

Angelina College – School of Arts and Education
COMM 2311 – Media Writing
Instructional Syllabus

I. BASIC COURSE INFORMATION:

- A. COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Fundamentals of writing for the mass media. Basic instruction in the professional methods and techniques for gathering, processing and delivering content. Emphasis is placed on development of newsgathering and writing skills in a variety of news forms, including basic news stories, opinion writing, feature writing and editorials. A comprehensive study is made of editing for print and electronic media. The students will also be exposed to headline writing and writing cutlines/captions for photographs as well as writing for broadcast and digital media. Three lecture hours and two lab hours per week. You will receive three credit hours when you successfully complete this course.
- B. INTENDED AUDIENCE:** Mass communication students who want to study journalism, photo-journalism, public relations or advertising.
- C. INSTRUCTOR:** Libby Stapleton
Office Location: Hudgins Hall, Room 102D
Office Hours: Mondays 1-4 p.m.
Wednesdays 2:45-4 p.m.
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9-9:30 a.m.
Fridays 9 a.m.-4 p.m. by appointment
Phone: 936-633-5288
E-mail address: lstapleton@angelina.edu

II. INTENDED STUDENT OUTCOMES:

- A. Core Objectives – (Interim)**
- 1. Critical Thinking Skills** – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
 - 2. Communications Skills** – to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communications
 - 3. Teamwork** – to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
 - 4. Personal Responsibility** – to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making
- B. Course learning outcomes for all sections –**
1. Demonstrate proper media writing styles and editing skills.
 2. Demonstrate effective information gathering skills and techniques
 3. Learn the importance of accuracy and working under deadlines and learn to recognize, gather and assemble news in a readable form
 4. Learn the Associated Press style rules and standard copy-editing symbols
 5. Compose news stories and other story assignments on the computers in the Publication Lab

6. Be able to modify writing styles to fit various media platforms
7. To be introduced to writing headlines and cutlines for stories
8. Demonstrate understanding of laws, ethics and responsibilities of media writing
9. Exercise critical thinking skills and communicate orally with persons interviewed for stories.

III. ASSESSMENT MEASURES OF STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

A. **Assessments for the Core Intellectual Competencies –**

1. **Critical Thinking:** Students must analyze and evaluate all of the information given to them on the different kinds of journalistic writing as well as the facts they are given in the exercises and be able to write a coherent, logical, truthful story for all of the types they write during the semester.
2. **Communication Skills:** Since this course is a writing course, students will be writing different kinds of news leads and stories, feature stories, opinions, editorials, etc. during the semester, most of which will be published in The Pacer newspaper and/or AC View magazine. Students will interview sources for the stories they write, and they will have to communicate with the members of the publication staffs about story ideas and deadlines. The students will learn the basics of writing for broadcast and digital media as well. Also, the tests contain short answer questions as well as news leads and/or news stories for the students to write.
3. **Teamwork:** The students will be expected to work along with the members of the publications staff to get ideas for stories and to meet deadlines for their stories.
4. **Personal Responsibility:** The students will learn to make ethical judgments about the stories and headlines they write.

B. **Assessments for Objectives Specific to the Course –**

1. Students will write at least 10 stories publishable in The Pacer newspaper and/or the AC View magazine. These stories are collected into a stringbook (portfolio) at the end of the semester to be graded under the criteria presented during the course.
2. The publishable stories as well as all exercises completed in the course will use Associated Press Style rules, and the students will edit the stories using the standard copy-editing symbols. Sections of all three major tests during the semester deal with AP Style and copy-editing symbols.
3. Students will be assigned different types of journalistic stories they must complete by a certain date using AP style, and they must revise and edit those stories before turning them in. Most of the stories require interviews with people involved in the events
4. Students are expected to adhere to newsroom ethics and communication law in all of the stories they write.

IV. INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES:

- A. Lectures on the designated chapters from the textbook
- B. Discussion of the reading assignments.
- C. Visual representations in the form of videos and/or examples
- D. Student performance
- E. Demonstrations

- F. Guest speaker(s) - if time allows
- G. Individual instruction as needed during the lab time

