



# Media Writing

JOUR 2310.001 F 2011

**Journalists deal only with the truth.  
Present the facts – or nothing. Never ever make things up.**

**Class:** M,W 9 a.m. to 10:20 p.m. GAB 112  
**Instructor:** Neil Foote  
**Phone:** 214.448.3765 (Emergencies only)  
**E-mail:** foote@unt.edu  
**Lab:** W 3 to 4:50 p.m. GAB 112  
**TA:** Graham White, gwhite8@hotmail.com

**Office hours:**

Immediately after class or  
by appointment.

**Course objectives:** To learn the basics of writing for several media, including newspapers, the World Wide Web, broadcast news (radio and TV) and public relations. By the end of this course you should be able to research, report and write a news story for several platforms. You will learn to write in a concise, accurate and fair manner, and to work under deadline. You also will brush up your grammar, spelling and punctuation skills, and familiarize yourself with Associated Press style and broadcast writing style.

After completing the course, you should be able to:

- Define news as it is understood by professional journalists and public relations professionals.
- Describe the operation of typical news organizations.
- Understand and use the AP and NT Daily stylebooks.
- Conduct a news interview.
- Write a coherent news story for several media platforms under deadline pressure.
- Describe the main ethical concerns of journalists and public relations professionals.
- Describe the main legal concerns of journalists and public relations professionals.
- Learn to be sensitive about cultural, ethnic, racial and gender issues.

**Reading requirements:**

- ✓ *Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method*, Sixth Edition, by Carole Rich
- ✓ Student Workbook for *Writing and Reporting News* (*Pac News Scene*, online only, \$19.95)
- ✓ *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual*.
- ✓ *The NT Daily Stylebook*. (Copies are available in the classroom.)
- ✓ Denton Record-Chronicle (available on class days).
- ✓ North Texas Daily (print edition on campus Tuesday through Friday and online at [ntdaily.com](http://ntdaily.com).)



You should closely follow current events by reading a variety of news publications, especially local newspapers such as the North Texas Daily, Denton Record-Chronicle, Dallas Morning News and Fort Worth Star-Telegram. You can read them online or visit any reputable news Web sites to get information. In addition, you should watch and listen to broadcast news on television and radio as part of your daily routine. Your quizzes will include major current events mentioned in the news.

**Textbook policy**

The Mayborn School of Journalism doesn't require students to purchase textbooks from the University Bookstore. Many are available through other bookstores or online.

**Attendance:** You must attend class and lab sessions. Lab exercises comprise nearly half of your grade. Homework prepares you for labs. Activities during lectures, such as quizzes and other in-class assignments, also represent a major portion of your overall grade. Those who miss a quiz or in-class assignment will receive a zero on that activity and cannot make it up. Labs cannot be made up without prior approval by the instructor.

- Four absences in the course is the limit without penalty toward your final grade, unless you have communicated with me from the beginning about an extraordinary problem. Coming to class late or leaving early may constitute an absence for that day. This is a seminar course, and it requires your attendance and participation each class meeting.



Treat this class as if it is a job. You are expected to arrive on time and to turn in work on time. If you must miss class or lab, contact your instructor and or teaching assistant in advance, just as you would your editor or boss at work.

Acceptable reasons for missing class include a verifiable illness, family emergency or religious holiday. Other situations are subject to the instructor's judgment. Documentation of why you missed class (a physician's note or a note from a relative explaining the emergency) should include a phone number so the instructor may verify the note. Documentation must be turned in during the class period immediately following the absence(s). Contacting the instructor ahead of time will almost always help your case.

**Quizzes:** You will have a series of open-book quizzes on AP style, grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and closed-book quizzes on news events and textbook readings. News questions will be based on NT Daily reports and online news from [dfw.cbslocal.com](http://dfw.cbslocal.com), [dallasnews.com](http://dallasnews.com) and [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com).

**Lab assignments:** Each week you will be assigned exercises due by the end of the lab period. You will be allowed to use your AP stylebook and textbook, so bring them to class and to lab. Always type and double-space lab assignments. Most will come from the online workbook.

**Class assignments:** You will have numerous homework assignments, three out-of-class news stories and a number of in-class exercises throughout the semester. Late assignments will be penalized one letter grade for every day they are late, with none accepted after one week.

**Source sheets:** For stories that involve interviews, attach a page listing each source, the date you interviewed each person and his or her contact information (preferably both phone numbers and e-mail addresses). Stories without source sheets will not be accepted and penalized one grade letter for each class session they are late. The instructor will contact sources to verify information in your stories.

**Guest speakers:** Professional journalists and other relevant speakers may be brought into class during the semester. A one-page summary of the speaker's presentation will be due at the start of the next class.

**Grading:** Because this is a skills course, the bulk of your grade will be determined by lab writing exercises and your three out-of-class story assignments. Your grade is derived from the points you earn. However, if you demonstrate exceptional improvement and effort during the semester, the instructor will consider raising a borderline grade to the next highest level, as long as all assignments were completed throughout the semester.

**Academic Honesty:** When you submit work for this class, that is the same as making a statement that you have produced the work yourself, in its entirety. Plagiarism, fabrication, copyright infringement, and similar uses of other people's work are unacceptable.

### Your grade

Attendance/homework: **10%**  
Lab assignments: **40%**  
News story: **10%**  
Speech story: **8%**  
Profile: **8%**  
Quizzes: **8%**  
Midterm: **8%**  
Final exam: **8%**





Plagiarism, in a nutshell, is using other people's written words as your own. Some people consider the use of 7-10 words in a row, copied from another source, as plagiarism. Be sure to include citations when using other people's writing, because plagiarism is a serious offense in any discipline, especially in journalism. It is a firing offense in the professional world.



