

MCOM 310: News Writing and Reporting

Fall 2020

Online, Asynchronously

Professor Drew Morton

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Office Hours: Virtually, By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This advanced course is a combination of a review of principles of journalism and a bullpen practicum running of *The Eagle Eye*.

Before the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand the fundamental of journalism.
2. Utilize the fundamentals of journalism in their own work.

REQUIRED TEXTS/MATERIALS:

The Missouri Group, *News Reporting and Writing*, 13th Edition (Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 2020).

SCHEDULE:

The course is online and asynchronous, which means we will not have set designated times. Deadlines are for Friday of the given week, assignments due by 5 p.m. I will try to post materials by Sunday of the given week.

WEEK ONE (August 28th)

Introduction: Review the lecture posted to Blackboard, read chapters 1-2 of *News Reporting and Writing*, take the Blackboard quiz on chapters 1-2.

WEEK TWO (September 4th)

Gathering and Interviewing: Review the lecture posted to Blackboard, read chapters 3-4 of *News Reporting and Writing*, listen to the *WTF with Marc Maron* interview with Robin Williams, write a two paragraph report on Maron's interview and what skills from the reading you think he utilized. Be specific.

WEEK THREE (September 11th)

Interviewing: No lecture, find a classmate to interview for 45 minutes, record the audio, and hone the interview into a four paragraph profile of that student's life. Turn BOTH files in.

WEEK FOUR (September 18th)

Quotations and News Releases: Review the lecture posted to Blackboard, read chapters 5-6, take the Blackboard Quiz on chapters 5-6, proofread a classmate's

interview from week three and offer three notes of constructive feedback, email the feedback to me and the author.

WEEK FIVE (September 25th)

Numbers and News Reports: Review the lecture, read chapter 7, find a national news source and write a three paragraph summary about their coverage.

WEEK SIX (October 2nd)

The Inverted Pyramid: Review the lecture, read chapter 8, interview a local politician running for office in November and write a profile.

WEEK SEVEN (October 9th)

Writing and Alternatives: Review the lecture, read chapters 9-10, take the Blackboard quiz, proofread a classmate's political profile from week six and offer three notes of constructive feedback, email the feedback to me and the author.

WEEK EIGHT (October 16th)

MIDTERM ON CHAPTERS 1-10 ON BLACKBOARD

WEEK NINE (October 23rd)

Covering a Beat and Basic Stories: Review the lecture, read chapters 13-14, listen to the selected episode of the *New York Times* podcast *The Daily*, write a six paragraph story on the November Election.

WEEK TEN (October 30th)

Bullpen Issue One Pitch: Read chapter 15, take the Blackboard quiz, and pitch a story to me that you want to write about for our first proper issue of *The Eagle Eye* (must include sources and an angle).

WEEK ELEVEN (November 6th)

Bullpen Issue One Publish: Write the approved story, exchange stories with a classmate, offer three notes of constructive feedback, email the feedback to me and the author, revise the story accordingly and email me that as well.

WEEK TWELVE (November 13th)

Rights, Responsibilities, and Bullpen Issue Two Pitch: Review the lecture, review chapters 19-20, take the Blackboard quiz, and pitch a story to me that you want to write

about for our second proper issue of *The Eagle Eye* (must include sources and an angle).

WEEK THIRTEEN (November 20th)

Bullpen Issue Two Publish: Write the approved story, exchange stories with a classmate, offer three notes of constructive feedback, email the feedback to me and the author, revise the story accordingly and email me that as well.

WEEK FOURTEEN (November 27th)

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

WEEK FIFTEEN (December 4th)

TAKE THE FINAL EXAM ON CHAPTERS 13-16, 19-20 ON BLACKBOARD

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Blackboard Quizzes (5): 15%

Midterm Exam: 15%

Final Exam: 15%

Editorial Feedback: 5%

Portfolio (Maron Analysis - 5%, Classmate Interview - 5%, News Analysis - 5%, Politician Interview - 5%, Election Story - 10%, Pitch One - 10%, Pitch Two - 10%): 50%

COURSE POLICIES:

Be sure to complete your reading and assignments on the date they are scheduled on the syllabus.

Late assignments are not accepted.

In accordance with the University's academic integrity policy (see below), students who violate the policy will earn an automatic F for the course.

Cell phones are to be set on vibrate and not to be used during class.

This course is structured like a workshop. That means that attendance and participation are especially important. You will be asked to share and critique one another's work (constructively and kindly!). Please see me if you have any reservations about this.

You are not required to buy any hardware or software for this course. Supervised, in-class, lab time will be provided to you. If you should you need access to the lab's resources outside of class, let me know.

Be sure to bring *all* your course materials to class each day we meet.

Finally, please allow a 24-48 hour turn-around time for any e-mails. Due to this policy, be sure not to leave any major concerns/questions about assignments for the last minute!

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus.

TAMUT POLICIES:

Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the A&M-Texarkana Disability Services Office by calling 903-223-3062.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of 'F' in the course and/or disciplinary actions. For additional information, see the university catalog.

A&M-Texarkana Email Address: Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M-Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework.

Drop Policy: Beginning with the first class day of the semester, faculty should report to the Registrar's Office via the preliminary class roster and/or email communication, by a date established by the Registrar's Office, any student who is not attending their class or who has not logged into Blackboard for an online class.

Faculty members shall automatically initiate an administrative drop for any student who has not been in attendance (face to face class) or has not reported in (web or web enhanced class) by the due date of the preliminary class roster as established by the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office will notify students by certified mail and/or email that the instructor has initiated the drop process and will instruct them to contact the instructor immediately. If the instructor does not rescind the request in writing within seven (7) days of documentable receipt of the notification, the Registrar's Office will drop the student from the class. Faculty who fail to submit an administrative drop by the established deadline, must record the grade earned by the student at the end of the semester. Faculty submitting a grade of F for a student will be required to enter the last date of attendance during the grading cycle.

Subsequent to the census date final roster, all drops during the semester must be student initiated.