V. **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES:**

- A. **Required textbooks, recommended materials, and equipment** – The textbook for this course is titled *Writing & Reporting for the Media* (Eleventh Edition) by John R. Bender, Lucinda D. Davenport, Michael W. Drager and Fred Fedler. The students will need to buy a jump (flash or travel) drive with at least 4G of memory on which to record their exercises and stories. If the students do them at home, they must be done in Microsoft Word 10.0 or earlier (If done in Word Perfect, they must be saved on the portable drive in Rich Text Format.) and transferred to the computers in the Publication Lab.
- B. **Assignments** – Students are responsible for reading all assigned chapters in the textbook and studying for the three major tests during the semester. They will also have assignments from the chapters to complete as well as at least ten stories publishable in the school newspaper or magazine to write. (*See Course Schedule for more detail*)
- C. **Course Policies – (This course conforms to the policies of Angelina College as stated in the *Angelina College Handbook*.)**
 - 1. **Educational Accommodations** – If you have a disability (as cited in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) that may affect your participation in this class, you should see Maria Lopez or Annie Allen in Room 200 of the Student Center. At a post-secondary institution, you must self-identify as a person with a disability; Ms. Lopez and Mrs. Allen will assist you with the necessary information to do so.

Angelina College admits students without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or age. To report any complaints of discrimination related to disability, contact the Steve Hudman, dean of Student Affairs, in Room 104 of the Administration Building. You may also contact Dean Hudman by phone at 936-633-5292 or by email at shudman@angelina.edu.
 - 2. **Attendance and Tardiness** – Excessive absences are defined as three or more consecutive absences or four or more cumulative absences from regularly scheduled class periods. Virtual classes must document equivalent participation. The summer terms call for two or more consecutive or three or more cumulative absences. A three-hour night class counts as two class periods. Students will not be dropped and will be allowed to make up work for absences because of (1) College District (including early college high school) authorized and sponsored activities and (2) religious holy days. It is the student’s responsibility to arrange for make-up work with the instructor and to complete it within a reasonable time. In accordance with the Texas Education Code, each student is allowed to be absent from a class for the observance of a religious holy day. A “religious holy day” means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code. The student must notify the instructor of each class of the anticipated absence no later than the 15th calendar day after the first day of the semester. A student who is excused under this section must complete all assignments or missed examinations at the direction of the instructor.

ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY! Students are expected to

attend all classes and be on time. If you have three consecutive absences or four cumulative absences, you will be dropped from the class. If you have more than three cumulative absences, your grade may be lowered by one letter grade. Three times of being tardy to class will equal one absence. Even if you must be absent, your assignments are due on the dates assigned.

3. **Cell Phones – PLEASE TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES DURING CLASS TIME TO ALLOW ALL CLASS MEMBERS TO CONCENTRATE ON THE COURSE.** If you are texting during class, you are hurting your chances of a good grade in the class, and you may be disrupting other students in the class. If you are caught texting, you will be asked to leave class immediately, and you will receive a zero for any work that day.
4. **Tests** – Students are expected to take the three major tests on the days they are given. If an extreme emergency makes this impossible or the student has obtained permission from the instructor in advance to miss the test, the student must schedule a makeup test before the tests are returned to the other students and discussed in class.
5. **Quizzes** – Students are expected to take the three quizzes on the days they are given. **No makeups will be allowed for these** unless you have an *extreme* emergency.
6. **Deadlines** – Getting your stories in on time is extremely important. In the real world, if you do not turn in your stories by deadline, you will be fired. Please make every effort to get the assigned stories in by the deadline. If you are late turning in your stories, you will have points subtracted from your stringbook at the end of the semester.

VI. COURSE CONTENT:

This course is a practical writing course for the media. Students become reporters for the student newspaper and magazine and begin contributing stories as soon as the instructor determines they are ready for assignments. (*See Course Schedule for more details.*)

VII. EVALUATION AND GRADING:

A. Grading Criteria –

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|----|---|------------|
| 1. | Chapter assignments and lab exercises
(20 @ 10 points each) | 200 points |
| 2. | Quizzes (3 @ 20 points each) | 60 points |
| 3. | Test #1 | 100 points |
| 4. | Test #2 | 100 points |
| 5. | Stringbook (portfolio), containing a minimum of 10 stories publishable in The Pacer/AC View | 200 points |
| 6. | Comprehensive Final Exam – Tuesday, May 8 – 11 a.m.-1 p.m. | 150 points |

TOTAL POINTS 810 points

C. Determination of Grade –

1. Stringbook:
 - A = 200-160
 - B = 159-140
 - C = 139-120
 - D = 119-100
 - F = 99-0
2. Final Grade:
 - A = 810-729
 - B = 728-648
 - C = 647-567
 - D = 566-486
 - F = 485-0

VIII. SYLLABUS MODIFICATION:

The instructor may modify the provisions of the syllabus to meet individual class needs by informing the class in advance as to the changes being made.