

# **JOUR 304 – Media Writing**

## **Spring 2017**

Classes #61347 & #61349

### **Professor:**

Dr. Barbara Warner

Office: 316 Stauffer-Flint Hall

Office Hours: 1 p.m.-2 p.m. Tuesdays & Thursdays and by appointment

Telephone: 785-864-7645 (during office hours only – use email otherwise)

E-mail: [warner@ku.edu](mailto:warner@ku.edu)

### **Class Meetings:**

#61347: TR 9:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m., 101 Stauffer-Flint Hall

#61349: TR 11 a.m.-12:15 a.m., 101 Stauffer-Flint Hall

### **Course Objectives**

This course emphasizes journalistic writing and the critical thinking that goes with it. Regardless of whether students are in the news and information or strategic communication tracks, it all comes down to coherent and engaging storytelling. That in turn is based upon an understanding of the purpose of the communication, the audience it targets and the medium used in conveying it – these dictate the form each message takes. Good writers need to use effective sentence construction, and clear and concise wording to get their points across. This class builds on JOUR 300 and JOUR 302, helping students enhance their writing and interviewing skills for the web, print and broadcast; sharpen their judgment in choosing and attributing information, sources and story forms; and appropriately targeting the audience and message for persuasive purposes. Students will also learn Associated Press style, considered the standard in the news and strategic communication industries, as well as learn how to communicate with multicultural and diverse audiences.

### **Required Books and Sources**

- *The Associated Press Stylebook* – latest edition or prior year.
- Assigned readings and materials on Blackboard (<http://courseware.ku.edu>) – This course is to a considerable degree a "flipped" or hybrid course. You will pull up modules online to prepare you for class. Those modules will include readings, video presentations, exercises and other materials. In class, you may be quizzed, and you will be expected to use what you learned from the module to get right to work.
- Laptops: You can bring your laptop or tablet to class for exercises and assignments. You can also use the classroom's desktop computers and bring a flash drive.

## Grading

Each assignment will be graded on its content, organization, grammar and format, plus a professional component. A student's failure to behave professionally in the completion of an assignment can result in the reduction of the assignment's grade. Grades will be assigned on the basis of what is known as the **publishability standard**:

**A - Outstanding.** This grade is for work of clearly professional caliber (publishable or broadcast ready). The writing is clear and well organized; it requires virtually no editing. The reporting is complete and leaves no significant questions unanswered. The work is turned in by or before deadline, needing no changes before submission to clients or editors. These strategic messages get results, win awards and, when appropriate, feature creative concepts; they are executed with comprehensive research, interesting presentation and nearly flawless writing.

**B - Good.** This grade is for work that could be raised to professional standards without extensive editing. Writing is grammatically correct, but may lack the sparkle and fine organization of "A" work. The reporting answers the main questions, but may miss the proper emphasis or the best sources. The work is turned in by deadline, with little or no prompting, and needs minor revisions in such areas as reorganizing, rewriting, reformatting or providing more or better sources. "B" work doesn't necessarily have anything wrong, but it could be better, often with a stronger topic, a more artistic presentation, better information or improved writing. "B" work demonstrates basic broadcast or print style.

**C - Adequate.** This grade is for work that indicates a problem in at least one area, such as grammar, diplomacy or strategy. It does not measure up to professional quality but could be saved by revision. Work is incomplete by the deadline and/or needs more than minor revision before submission to a client or supervisor. The messages have weak ideas, concepts or presentation. They draw attention because they don't quite do the job. In summary, the work is an adequate first draft, but isn't yet ready to show a client or supervisor. NOTE: A C- final grade is considered a failing grade in this class by the School of Journalism.

**D - Unacceptable performance.** This grade is for work that is clearly unacceptable, even in a classroom setting. The writing is confused and/or ungrammatical. The reporting is flawed and may contain major factual errors and/or omissions, or may show little concept of basic strategic judgment. Work may miss the deadline.

**F - Failing.** This grade is for work that is not completed in a professional, timely way. For whatever reason, it has the appearance that the student did not take the assignment seriously. Such performance is often the result of personal or time-management problems that extend beyond a lack of skills or understanding of the research, writing or production processes.

