

## COJO 2100: Reporting and Newswriting Fall 2014

**Instructor:** Dr. Kristen Landreville

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**Office:** Ross Hall 425

**Office hours:**

**Dr. Kristen Landreville**

TR: 3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Or by appointment

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an intensive introduction to basic news writing, reporting and editing. Good writing, meeting deadlines, speed, accuracy, sound news judgment, sound ethical practices and sensitivity and an appreciation of our pluralistic society are expected. This course provides skills necessary for various media careers including broadcasting, strategic communication, and magazine writing.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize and write a good lead.
2. Write the basic kinds of news stories that appear every day in newspapers and electronic news media.
3. Develop skills in gathering information and interviewing
4. Exercise fundamental news judgment.
5. Recognize and correct ethical, libel, and stereotyping problems. Recognize and appreciate issues and concerns of our pluralistic community.
6. Have an awareness for current events and issues pertaining to the media profession
7. Develop skills in editing and revising.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

*The Associated Press Stylebook* (preferably 2013 edition)

Rich, C. (2013). *Writing and reporting news* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Kessler, L., & McDonald, D. (2008). *When words collide: A media writer's guide to grammar and style* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. **\*\*HIGHLY RECOMMENDED\*\***

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### **In-Class Writing, Skills-Building Exercises, and Peer-Editing (40% of your final grade):**

Throughout the class you will do various in-class writing assignments. These are designed to give you practice at what we discuss in class. They will strengthen skills essential for news writing. These skills include AP style, sentence structure, conciseness, and grammar. There also may be exercises related to issues such as direct quotations and descriptive writing. These assignments will vary in length and content throughout the class. You will also be asked to edit the writing assignments of other students in the class. Based on your classmates' and my comments, you may revise your exercises for a final score. **If you do not attend on a day in which an in-class writing assignment is due, and you do not have documentation of an illness or a university excused absence, you will receive a zero on that assignment.**

### **Grading Criteria:**

Grades are based on the extent of editing/revisions needed to make a story publishable. Thus, the more errors, the lower the grade. The quality of stories is generally determined by the following areas:

1. *Creativity and tone.* Does the lead attract attention? Does the lead reflect the gist of the story? Is the tone of the story appropriate?
2. *Structure and flow.* Do paragraphs show unity? Is the organization coherent? Are the sentences readable?
3. *Mechanics.* Are the spelling, grammar, and punctuation correct?
4. *Information.* Is the information correct, accurate? Is the information clear and appropriate for the story? Is the information properly attributed? Are direct quotations properly used?
5. *Language.* Are words properly used? Is the language clear and concise?
6. *Other issues.* Does the story follow AP style? Does the story show sensitivity to cultural differences? Does the story follow the specified directions?

### **AP Style Quizzes (15% of your final grade):**

You will have five quizzes over the *Associated Press Stylebook*. The quizzes will be broken down as follows:

Quiz 1: A-E (*AP stylebook*)

Quiz 2: F-J (*AP stylebook*)

Quiz 3: K-O (*AP stylebook*)

Quiz 4: P-T (*AP stylebook*)

Quiz 5: U-Z, sports and punctuation (*AP stylebook*)

Each quiz will have sentences that may or may not have mistakes. **You will use your AP Stylebook to correct the mistakes.** Although you may use your *AP Stylebook* during quizzes, I suggest you read through the entries before the quiz so that you can easily locate the mistakes. Dates for the quizzes are listed on the class schedule at the end of this syllabus.

**News Feature Story (25% of your final grade) & Draft (15% of your final grade):**

Each student will complete one story requiring them to gather their own information. This will be a news feature story that deals with environment, health, or science related issues. This story will not be peer-edited. This story requires research and interviewing sources. The instructor must approve the idea for this story in advance. The specifics of these assignments will be discussed in greater detail in the class. You will turn in a draft of the story two weeks before the story is due. **The draft is worth 15% of your final grade and due Tuesday November 25 at 1:20 p.m. in class. The final copy is due Tuesday December 16 at 1:15 p.m. in class.**

**Story Ideas (5% of your final grade):**

You will propose and submit **3** story ideas for your environment / health / science news story. The instructor will then choose one, which shows the most promise of becoming a quality story. **Due Thursday, October 23 at 1:20 p.m. in class.**

**FINAL GRADE CALCULATION**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>
In-Class Writing, Skills-Building Exercises, and Editing	200
AP Style Quizzes	75
3 EHS Story Ideas	25
EHS Story Draft	75
EHS Story Final	<u>125</u>
	<b>500 points total</b>

**GRADING SCALE**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Points</b>
A	450-500	D	300-349
B	400-449	F	299 or less
C	350-399		

**EXTRA CREDIT**

1. There may or may not be several opportunities to participate in research projects conducted by faculty and graduate students for extra credit. The amount of extra credit given will depend on the effort and time required by you complete the extra credit.
2. You can receive up to 10 points of extra credit in this class.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### **Class Policies:**

Factual errors and misspellings of proper nouns will result in an F on an assignment for the writer AND the editor. That is, the highest grade you can get is a 50%. Make sure you understand what your source is saying before you write about it.

