

Spring 2005 Syllabus: JOMC 53.8

Newswriting

"A free press is not a privilege but an organic necessity in a great society..."

– Walter Lippmann, 1965

Tuesday and Thursday, 2 - 4:45 p.m. 58 Carroll Hall

Jock Lauterer

Lecturer

213 Carroll Hall

W: 962-6421

H: 968-1797

jock@email.unc.edu

Office Hours: Whenever my door is open.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: NEWSWRITING

JOMC 53 concentrates on teaching students how to gather and organize information for news articles and how to write according to acceptable professional standards under deadline pressure. Students interested in any number of careers in communications must be able to write with care and precision regardless whether their intended careers are in newspaper/magazine journalism, advertising, public relations, broadcast journalism or photojournalism. Consequently, we will focus on basic newswriting. Students will learn about and practice writing different types of news stories and their respective "ledes." Careful attention is paid to correct use of the language, with considerable emphasis on spelling and grammar, newswriting style consistency, accuracy and good writing.

TEXTBOOKS

REACHING AUDIENCES, A Guide to Media Writing, 3rd. ed.

By Jan Johnson Yopp and Katherine C. McAdams

Associated Press Stylebook (2004 ed.)

UNC-CH School of Journalism and Mass Communication Stylebook.

ATTENDANCE, ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES

Student journalists are expected to assume a professional attitude about their work in this class. Because most of the work in this course is done in class, attendance is mandatory.

Students in this class will be treated as members of a working newspaper staff, and every attempt will be made to create a realistic working newsroom atmosphere. Therefore, deadlines in this class will be as sacred as they are in the real world of journalism. No late assignments will be accepted without a doctor's excuse.

Your final grade will reflect your class attendance since **no late work will be accepted** (except under the direst of circumstances. The instructor reserves the right to dock the work one letter grade for every 24 hours.) That means you cannot make up an assignment, an unannounced in-class exercise or quiz **UNLESS YOU NOTIFY ME AHEAD OF TIME**, or if you provide an official note detailing your medical distress. If you miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what material was covered, as well as the assigned readings.

You will be graded on stories written in class under time and length limitations so that you will become accustomed to working under deadline pressure. All written assignments for this course must be typed (or printed from a computer file) and double-spaced. Please use Ariel, a standard 12-point font (no all-caps fonts).

Note: Technical problems will NOT be accepted as an excuse for late work. Just because we're using high-tech computers and printers doesn't excuse us from making deadlines. Young reporters must learn that Murphy's Law (Everything that can go wrong will go wrong in direct proportion to how badly you need it) applies to this class, and indeed, to our entire industry.

In short: if your computer mysteriously eats your disk or your printer decides it's having a bad day, as far as your editor is concerned, that's just a variation of "My Dog Ate My Homework."

NOTETAKING

Every college student in the “Information Age” needs to be able to take fast, accurate notes – but this skill is especially critical for people going into the communications industry.

You will be expected to take at least **two full pages of notes per class** in a reporter's notebook which must be brought to every class. At unannounced times these **notebooks will be collected** and graded for content.

ACCURACY

J-53 is based on standards expected by the communications professions, with accuracy being paramount. Students will demonstrate skill with basic factual information such as names, addresses, dates and figures. Because nothing erodes media credibility faster than factual errors, they will not be tolerated. To allow students time to become familiar with the standards of verification and accuracy expected of journalists, we will ease into the following system: for the first five weeks of the class, each major factual error (such as incorrectly naming a subject's hometown, misquoting someone, or misspelling a name on first reference) will result in **25 points** being deducted from the paper's total grade. Thereafter, any major factual error will result in an **automatic grade of 50** on that particular assignment.

NEWS AWARENESS

Journalism students are expected to stay abreast of local, regional, state, national and world events by reading *a local daily* each day. Students should also be familiar with a national newsweekly (Time, Newsweek, etc.). To ensure that students maintain a broad news awareness and develop a world perspective, the instructor will give occasional quizzes based on the week's news.

ASSIGNED READING

You will be responsible for the material in the reading assignment in the **Yopp and McAdams** book for that week as listed in the week-by-week guide.

THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Our “beat” this spring will be the public service activities of UNC-CH students, most notably the UNC Dance Marathon. Students will write a story and make a photograph for a story/photo package about a single dancer. That story will be

targeted to the hometown newspaper of that particular dancer. This component will count as 10 percent of the final grade.

GRADING

We will use a 10-point scale for grading. Graded papers will be returned and critiqued at the next class period in order that students may learn from past errors and not repeat them. Reviewing graded papers may sound (and feel) harsh, but it is a valuable learning experience. The instructor will be careful to indicate specific problems with the following abbreviations:

Ag	Agreement error
AP	Associated Press style error
Awk	Awkward phrasing
Gr	Grammatical error
Punc	Punctuation error
Red	Redundancy
Sp	Spelling error
Tense	Incorrect verb tense
Tr	Transition problem
WC	Improper Word Choice
VPR	Vague Pronoun Reference

Final class grades will be compiled using the following formula:

Daily class assignments and writing	40 percent
Quizzes (news and book)	10 percent
Dance Marathon story	10 percent
Spelling and Grammar Exam score	10 percent
First competency exam	10 percent
Second competency exam	10 percent
Final exam	10 percent

CLASS ETIQUETTE

A newsroom is like an orchestra or a band. Everybody in the band may play a different instrument, but we all want to sound good together. Similarly, learning to write well demands respect. So, some basic rules of conduct are in order.