## Grades and Points:

A = 924-1,000  
 A- = 900-923  
 B+ = 880-899  
 B = 830-879  
 B- = 800-829

C+ = 780-799  
 C = 730-779  
 C- = 700-729  
 D = 600-699  
 F = 599 and below

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
News release	40
Speech/event pitch and story	100 (20 pitch; 80 story)
Strategic Research Document (SRD)	100 (team project)
Broadcast script	30
Final project pitch, story, explainer	140 (20 pitch; 100 story; 20 explainer)
Exercises	90ish
Attendance/professionalism	<u>50</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>550</b>

I use the following scale, although I largely rely upon a point system:

A = 93%-100%	C = 73%-<77%
A- = 90%-<93%	C- = 70%-<73%
B+ = 87%-<90%	D = 63%-<70%
B = 83%-<87%	F = <63%
B- = 80%-<83%	
C+ = 77%-<80%	

To see where you stand, divide the “points you’ve earned to date” by the “total points possible” at that point. This table showing points and approximate percent may help:

Total Points Needed			Approximate Percent		
	A=511	A-=495		A=93%	A-=90%
B+=478	B=456	B-=440	B+=87%	B=83%	B-=80%
C+=423	C=401	C-=385	C+=77%	C=73%	C-=70%
D = 346, F = 330 and below			D=63%, F = below 60%		

Whether I decide to round up a grade is at my discretion and depends upon many factors. It is unethical to lobby me for higher grades, especially at the end of the semester, or ask me what additional work you can do to boost your grade. My grading notes are your guide, although I will entertain questions or correct errors in grading. My goal is to be as fair as possible.

## Contacting Me

I will communicate with you via messages to your KU-registered address. It's your responsibility to regularly keep track of them, even on weekends. I generally respond to emails within 24 hours. I check them until around 8 p.m. Make sure to be succinct and sign your full name.

I am available to take your calls on my office phone during my office hours. Phone calls do not default to my email, so if you leave a message outside my office hours, I am not likely to get it until my next office hours, as I do not give out my only phone number, which is my cell phone. I strongly recommend email instead. You will find me responsive to your emails.

## Attendance and Professionalism

### Journalism School Policy on Classroom Attendance:

"No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester.

"Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent.

"The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting."

"The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid.

"Students who receive any form of financial aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours of enrollment and grades to qualify for and retain that aid."

Notwithstanding the above, class participation includes attendance, being on time, contributions to the class, demonstrated knowledge of the news on an ongoing basis, and respect for your professor, guest lecturers and fellow students. Be aware that there is no exact formula for judging some aspects of participation, so professional judgment is involved.

I take attendance for every class. Your attendance, especially at this introductory level and especially in a laboratory class, is mandatory. This class starts promptly. Late arrivals are distracting to me and others, and are not tolerated in the business world. If by the time I have finished calling the roll you have not registered your presence, I will mark you as absent. It is up to you to correct that at the end of class if you are late. Late absences are noted.

You are allowed one excused absence without penalty and without notifying me of the reason for your absence. Thus you should save your allowed absence for times of real need. Unexcused absences lower the attendance and professionalism component of your grade. Each unexcused absence results in a one-point deduction, while each late attendance results in a 0.5 point deduction. Remember that even small points can tip a grade. More than two unexcused absences may result in

forfeiture of all professionalism points. If you have more than four unexcused absences, you are eligible to be dropped from the course.

Aside from your one unexcused absence, I will excuse you without penalty for the following reasons, if you notify me as indicated:

1. University-excused absences (these are organized school events for which I need paperwork or an email from the supervisor at least two days beforehand).
2. Religious holidays recognized by the University (notify me at least two days in advance).
3. Your serious illnesses or hospitalization (notify me as soon as possible; a copy of doctor's note that I can keep is requested).
4. Death of an immediate family member<sup>1</sup> (funeral notice required as soon as possible).

Inattentiveness in class is grounds for being counted absent. That includes using a computer or phone for anything not related to the class or assigned by me, talking to others or generally not paying attention.

**You may NOT use cell phones in class, unless you've asked for special permission to do so. Please do not surf the web, attend to email or do other non-class-related activities on your laptop, phone or other device. You're allowed to use a computer only for class purposes. If I discover you using these devices for any other purpose, I reserve the right to take appropriate action, especially if you do this after repeated warnings.**

I encourage you to communicate with me about the course during office hours, through e-mail or after class (reserve after class for quick questions; before class is often too hectic, unless you need to briefly mention something that pertains to your time in class – reserve your administrative questions to the time I allow at the beginning of each class). If you schedule an office appointment, please keep your appointment and be on time. Notify me otherwise.

