

# **JOUR 2310**

## **Intro to Media Writing**

**Section 004**  
**Fall 2009**

**Class: 6 p.m. - 8:50 p.m. Monday, GAB 112**  
**Lab: 6 p.m. - 7:50 p.m. Wednesday, GAB 112**

**Instructor: John Sparks**

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**Office: GAB 101A**

**Office Hours: 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Monday, Wednesday**

**1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday**

**By Appointment**

**Lab Teaching Assistant: Candace Bagwell**

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**E-mail: [candace.bagwell@gmail.com](mailto:candace.bagwell@gmail.com)**

**Course objectives:** To learn the basics of writing for several media, including newspapers, the World Wide Web, broadcast news (radio and TV), public relations and advertising. By the end of this course you should be able to research, report and write a news story for several platforms. You will develop your writing, reporting and interviewing skills and sharpen your news judgment. You will learn to write in a concise, accurate and fair manner, and to work under deadline. You also will brush up your grammar, spelling and punctuation skills, and familiarize yourself with Associated Press style and broadcast writing style.

After completing the course, you should be able to:

- Define news as it is understood by professional journalists and public relations professionals.
- Describe the operation of typical news organizations.
- Understand and use the AP and NT Daily stylebooks.
- Conduct a news interview.
- Write a coherent news story for several media platforms under deadline pressure.
- Describe the main legal concerns of journalists and public relations professionals.
- Describe the main ethical concerns of journalists and public relations professionals.
- Learn to be sensitive about cultural, ethnic, racial and gender issues.

**Reading requirements:**

- *Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method*, Sixth Edition, by Carole Rich  
Download online option:  
<http://www.ichapters.com/t11/en/US/storefront/ichapters?cmd=catProductDetail&ISBN=9780495569879&cid=APL1>  
Several options: Buy, Rent, Buy by Chapter  
Buy bundled with Newscene Access Card: Cost is: \$98.49
- Student Workbook for *Writing and Reporting News*  
Download online at [www.ichapters.com](http://www.ichapters.com) Enter isbn number: 0495570427  
Cost is: \$19.49
- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*
- *The NT Daily Stylebook*. (Copies will be made available in the classroom.)
- The Denton Record-Chronicle (made available on class days)
- Additional outside readings may be required during the semester.

You must closely follow current events by reading a variety of news publications, especially local newspapers such as the *North Texas Daily*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *Denton Record-Chronicle*.

You will receive the *Record-Chronicle* in class. You should read other newspapers online and visit many reputable news Web sites to get information. In addition, you must watch and listen to broadcast news on television and radio as part of your daily routine. Your quizzes will include current events mentioned in the news.

**Attendance and Sick Policies:**

You must attend class and lab sessions. I will be in class. I expect you to be here, too.

If you are sick and miss class or lab, you must bring a *doctor's excuse* to make up the in-class assignments. You must immediately get any homework assignment from me or another student and turn it in on time. If someone in your immediate family dies during the semester, please provide documentation to me. See me about making up the work you missed.

Most story assignments will be completed during lab time, so attendance in labs is **mandatory** to pass the class. Activities during lectures, such as quizzes and other in-class assignments, also represent a major portion of your overall grade. Those with an unexcused absence for a quiz or in-class assignment will receive a zero on the class activity and will not be allowed to make it up.

Because this is a once-a-week class, I reserve the right to drop you after two absences.

Treat this class as if it is a job. You are expected to be in every class, show up on time and turn in work on time. If you must miss class or lab, contact your instructor and and/or teaching assistant in advance, just as you would your editor or boss at work.

**You will learn to write on DEADLINE.**

**LATE WORK IN THIS CLASS OR LAB DOES NOT MAKE MY GRADE BOOK.**

**Period. (One second late is late)**

**Grading: Total points available = 1,000 points**

Lab assignments:	50 %	500 points
Class activities, writing, discussions	10%	100 points
Meeting/speech story	10 %	100 points
Profile story	10%	100 points
Quizzes and Question of the Day:	10 %	100 points (70pts quiz/30 pts QofD)
Final exam	10%	100 points

**Grading system:**

1,000-875	= A
874-750	= B
749-625	= C
624-500	= D
499 - below	= F

**Lab assignments: (500 points)**

Each week you will be assigned exercises that are due by the end of the lab period. You will always be allowed to use your AP stylebook and texts, so you should bring these books to class and to lab.

Most lab assignments will come from the workbook, so always bring your workbook with you to lab. All work must be typed, and written in the appropriate style and format.

**ALL WORK MUST BE COMPLETED ON DEADLINE.** Late work is not accepted.

**Class activities, writing, discussions: (100 points)**

During class, there will be various activities, including writing, discussion, group projects, research, etc. You will be expected to actively participate. You must complete your work in the appropriate style, format, and on deadline.

