

JOUR 304 – Media Writing

Fall 2016

Class 4166-15691

Professor: Hong T. Vu, PhD

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Class Meetings: Mon & Wed 2:00 PM – 3:15 PM

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 on an understanding of how the purpose of the communication, the audience it targets and the medium used in conveying it 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, for print and for 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 communicating with multicultural and diverse audiences.

Required Books and Sources

- *The Associated Press Stylebook* – latest or recent edition
- 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.
- Email: The instructor will communicate by messages to your KU-registered address. It's your responsibility to keep track of them.

- Laptops: Bring your laptop or tablet to class for exercises and assignments. You can also use the classroom's desktop computers.

Grading

Each assignment will be graded on its content, organization, grammar and format. Each assignment also includes 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 deadline and/or needs more than minor revision before submission to a client or supervisor. These 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.

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.

A = 92.4 and above	C+ = 78.0-79.9%
A- = 90.0-92.3%	C = 73.0-77.9%
B+ = 88.0-89.9%	C- = 70.0-72.9%
B = 83.0-87.9	D = 60.0-69.9%
B- = 80.0-82.9%	

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points</i>
News release	75
Speech/event and rewrite	100
SRD and Creative Brief	100
Broadcast scripts	75
Profile and rewrite	100
Final project (issue/trend story)	200
Exercises & quizzes	100
Attendance/professionalism	<u>100</u>
Total	850

Attendance and Professionalism

Your attendance in J304 is mandatory. Unexcused absences lower the attendance and professionalism component of your grade. More than two unexcused absences may result in forfeiture of all professionalism points. For an excused absence, you must – at the least – inform your instructor that you will not be able to attend class. If you're sick, email or phone in sick. That is proper professional conduct. Please remember that this class starts promptly.

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 the instructor. Some instructors may simply prohibit screens.

Deadlines are crucial. If you submit an assignment late, your instructor will at least penalize the grade significantly and may refuse altogether to accept the work.

Communication

I encourage you to communicate with me about the course face-to-face during office hours, or through e-mail. If you choose the later, I will do my best to respond to email messages within 24-36 hours Monday – Friday. Please be mindful of email etiquette. Compose a brief yet informative subject line. Use a greeting, such as “Hello, Dr. Vu,” at the beginning of your message. Write the body of your message using full sentences, proper capitalization and punctuation. Explain your question or concern as completely as possible. Sign your message using your full (first and last) name.

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. Plan to work Monday through Friday.

Inclement Weather

The Pentagon does not trust your instructor with the nuclear launch codes and the University reserves the right to cancel or delay classes. KU sends text alerts when classes are canceled. To determine whether weather conditions have altered class times, call the KU snow line: (785) 864-7669 (785-864-SNOW).

Students with Disabilities

The University of Kansas is committed to helping all students learn. If you have a special need that may affect your learning, please contact your lab instructor as soon as possible. Please be aware that the KU Office of Disability Resources coordinates accommodations and services for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted this office, please do so as soon as possible.

Additional information can be found at <http://www.disability.ku.edu/~disability/>. The Office of Disability Resources (DR), 22 Strong Hall, (785) 864-2620 (v/tty), coordinates accommodations and services for KU students with disabilities. **If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in KU classes** and have not contacted DR, please do so as soon as possible. Please also contact your lab instructor privately in regard to this course.

Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification

Do not make material or facts up; do not take others' work without due credit – 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 the instructor.**

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.

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."

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.