Please do not ask me to recount what happened in class if you miss one. I suggest your pair with another classmate who can fill you in on what happened. I do not post lecture notes online.

Please remain in class until I indicate the class is over. Do not pack up items before class is done.

Deadlines are crucial. Late is late, meaning any time after the assignment is due. In the professional world, lateness can have drastic consequences. I will mark down late assignments by three points for each late day, including the day of the deadline and weekends. Extensions may be granted only as circumstances warrant. Assignments may not be submitted after being three days late.

All assignments should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman type (and be consistent in size); have one-inch margins on each side; contain a slug indicating your name(s), the assignment and the semester; be double-spaced with consistently indented paragraphs; have no additional spacing before or after headers; include copy under headers (no stand-alone headers at the bottom of pages without copy under them); have page numbers; be clean from editing marks; and not contain blank pages. It is expected that you used AP style in every assignment. When references are relevant to the assignment, they should be on a separate page and be in APA style.

Clear writing, free of spelling and grammatical errors, is expected. The quality of your writing affects your grade on written assignments, just as it would in a job. Poor writing contributes to poor grades. In academia, as in the professional world, people often judge you by your writing, including in emails, posts and texts. All writing should be in AP style; when in doubt, look it up. I strongly advise you to use the [Bremner Editing Center](#) on the first floor of Stauffer-Flint Hall to

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<sup>1</sup> "Immediate family member" means father, mother, stepparent, child, stepchild, sibling, spouse/partner or grandparent.

review your final work (make appointments). I do not engage in prior review/approval of your copy, unless you are allowed rewrites. You should read my feedback and not repeat the same mistakes.

## **Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification**

*(Note: I take this very seriously as it goes to the heart of ethics and education.)*

**Do not make material or facts up; do not take others' work without due credit – it's as simple as that.** If you do, it will not end well. If you don't understand the following, or you get into a situation where you're not sure, **ask me.** Also, if you have a **SafeAssignment**, you can check your **SafeSubmit** report before final submission to correct any potential plagiarism.

### **School of Journalism policy — Adopted 5/7/04**

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor(s) of this course.

*The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.*

**Plagiarism** - Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

**Fabrication and Falsification** - Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

## **School Laboratories**

The School provides computer and broadcast laboratories for student use. Adequate laboratory resources are available for students who complete their assignments in a timely manner. The hours for the computer lab in 105 Stauffer-Flint are posted outside the lab. Computers are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Hours for the Weir Production Laboratory are posted in the Dole Center. Students may sign up for editing time and equipment on a first-come, first-served basis on the online reservation system at <http://journalism.ku.edu/dole-center>. Sign-up instructions are on the website. Remember, all posted lab times are subject to change.

## **Inclement Weather**

The decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials. To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call 864-7669 (864-SNOW).

## Students with Disabilities

The Academic Achievement and Access Center, 22 Strong Hall, phone number 785-864-4064, web site <https://access.ku.edu/>, coordinates accommodations and services for KU students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability for which you request accommodation in this class, please contact the AAAC and me early in the course (within the first two weeks). The onus is on you to initiate action in a timely manner that allows for reasonable accommodation. For extended absences, in which an emergency or crisis causes you to miss three or more days of class, the Academic Achievement and Access Center can help contact your professors.

## Copying or Recording

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the instructor's intellectual property. Video and audio recording of lectures without instructor consent is prohibited. On request, the instructor usually will permit students to audiotape lectures on the condition that these audiotapes are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless the instructor gives explicit permission, recordings of lectures may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

## Commercial Note-Taking

Pursuant to the University of Kansas' [Policy on Commercial Note-Taking Ventures](#), commercial note-taking is not permitted in this course. Lecture notes and course materials may be taken for personal use, for the purpose of mastering the course material, and may not be sold to any person or entity in any form. Any student engaged in or contributing to the commercial exchange of notes or course materials will be subject to discipline, including academic misconduct charges, in accordance with University policy. **Note:** Note-taking provided by a student volunteer for a student with a disability, as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, is **not the same** as commercial note-taking and is **not** covered under this policy.

## Responsibility for the Syllabus and Course Outline

You are expected to have read the syllabus, and you will be asked to indicate in Blackboard that you have done so, that you understand the syllabus and that you accept its terms. This must be done in the first week of class or there is a 5-point deduction. It is your responsibility to keep up with the course outline. If you see an error, please let me know.

*This document is subject to updating  
to make reasonable changes that benefit students and that clarify, as the need arises.*