**Meeting/speech story: (100 points)**

This is an out-of-class news story. You will be assigned to go out and cover a meeting or speech, then write a news story. You will be expected to find the speech or meeting to cover, go there, take notes, ask questions, gather information, and write a new story. You must dress appropriately. This important assignment will take the place of a midterm exam. Source Sheet required (see below). I'll give you more details as we get closer to the time. **Late assignments are not accepted. You will receive zero for missing a deadline.**

**Profile story: (100 points)**

During the semester, you will write a well-researched, thorough and interesting profile of a person. You will follow all the rules of good news writing. You must dress appropriately. Source Sheet required (see below). Details to follow.

**Late assignments are not accepted. You will receive zero for missing a deadline.**

### **Quizzes and Question of the Day: (70 points quizzes/ 30 points Q of D)**

Knowing what's going on in local, state, national and international news is critical. You will have a series of open-book, Internet-friendly quizzes on AP style, grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and closed-book, no-Internet quizzes on news events. **Deadlines apply.**

You may also earn points by correctly answering "**Question of the Day**," asked at the exact start time of each class. It's based on current events, issues and other facts a journalist should know. Do not arrive late. Slow traffic and no parking places are not an excuse for being late. Plan ahead. If you are late, you will miss the opportunity to earn these points.

### **Final exam: (100 points)**

This exam will be given at the end of the semester. It will cover everything we've discussed or done in class, including information from the text, style, lectures, notes, speakers, writing assignments, exercises, handouts, reading assignments, and class discussions -everything we have covered during the semester. The final exam is scheduled for **Monday, Dec. 14, 6-8 p.m.**

### **Source sheets:**

For stories that involve interviews, you must attach a page listing each source, the date you interviewed each person and his or her contact information (phone numbers and e-mail addresses). Stories without source sheets will not be accepted. The instructor will contact sources to verify information in your stories.

### **Guest speakers:**

Professional journalists and other relevant speakers may be brought into class during the semester. I expect you to ask interesting, relevant and professional questions.

### **Saving your work:**

You are responsible for making copies of all of your work. Most students save their work on CD-RWs, thumb drives or by e-mailing finished assignments to themselves. You cannot save material on the computers in the lab.

**IMPORTANT:** Save all graded copies of your work that have been returned to you since this is the only way to resolve any potential discrepancy between the grade you are assigned and your own calculation of your grade.

### **Academic Honesty:**

Plagiarism, fabrication and resubmission or double submission of work completed for another class are considered to be acts of academic dishonesty under the UNT Code of Student Conduct. You should never quote friends or family members in news stories unless you have advance permission from the instructor.

Any of the above violations will result in an automatic failing grade on the assignment and a referral to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Most lab assignments for this class will not require original reporting, because you will be furnished with the information you need, but the stories you pursue independently outside of class (the speech/event story and your profile story) should rely entirely on YOUR OWN reporting. If you must include information reported by another journalistic outlet (and I suggest

you do this rarely, because there is almost always a way to find the information yourself), cite the publication.

The instructor reserves the right to contact sources listed on your source sheet and will perform spot checks throughout the semester.

### **Honor Code:**

(See the attached page)

### **Journalism Course Registration**

1. Each semester, you'll need to print your unofficial transcript, highlighting all of the journalism courses that you have taken. You'll use this to obtain class codes in the advising office before registering for classes.
2. By registering for this course, you are stating that you have taken the required pre-reqs according to your catalog year and major/minor status. If the instructor later determines that you haven't taken and passed these requirements, then you may be dropped at any point in the semester. If you have questions about your pre-reqs, please see an advisor.
3. For a journalism major to be enrolled in any restricted 3000 and 4000 level classes, you must have taken and passed the GSP test, all pre-major courses, and Math 1680 and also applied for major.

### **Re-taking Failed Courses**

Students will not be allowed to take a course more than twice. Once you have failed a journalism course two times, then you will not be allowed to enroll in that course for 12 months. Once you have waited 12 s after failing a course twice, you may make an appeal to the professor teaching the course to be allowed to enroll a third time.

### **Disability Accommodation**

The School of Journalism cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodations to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students. If you have not registered with ODA, please do so, and present your written accommodation request to me by the 12th day of class.

### **Plagiarism**

You are learning the craft of Journalism, which is about accuracy and truth telling.

