

Cleveland State University
School of Communication

COM 225 Section 501 - MEDIA WRITING – Summer 2020 (8-week course)

Key dates

Term Begins	May 16, 2020
First Weekday Class	May 18, 2020
Last Day to Drop with Full Refund (click to view refund schedule)	May 19, 2020
Last Day to Join a Course Waitlist	May 20, 2020
Last Day to Add (CampusNet Registration)	May 21, 2020
Last Day to Drop	May 26, 2020
Course Withdrawal Period Begins - 'W' Grade Assigned	May 27, 2020
Last Day to Withdraw from Courses	June 24, 2020
Last day of classes	July 10, 2020

Class Time & Place: Online

Instructor: John Jirik, Ph.D. **Office:** MU 241

Email: j.c.jirik@csuohio.edu (I try to respond within 24 hours to emails sent Sun-Thu; I try to respond on Monday to emails sent Fri-Sun)

Phone: 216.687.6927

Office hours: Zoom, phone (until we are back on campus)

- Zoom and phone availability: Tue, Thu (1200-1400)
- Zoom ID: 970-2248-6523
- Zoom URL: <https://csuohio.zoom.us/j/97022486523>
- Phone: 216.687.6927

Texts

1) **REQUIRED:** *News Reporting & Writing* (13th ed.). Missouri Group, Bedford Saint Martin's (MPS). Available as a digital rental from the CSU bookshop. (referred to below as NRW)

2) **RECOMMENDED:** *Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*. (Any recent edition is okay). (referred to below as **APSG**)

Blackboard will host **quizzes, short essays, writing assignments, discussions** and the **syllabus** (this document). It includes the **weekly schedule, which is structured Sunday through Saturday**.

For **technical help with Blackboard**, please see the following:

<https://www.csuohio.edu/center-for-elearning/technical-support>

<https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student>

A) INTRODUCTION & EXPECTATIONS

Course level learning objectives (CLOs).

At the end of Com 225 (Media Writing), you should be able to:

- (CLO1) **report**: know how to do background research for a news story or PR (see below), make observations and record them, do interviews and verify whether information is factual, ensure observations are backed by further evidence, and know whether your information and observations are publishable as news or PR;
- (CLO2) **distinguish** news from PR (**public relations** – also known as **strategic communication**);
- (CLO3) **write in the inverted pyramid structure**, which is standard for much news and PR;
- (CLO4) **apply Associated Press style (AP style)** to correctly format news and PR stories;
- (CLO5) **identify and apply the fundamental legal and ethical codes** that inform the journalism and PR professions, and know how to apply them in your news and PR writing.

Com 225 is a **prerequisite core course** for **Journalism and Promotional Communication (JPC)** majors. Com 225 also meets the guidelines for **Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)** and may be used for WAC credit.

**** Students must complete Com 225 with a minimum grade of B- to enroll for the JPC Major sequence and/or the Science Writing Certificate sequence.**

**** Com 225 meets the criteria for WAC in the following ways:**

- 1) You will write a minimum of 3,000 words in essays and assignments;
- 2) Each longer form writing assignment will be done as a draft on which you will receive feedback before you revise it for final submission. You may do more than one draft per story, but only one draft may be counted in the final word count;
- 3) In order to receive WAC credit for Com 225, you must write at a satisfactory skill level (C or better). If your writing does not warrant a C, but you show understanding of the course material, you may be assigned a grade of D in which case WAC credit will not be received for the course.

As Com 225 is writing-intensive, consider resources that might help such as the following:

CSU Writing Center: www.csuohio.edu/writing-center/writing-center

Poynter: www.poynter.org

Nieman Foundation for Journalism: www.nieman.harvard.edu

B) ASSESSMENT (100 points) (All work must be submitted through Blackboard)

- 1) **Four 300-word writing assignments** (10 points per draft, 5 points per final; **60 points**);
- 2) **Five 100-word essays** (2 points per essay; **10 points**);
- 3) **Five 3-point quizzes** (3 points per quiz; **15 points**);
- 4) **Discussion of required reading**: Reading should be done before the topic for which it is assigned. Discussion will be online on Blackboard. You must post to a discussion to earn credit, and full credit will only be given when you engage with the assigned reading in your response. Each discussion is worth two points. You must engage in at least five discussions to potentially earn a maximum of 10 points. You are encouraged to engage in each week's discussion(s), but it is not mandatory (2 points per discussion; **10 points**);
- 5) **Journaling** throughout the semester (**5 points**);
- 6) **NO EXTRA CREDIT** is given in this class.

Grading: The following rubric will govern grading of all submitted writing:

- a) Quality of reporting (research, observations, note-taking, interviews);
- b) Content (factual, accurate, fair, the 5Ws (who, what, when, where, why and how));
- c) Structure (the inverted pyramid);
- d) Use of AP style for spelling, grammar and formatting stories.