Do not use friends, roommates, relatives, etc., as sources for your news stories. This is a conflict of interest and shows laziness. You will receive an F on any assignment in which there is a conflict of interest.

Do not write about any activities, organizations, projects, companies, etc., in/on which you are involved. This is also a conflict of interest. You will receive an F on any assignment in which there is a conflict of interest.

### **Attendance:**

Attendance is required. **All absences are considered unexcused unless 1) an official excuse from the University of Wyoming or 2) documentation from a physician regarding an illness is provided.** Discuss with your instructor any anticipated absences, such as University-sponsored trips, BEFORE you are absent. Make up work will only be accepted for excused absences; there will be no make up work allowed for unexcused absences. **After your 4<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence, 25 points will be deducted from your final grade for each additional absence.**

### **Missed or Late Assignments:**

By definition, missed and late assignments are below average, and are unfair to those who are prepared. Unless otherwise noted above under the specific course requirements, missed and late assignments receive a zero. If you know in advance that you not be able to meet a course requirement deadline, you may contact me and explain your situation. I may grant an extension on a course requirement deadline if your excuse is documented and/or out of your control. Even in cases that I grant an extension, you may still have 10% deducted from your grade for *each day* it is late (including weekends).

A few additional things to note regarding late quizzes and assignments:

1. Students arriving after 1:40 p.m. will not be permitted to take the quiz and will receive a zero.
2. In the case when a make-up quiz is approved, the quiz may contain different questions and/or be in a different format than the original quiz
3. Quizzes and assignments turned in more than one week late will receive a zero for a grade.

**Readings and Participation:** All readings should be done prior to the assigned class period. Students are expected to participate *fully and constructively* in class discussions and activities.

**Classroom Civility:** We want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all. In a communication class, it is *especially* important that we (1) display respect for all members of the classroom – including the instructor and students, (2) pay attention to and participate in all class sessions and activities; (3) avoid unnecessary disruption during class time (e.g., having private conversations, reading the newspaper, doing work for other classes, making/receiving cell phone calls, text messaging, etc.); and (4) avoid racist, sexist, homophobic or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom. This is not an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, they represent the minimal standards that help make the classroom a productive place for all concerned. Your final grade may be reduced by 1% *each time* you engage in these sorts of behaviors.

**E-mail and Computer Work:** We will use electronic mail for class updates. Please read your mail regularly (at least once per day) so you can keep up-to-date on upcoming assignments. In some cases, you may also be required to turn in assignments in electronic format (you will always be notified in advance when this is the case). Let me know if you need help with this.

**Printing:**

All assignments completed in-class (with the exception of quizzes) are expected to be printed and turned in before you leave class.

**Saving your work:**

Saving work done on computer is by the far the easiest, yet most neglected, thing that we can do to avoid unnecessary stress. Technical failures will occur – computers will crash, printers won't print – but you are still responsible for completing your work. Make sure you **bring a flash drive to class**. DO NOT expect work saved on the local drive in the lab to exist once you leave class. **Save early and often! I also suggest emailing your documents to yourself.**

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Cheating and/or plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated and will result in failure of this course. In addition, academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean's office for further action. University Regulation 802 defines academic dishonesty as “an act attempted or performed which misrepresents one's involvement in an academic task in any way, or assists another student to misrepresent his or her involvement in an academic endeavor.” Student work and behavior during quizzes/exams will be evaluated carefully, and any suspicion of academic dishonesty will be investigated fully.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic dishonesty in this course, please contact me.

**Student Disability Accommodations:**

If you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let the course instructor know as soon as possible. You will need to register with,

and provide documentation of your disability to, University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in SEO, room 330 Knight Hall, 766-6189, TTY: 766-3073.

**Course Director:**

Mitzi Stewart  
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307-760-4340  
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The course director is responsible for policies outlined in the syllabus. Instructors and students will be held accountable to course policies. Course schedules and policies are tentative. If changed you will be notified in a timely manner.