**DO NOT LIE. CHEAT OR MAKE UP ANYTHING.**

Plagiarism, in a nutshell, is using other people's written words as your own. Some people consider the use of 7-10 words in a row, copied from another source, as plagiarism. Be sure to include citations when using other people's writing because plagiarism is a serious offense in any discipline, especially in journalism. It is a firing offense in the professional world. In the Mayborn School of Journalism and Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism at UNT, students face a range of penalties for plagiarism (depending on the importance of the assignment):

- A grade of "F" on a minor assignment
- A request that the student drop the class
- Withdrawal of the student from the class, initiated by the professor
- An F in the course

- A referral to the UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities
- A notation on the student's transcript
- Expulsion from the university.

A combination of these penalties may also be used. If you need more information or have questions about plagiarism, ask your nearest journalism professor or visit the Center for Students Rights and Responsibilities.

### **Other Policies:**

Turn off cell phones and all other electronic devices before class starts. Text messaging and checking e-mail is not permitted during class. If you violate these policies, I will ask you to leave the room.

Civility is expected at all times toward the professor and one another.

**I do NOT believe in Extra Credit.** Show up for class and assignments, do the work, make the deadlines and you'll be fine.

**A note to advertising students:** Being able to recognize big issues then thinking and writing about them are valuable for all areas of journalism, including advertising. Here's a testimonial from a big-time advertising professional: Eric Schnabel, Vice President/Account Director at Leo Burnett in Chicago, believes the best thing that ever happened to him "was being a journalism major and learning about Associated Press-style writing. You're forced to think about what's the biggest, most important thing, what's the lead in my story here, then go from the lead to the supporting facts that are perhaps less broadly important" (*Idea Industry: How to Crack the Advertising Career Code* by Brett Robbs and Deborah Morrison, 2008, p. 97). This class will help you think and write better, and the advertising faculty members believe that's important, no matter what area of advertising you find yourself in — account management, media, research or creative.

### **FOR EVERYONE:**

**You must read newspapers and web articles, watch and listen to radio and TV newscasts throughout the semester. I expect you to attend each class. Be here on time and come ready to write. Being a journalist is an exciting, fun and HIGHLY COMPETITIVE. If you want to make it, you must learn to write well. Did I mention deadlines?**

# Honor Code

## Mayborn School of Journalism • Mayborn Graduate Institute University of North Texas

The faculty, staff, and students of the University of North Texas Mayborn School of Journalism and Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism regard honesty and integrity as essential qualities of our Journalism students and as reflections of the standards of the professions for which journalism educates its students.

Students of The University of North Texas Mayborn School of Journalism and Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism have entered a community of scholarship and journalism where academic integrity is of the highest importance.

By enrolling in Journalism classes, all students agree to uphold this Honor Code. All students taking Journalism classes agree that in their course work and interaction with faculty and staff they will not engage in:

- **Fabricating** information, data, research, quotations or sources.
- **Plagiarizing** the words or other creative work of another person: Plagiarism consists of intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another person as one's own. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the knowing or intentional failure to attribute language or ideas to their original source, in the manner required by the academic discipline (such as by quotation marks, attribution in the text, and footnotes citations in an academic exercise) or in the manner required by journalism practice (such as by quotation marks and attribution in a journalistic presentation).
- **Looking at the exam** of another student or using unauthorized notes, study aids or other materials during an examination.
- **Altering and resubmitting** work previously submitted and graded (this does not include rewrites of previously graded lab assignments).
- **Submitting identical** or substantially the same work for credit in more than one course.
- **Obtaining unfair advantage**, aiding and abetting, and falsifying records.
- **Academic sabotage**, by intentionally taking any action, which negatively affects the academic work of another student.

Professional journalists who fabricate and/or plagiarize violate industry standards and the public trusts greatly compromising the integrity of their medium. Such journalists are often disciplined or fired. Students in the Mayborn School of Journalism and Mayborn graduate students, especially those whose work goes out to client news organizations via the School of Journalism, will be held to the same standards in their work.

At the Mayborn School of Journalism and Mayborn Graduate Institute, all of the activities listed above are grounds for sanctions ranging from a reprimand to revocation of a degree or expulsion from the University.

Honor Code based on The Medill School of Journalism (2001 pledge) with amendments approved by the faculty of the Mayborn School of Journalism and the Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism (2004).

I have read and understand this Honor Code.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Student # \_\_\_\_\_

# **JOURN 2310 Class Schedule - Sec. 004 Fall 2009**

## ***Aug 31: Understanding news***

Intro to class. News judgment. Review and discuss Chapter 1: Changing Concepts of News, and Chapter 2: Blogs. Lab 1 – (Sept. 2) - Online tutorial (TA demonstrates sign-up); 1-1; 1-2; 1-3; 1-4.