Grades: A = 95-100, A- = 90-94, B+ = 86-89, B = 83-85, B- = 80-82, C+ = 75-79, C = 70-74, D = 60-69, F = less than 60.

Copy editing, proofreading, formatting and submission guidelines

Please copy edit and proofread your assignments before submitting them. Spelling and grammar will count in your assessment; AP style is expected.

Please **submit your writing assignments to Blackboard in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) format**, so I can mark them up and provide guidance for revision. Please run **spelling and grammar checks** on any work before submitting it.

Deadlines

Journalism is deadline-driven. Late assignments may be penalized.

Cheating and Plagiarism

(From the Policy on Academic Misconduct, section 3.1.2 of the CSU Student Conduct Code <https://www.csuohio.edu/sites/default/files/StudentCodeOfConduct.pdf>)

Academic honesty is essential to maintain the integrity of the University as an institution and to foster an environment conducive to the pursuit of knowledge. The Cleveland State University Academic Community values honesty and integrity and holds its members to high standards of ethical conduct. Academic dishonesty is, therefore, unacceptable, and students must be prepared to accept the appropriate sanctions for any dishonest academic behavior as outlined in this policy on academic misconduct. Academic misconduct refers to any fraudulent actions or behaviors that affect the evaluation of a student's academic performance or record of academic progress. It includes, but is not limited to:

Cheating: Fraudulent acquisition and/or submission of another's intellectual property. This includes but is not limited to the unauthorized giving or receiving of a copy of examination questions, the use of unauthorized or fabricated sources in carrying out assignments, and copying the examination answers of others. Cheating also means intentionally misrepresenting the source, nature, or other conditions of academic work to receive undeserved credit. Cleveland State University affirms that acts of cheating debase the academic degree awarded, have no place in the University, and are severe offenses to academic goals, objectives and the rights of fellow students. CSU does not tolerate any type of cheating and will take disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Plagiarism: Stealing and/or using the ideas or writings of another in a paper or report and claiming them as your own. This includes but is not limited to the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. (See also <https://www.csuohio.edu/writing-center/plagiarism>)

C) ADA ACCOMMODATION

The **Office of Disability services** is on Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/7568177894>
When prompted for a password, please use 301705.

They will be available Monday - Friday, 10:00am to 3pm. Note, if you cannot use the audio feature, please feel free to use the "chat" option located at the bottom of Zoom screen.

Educational access is the provision of classroom accommodations, auxiliary aids and services to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their disability. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services at (216)687-2015. The Office is located in MC 147. Accommodations need to be requested in advance and will not be granted retroactively.

See also: <https://www.csuohio.edu/disability/disability>

D) SYLLABUS AND WEEKLY SCHEDULE (BLACKBOARD)

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS; AP STYLE; THE INVERTED PYRAMID (Sat May 16 – Sat May 23)

Topic 1	Introductions, the syllabus
Discussion 1	Introductions; question about the syllabus; expectations, etc.
Topic 2	AP Style
Reading	www.apnews.com // www.ap.org (have a browse through both) About the AP (in APSG , which refers to the Associated Press Style Guide (see above RECOMMENDED text; it's also online @ www.ap.org under "About") AP statement of news values and principles (APSG, also online @ www.ap.org under "About") What's new, Key to Stylebook entries (APSG) Punctuation, Editing marks, Bibliography (APSG) (browse)
Discussion	What is AP style and why does it matter?
Quiz 1	AP Style
Essay 1	Write a short essay about the Associated Press, its history and role in news. (100+ words, due by Sat May 23)
Topic 3:	The Inverted Pyramid
Reading	The Inverted Pyramid (NRW 8)
Discussion	What is the Inverted Pyramid and how does it work for news?
Quiz 2	The Inverted Pyramid

WEEK 2: WHAT IS NEWS? NOTE TAKING (Sun May 24 – Sat May 30)

- Topic 4** **What is news?**
Reading The Nature of News (NRW 1)
Discussion What is news and what news interests you?
Quiz 3 [Do the latest New York Times News Quiz](#) (Report your score on Blackboard)
- Topic 5** **Note taking (building your own information archive)**
Reading Go online and read about Evernote, OneNote, Pocket, etc.
Some suggestions:
www.evernote.com
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evernote>
<https://www.workzone.com/blog/evernote-alternatives/>
<https://products.office.com/en-us/onenote/digital-note-taking-app>
<https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/pocket>
- Homework** Choose an archiving system and set it up. Start filling it with notes you save from the internet, news apps, etc. Archiving information from online stories, and taking notes and organizing them in an archive is a craft that will stand you well, not only in journalism, but in any part of life in which you need to refer back to notes about something.
- Assignment 1** **DRAFT** - Write an Inverted Pyramid-style story according to the rubric on the assignment in Blackboard (**300+ words, due by Sat May 30**)