**TENTATIVE DAILY SCHEDULE**

CLASS	DATE	TOPIC	READING(S)	WHAT'S DUE
Week 1	R 9/4	Introduction to Class Planning for Success in Your Media Career		
Week 2	T 9/9	The Role of Journalism in Society; The Changing Concept of News  Newsworthiness Assignment (10 points)	Ch. 1-2 in Textbook	
	R 9/11	The Changing Concept of News continued, The Basic News Story	Ch. 1-2 in Textbook	
Week 3	T 9/16	Constructing Stories: Story Structure, Leads and Nut Graphs	Ch. 7-9 in Textbook	
	R 9/18	Constructing Stories: Story Structure, Leads and Nut Graphs continued  Lead Writing Assignment (20 points)	Ch. 7-9 in Textbook	
Week 4	T 9/23	Constructing Stories: Attribution	Ch. 5 in Textbook	
	R 9/25	Constructing Stories: Attribution Cont., AP Stylebook A-E  Attribution and AP Style Editing Assignment (10 points)	Ch. 5 in Textbook  AP Stylebook A-E	
Week 5	T 9/30	Hard News Writing and Peer-Edit Assignment (10 points)  <b>AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR QUIZ 1</b>		Quiz on AP Stylebook A-E
	R 10/2	Continue Hard News Writing and Peer-Editing AP Sylebook F-J	AP Stylebook F-J	

Week 6	T 10/7	AP Stylebook F-J Continued; Editing, Commas & Grammar  News Editing Exercise, Commas Assignments (10 points each)	AP Stylebook F-J	
	R 10/9	Constructing Stories: News Features Writing  <b>AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR QUIZ 2</b>	Ch. 7, 10, 17 in Textbook	
Week 7	T 10/14	Constructing Stories: News Features Writing Continued, Personality Profile Writing  News Feature Writing and Peer-Edit Assignment (15 points)	Ch. 7, 10, 17 in Textbook	
	R 10/16	Finish News Feature Writing and Peer-Edit  Business Writing: Memos and E-mails  In-Class Personality Profile Memo Assignment (5 points)	Ch. 6, 7, 10, 17 in Textbook	In-Class Exchange Personality Profile Memo with a Partner
Week 8	T 10/21	Time to write interview questions in class  Generating Story Ideas, EHS Story Assignment, Collecting Information	Ch. 6, 7, 10, 17 in Textbook	Quiz on AP Stylebook F-J
	R 10/23	Generating Story Ideas, EHS Story Assignment, Collecting Information Continued  Interviewing Techniques and Skills  In-Class Interviewing for Personality Profile (5 points)	Ch. 6, 7, 10, 17 in Textbook	15-20 Interview Questions for your Personality Profile Partner
Week 9	T 10/28	Interviewing Continued (if necessary)  Review of News Feature Stories  AP Stylebook K-O  In-Class Personality Profile Writing Assignment (20 points)	Ch. 6, 7, 10, 17 in Textbook  AP Stylebook K-O	3 Ideas for Environmental / Health / Science Story
	R 10/30	Bring Completed Personality Profile Draft to Class; Peer-edit Personality Profiles  <b>AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR QUIZ 3</b>		Quiz on AP Stylebook K-O
Week 10	T 11/4	AP Stylebook P-S  Environmental / Health / Science Story Workshop 1 (Getting Sources, Getting Interviews, Q&A session) (5 points)	Ch. 13 in Textbook  AP Stylebook P-S	
	R 11/6	Introduction to Public Relations and Writing News	Ch. 13 in Textbook	

		Releases In-Class PR Writing 1 Assignment (10 points)		
Week 11	T 11/11	Complete and Peer-Edit PR Writing 1 Assignment Editing Press Release Exercise (10 points)	Ch. 13 in Textbook AP Stylebook P-S	
	R 11/13	<b>AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR QUIZ 4</b> In-Class PR Writing 2 Assignment (20 points)	Ch. 13 in Textbook	Quiz on AP Stylebook P-S
Week 12	T 11/18	Peer-Edit In-Class PR Writing 2 Assignment Continued Environmental / Health / Science Story Workshop 2 (Discussion of Current Problems, Sharing of Advice, etc) (5 points)	Ch. 14-16 in Textbook	
	R 11/20	Sign-up for Individual Meeting with Instructor for either Thursday 12/4, Tuesday 12/9, Thursday 12/11  AP Stylebook T-Z; Introduction to Advertising  Advertising 1 Assignment (10 points)	Ch. 14-16 in Textbook AP Stylebook T-Z	
Week 13	T 11/25	Out-of-class Work Day: Submit Advertising 1 Assignment on WyoCourses by 11:59 p.m.		Draft Story Due
	R 11/27	<b>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING</b>		
Week 14	T 12/2	<b>AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR QUIZ 5</b>  Accuracy, Media Law, Media Ethics, Sensitivity  Explanation of Out-of-Class Ad Assignment (20 points)		Quiz on AP Stylebook T-Z
	R 12/4	Individual Meetings with Students; Out – of – Class Ad Assignment DUE  Final Story is Due by 11:59 p.m. on Fri. Dec. 12		
Week 15	T 12/9	Individual Meetings with Students; Out – of – Class Ad Assignment DUE  Final Story is Due by 11:59 p.m. on Wed. Dec. 17		
	R 12/11	Individual Meetings with Students; Out – of – Class Ad Assignment DUE  Final Story is Due by 11:59 p.m. on Fri. Dec. 19		
<b>FINAL</b>		No In-Class Final		