## **NO CLASS Mon Sept. 7 – LABOR DAY**

## **NO LAB Wed. Sept. 9**

## ***Sept. 14 The basic news story***

Review Chapters 1 and 2. Read Chapter 3: The Basic News Story. Discussion on inverted pyramid, leads, nut graphs, introduction to Associated Press style, quotes, attribution.

Lab 2 (Sept. 16): 3-1: (discuss first), write all; 3-2; 3-4: first two graphs; 3-5: first three graphs.

## ***Sept. 21: Convergent Media Writing***

Read Chapter 4. Immediacy; producing for print, broadcast and the Web.

Lab 3 (Sept. 23): Online quiz; 4-1: critique three stories (groups of three, separate submissions); 4-2: (groups of three, separate submissions); 4-3.

## ***Sept. 28: Curiosity and Story Ideas***

Read Chapter 5. Vivid writing and action, "so what" test; tickle files; story ideas.

Lab 4 (Sept. 30): Web true/false quiz; 5-3: A-Z brainstorming three ideas for each of 10 words (groups of 3 compare after printing); 5-4: Write out plan to localize four front-page nytimes.com stories, with three types of sources identified and full summary line.

## ***Oct 5: Sources and Online Research***

Read Chapter 6. Sources, online research, library research, databases, public records, FOI and Texas Open Records, and Open Meetings Acts.

Lab 5 (Oct. 7): Tutorial quiz; 6-1: (1-10); 6-2: (2-10); also, most recent UNT student population and ethnic breakdown by percentages.

## ***Oct. 12 Interviewing Techniques***

Read Chapter 7. Listening, note-taking, taping, question strategies, sensitivity, e-mail interviews, phone interviews and in-person interviews.

Lab 6 (Oct. 14): Web quiz; 7-1: with specific criteria required for complete mini-portrait of classmate.

## ***Oct. 19: Leads and Nut Graphs***

Read Chapter 8. Specific strategies for leads and nut graphs, different types of leads, anecdotal leads.

Lab 7 (Oct. 21): Web quiz; 8-1; 8-2; 8-3; 8-4; 8-5; 8-6

—MIDTERM EXAM (through Chapter 8), last half of class.

## ***Oct. 26: Story Forms***

Read Chapter 10: Summary leads, inverted pyramid, WSJ style and hour-glass story forms.

Lab 8 (Oct. 28): Tutorial quiz; 10-1 (use ALL the material); 10-3: (use ALL the material); 10-4: (first three graphs and graphic/bullet presentation).

## ***Nov 2: Profiles and obituaries***

Read Chapter 18. Basic elements of profiles, obits. Guidelines for obits.

Lab 9 (Nov. 4): Online quiz; Research and write a biographical news-style profile on former U.S. Speaker of the House Jim Wright. Use everything you can find online. (DO NOT contact him or his office or any other living person.) Lead with the most interesting/significant aspect of his career.

**Nov. 9: Speeches, news conferences and meetings**

**\*\*Profile proposal due at class start.**

Read Chapter 20. Speeches, news conferences and meetings. Researching in advance, facts to include, sources, getting reaction. (**After the class session, identify and cover a speech, meeting or news conference on your own**).

Lab 10 (Nov. 11): Online true/false quiz; 20-4; 20-5

**Nov. 16: Public relations writing**

Read Chapter 14. What's the difference between news writing and public relations writing? Writing news releases, constructing media kits, nonprofit vs. corporate PR.

**Lab 11** (Nov. 18): Online true/false quiz; 14-1: (text no more than 65 to 70 words); 14-4: (graphic or bulleted items required); 14-6.

**Nov. 23: Broadcast Writing**

**\*\*3 copies of profile draft due at class start for student workshoping.**

Read Chapter 12. Print writing vs. broadcast writing. Emphasis on visuals, broadcast story structure, active verbs, broadcast terms.

**Lab 12** (Nov. 25): 12-1, 12-2, 12-3, 12-4, 12-6.

**Nov. 30: Online Journalism**

**\*\*Final version of profile due at class start.**

Read Chapter 13. Immediacy, interactivity, multimedia reporting, writing for the Web, story structure.

**Lab 13** - 13-1, 13-2, 13-3.

**Dec.7: Accuracy and law; Survival Math and review**

Read Chapter 15. Libel, privacy, public figures and private figures, corrections, reporter privilege, online legal issues.

**Media Ethics; Multicultural Sensitivity**

Read Chapters 16 and 17. Plagiarism, fabrication, privacy issues, ethical reasoning, codes of ethics; multiculturalism, gender considerations, writing about special groups.

**Lab 12** (Dec. 9): The movie "Shattered Glass" and response paper. (**This is your LAST LAB.**)

**Dec. 14 - Final exam: 6-8 p.m.**