WEEK 3: NEWS & PUBLIC RELATIONS (Sun May 31 – Sat June 6)

- Assignment 1** **FINAL** – Rewrite, then submit your Assignment 1 according to the guidance provided in the feedback on the draft (**300+ words, due by Sat June 6**).
- Topic 6** **How to distinguish news from public relations; how to write both**
- Reading** 1) Public Relations (NRW 18)
2) Using News Releases as Sources (NRW 6)
- Discussion** What are the similarities and differences between writing for news and public relations?
- Quiz 4** News and PR
- Assignment 2** **DRAFT** - Rewrite the provided press release as news; use the inverted pyramid and AP style in your writing (**300+ words, due on Blackboard in Word .doc or .docx format by Sat June 6**).

WEEK 4: NEWS ETHICS AND MEDIA LAW (Sun June 7 – Sat June 13)

- Assignment 2** **FINAL** - Based on the guidance provided in the feedback on your draft, rewrite then submit your Assignment 2 (**300+ words, due by Sat June 13**).
- Topic 7** **Ethics in journalism**

- Reading** 1) SPJ Code of Ethics (NRW Appendix 3)
2) Times Reporter Who Resigned Leaves Long Trail of Deception

Topic 8 Media law

Reading Media Law (NRW 19)

Discussion The Supreme Court has affirmed that “Government officials have the *absolute privilege* to say whatever they like [whether true or false] when they are acting in their official capacities... journalists have a *qualified privilege* to report on what those officials say during official proceedings.” (NRW, Ch. 19, pp. 425-6).

Quiz 5 News ethics, reporting and the law.

Essay 2 Write briefly about the case of Jayson Blair. For a bonus point, do some research and write a couple of sentences about how he dealt with the incident moving forward. **(100+ words, due by Sat June 13)**

WEEK 5: REPORTING A STORY OF YOUR CHOICE (Sun June 14 – Sat June 20)

Topic 9 What makes a good interview?

Reading Interviewing (NRW 4)

Discussion How do you prepare then conduct a news-style interview?

Topic 10 How to quote sources and attribute information

Reading Quotations and Attributions (NRW 5)

Discussion What roles can interviews play in a news story?

Assignment 3 **DRAFT** – Reported story: Choose a topic and report on it. Your story must include quotations from at least one interview. **(300+ words, due by Sat June 20)**

WEEK 6: MULTISOURCING AND VERIFICATION; WRITING TO BE READ (Sun June 21 – Sat June 27)

Assignment 3 **FINAL** - Rewrite, then submit your Assignment 3 according to the guidance provided in the feedback on the draft **(300+ words, due by Sat June 27)**.

Topic 11 What reporters do

Reading Gathering and Verifying Information (NRW 3)

Discussion What are the disciplines of multiple sourcing and verification and how do you practice them as a reporter?

Topic 12 Writing news that people want to read

Reading Writing to Be Read (NRW 9)

Discussion How to write news well

Essay 3 Summarize NRW 9 - Writing to Be Read **(100+ words, due by Sat June 27)**

WEEK 7: THE STATE OF THE NEWS INDUSTRY (Sun June 28 – Sat July 4)

Topic 13 How have economics and technology changed the news industry?

Reading The State of the News Industry (NRW 2)

Discussion Research online and read into what has happened at the “**Cleveland Plain Dealer**” and

discuss the newspaper's fate in the context of the changes in the news industry outlined in the reading (NRW 2).

Essay 4 Suggest changes to how news can be done that can help save the news industry and journalism (**100+ words, due by Sat July 4**)

Assignment 4 DRAFT – “Dear Editor...” Choose a topic that you care about and write a letter to the editor of an appropriate newspaper or online news site outlining your concerns about this topic (**300+ words, due by Sat July 4**)

WEEK 8: WRITING FOR DIGITAL MEDIA (Sun July 5 – Fri July 10)

Assignment 4 FINAL – Rewrite, then submit your Assignment 4 according to the guidance provided in the feedback on the draft (**300+ words, due by Fri July 10**).

Topic 14 What do audiences want from digital news?

Reading Writing for Digital Media (NRW 11)

Discussion What do online news audiences want? How do they want it and when do they want it?

Essay 5 Take a photograph with your phone or a camera and write for it:

- a picture caption
- an Instagram caption and
- a tweet

Upload to Blackboard on a single Word document the picture, its caption, the Instagram caption and the tweet (**Due by Fri July 10**)