- No cell phones. If yours rings, you will be asked to leave class and you will receive no credit for work done that day in class.
 - No surfing the Web or e-mail during class/lectures.
 - Monitors will be turned OFF during lectures/class unless we're writing.
-

CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan. 13 Thurs. DESIRE? "I guess they just didn't want it bad enough." and "Because we wanted it badder than they did."

File cards with info on each student.
How this lab works: Fred Thomsen.
The team concept of the newsroom/classroom.
Our beat: Dance Marathon at UNC-Chapel Hill.
Syllabus and books.
The Name Game.

Assign: Martin Luther King Jr. Day story, Jan. 17.

Jan. 17 Mon. Go cover MLK Day speech/event.

Jan. 18 Tues. Interviewing skills.

Brainstorming, then write in-class: M.L. King Jr. story.

News Judgment; Factors:
importance, audience, impact, proximity,
conflict, oddity, magnitude, timeliness
and prominence.

Discussion of the AP and "style" and how a
newsroom works.

AP Style intro and copyediting in class.

Alert: First Mid-Week Special, Grammar, 4 p.m. 111
Carroll.

Jan. 20 Thurs. Winners and Sinners: M.L. King Jr. story.

Option: Geography for Journalists: Bill and Scotty's

Most Excellent State.

N.C.. \$1 million dollar lottery story.
Each student has 20 minutes to interview a partner, and then 40 minutes to write the story. (page 5)

Jan. 25 Tues.

New Lede Lecture: Roy Williams.

Winners and Sinners: Lottery ledes — formatting, copyediting, AP style, why we write the way we write — and objectivity.

Notetaking. Speech story coverage.

Handout: Copy editing.

Jan 27 Thurs.

Video: “The Black Press, Soldiers Without Swords.”

Assign: bring in lede examples next time.

Feb. 1 Tues.

Book quiz: 1-4.

Write: Jamie the Dog.

MARATHON assignments and org'ing.

Feb. 3 Thurs.

WS: Jamie the Dog.
Lecture on the Lede, the Inverted Pyramid with handouts.

Time Line, Tonto's Rule, the Greer Scale.
News is Like a Hurricane/Tsunami.

Different styles of stories in the media, beginning with print: straight news, news feature, feature, sports sports feature, editorial, column, letters to the editor.

Attribution lecture and ex.

Feb. 8 Tues. Spelling and Grammar Exam in class.

Option: Discuss: lede examples brought in.

Feb. 10 Thurs. **6**
Show: Woody on Interviewing

Option: Write Booze and Babies.

Take-home or in-class AP exercise (Jaws).

Point-and-Shoot 101

Feb. 15 Tues. Storytelling: Marty.

WS: Booze and Babies.

Collect AP ex.

Simplicity lecture, slides, ex.
edit, fat in the copy, gobbledygook, jargon,
WC, slang, active-passive, redundancy, Kiss
and Tonto's Rule.

Marathon progress reports.

Feb. 17 Thurs Fetzer Gym Color Story Exercise option 1.

Video: Charles Kuralt and enterprise reporting.

Final DMO5 prep.

Friday, Feb. 18, –
Saturday, Feb. 19.

UNC DANCE MARATHON 2005.

Feb. 22 Tues. Marathon story and photo due: work day for editing in-class, scanning photos and general org'ing.

Feb. 24 Thurs Write Boxing Speech; peer evaluations.

7

March 1 Tues. Comp 1.

Assign: Shadowing Ex.

March 3 Thurs. Write: Library Arrests.

March 8 Tues. Write: Hairy Cop.
WS: Hairy Cop.

March 10 Thurs. Obituaries lecture and ex. in class.

SPRINGBREAKPRINGBREAKSPRINGBREAKSPRINGBREAKSPRINGBREAK

Mar. 22 Tues. Slides: History of American Newspaper Graphics.

Write: Bulletproof Vest.

Mar. 24 Thurs. Write: Booze and Babies.

Mar. 29 Tues. Write: Hold-Up

March 31 Thurs. Video: "Absence of Malice."

April 5 Tues. Spelling and Grammar Exam in class.
"¿Hablamos Espanol?"

April 7 Thurs. Comp 2 review session.

April 12 Tues. Comp 2
Writing exercise.

April 14 Thurs. Write: Mario's Fire.

April 19 Tues. Write: The Running Story.

April 21 Thurs. Shadowing exercises due; presentations.

April 26 Tues. Final Exam Study Guide: Spearman speech video.
Evaluations.

April 28 Thurs. Final Exam in class.