Any situations involving potential academic dishonesty will be handled through procedures established by the UNT Office of Academic Integrity. The process also includes the opportunity for students to appeal the outcome. Read specific procedures at <http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>

You should never quote friends or family members in news stories unless you have advance permission from the instructor. Most lab assignments for this class will not require original reporting because you will be furnished with the information you need. But the stories you pursue independently outside of class (the speech, profile and news stories) should rely entirely on YOUR OWN reporting.



If you must include information reported by another journalistic outlet (rarely, because you can almost always a way to find the information yourself), cite the publication. The instructor reserves the right to contact sources listed on your source sheet and will perform spot checks throughout the semester.

**Saving your work:** You cannot save material on the computers in the lab. Make copies of all of your work on a CD or thumb drive, or by e-mailing finished assignments to yourself. Save all graded copies of your work so you can resolve any potential discrepancy between the grade you receive and your own calculations.

### Disability Accommodation

The School of Journalism cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodations to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students. If you have not registered with ODA, please do so and present your written accommodation request to me by the 12th day of class.

## JRN 2310 Tentative Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

**Week 1 (Aug. 29, 31): Introduction to class, assessment, intro to AP style, personal goals; Understanding news**  
Read Chapter 1: Changing Concepts of News. AP Style; sentence structure.

**Week 2 (Sept. 7): Understanding news Part II**

Read Chapter 2: Blogs. Learning news judgment, multiple audiences and methods of delivery. AP style exercise.

**Lab 1** (Sept. 7)

**Week 3 (Sept. 12, 14): The Basic News Story; Curiosity and Story Ideas**

Read Chapter 3: The Basic News Story. Discussion on inverted pyramid, leads, nut graphs, introduction to Associated Press style, quotes and attribution.

Read Chapter 5: Vivid writing and action, "so what" test; tickle files; story ideas.

**Lab 2** (Sept. 14)

**Week 4 (Sept. 19, 21): Sources and Online Research**

Read Chapter 6: Sources, online research, library research, databases, public records, FOI and Texas Open Records, and Open Meetings Acts.

**Lab 3** (Sept. 21)

**Week 5 (Sept. 26, 28): Interviewing Techniques**

Read Chapter 7: Listening, note-taking, taping, question strategies, sensitivity, e-mail interviews,

phone interviews and in-person interviews.

**Lab 4** (Sept. 28)

**Week 6 (Oct. 3, 5): Leads and Nut Graphs**

\*\* News story idea and three types of sources due at beginning of class.



Read Chapter 8: Specific strategies for leads and nut graphs, different types of leads and anecdotal leads.

**Lab 5** (Oct. 5)

**Week 7 (Oct. 10, 12): Story Forms**

*\*\* News story draft due at beginning of class*

Read Chapter 10: Summary leads, inverted pyramid, WSJ style and hour-glass story forms.

\* Mid-semester review last 15 minutes of Wednesday class.

**Lab 6** (Oct. 12)

**Week 8 (Oct. 17, 19) Profiles and obituaries**

**Monday: Midterm exam**

**Wednesday:** Read Chapter 18: Basic elements of profiles, obits. Guidelines for obits. How to research and write a biographical news-style profile.

**Lab 7** (Oct. 19)

**Week 9 (Oct. 24, 26): Speeches, news conferences and meetings**

*\*\* Revised news story due at beginning of class*

*\*\* Profile proposal due at Monday class start.*

Read Chapter 20: Speeches, news conferences and meetings. Researching in advance, facts to include, sources and getting reaction. (*\*\* After the class session, identify and cover a speech on your own. Three-source story is due the following class period.*)

**Lab 8** (Oct. 26)

**Week 10 (Oct. 31, Nov. 2): Public relations writing**

Read Chapter 14: What's the difference between news writing and public relations writing? Writing news releases, constructing media kits and nonprofit vs. corporate PR.

**Lab 9** (Nov. 2)

**Week 11 (Nov. 7, 9):**

*\*\*3 copies of profile draft due at class start for student workshopping.*

Read Chapter 12: Print writing vs. broadcast writing. Emphasis on visuals, broadcast story structure, active verbs, broadcast terms.

**Lab 10** (Nov. 9)



**Week 12 (Nov. 14, 16.): Online Journalism and Convergent Media Writing**

*\*\* Final version of profile due at class start.*

Read Chapter 4: Immediacy; producing for print, broadcast and the Web.

Read Chapter 13: Immediacy, interactivity, multimedia reporting, writing for the Web, story structure.

**Lab 11** (Nov. 16)



**Week 13 (Nov. 21, 23): Media Ethics; Multicultural Sensitivity**

Read Chapters 16 and 17: Plagiarism, fabrication, privacy issues, ethical reasoning, codes of ethics; multiculturalism, gender considerations, writing about special groups.

**Lab 12** (Nov. 23): The movie "Shattered Glass" and response paper.

**Week 14 (Nov. 28, 30): Accuracy and law**

Read Chapter 15: Libel, privacy, public and private figures, corrections, reporter privilege and online legal issues.

**Lab 13** (Nov. 30)

**Week 15 (Dec. 5, 7): Survival Math and review**

Survival math, graphics, review; review for final exam last 20 minutes of class

Final exam: TBD

## **JOURNALISM REQUIREMENTS & GUIDELINES**

For journalism majors, not minors: This is a pre-major class. Enrollment in this class means that you are in pre-major status, not major status. When you have completed this course and others in your pre-major, then you must apply to become a major and therefore have access to upper-level journalism courses. If you have questions about what counts in your pre-major, please see an adviser.

### **Journalism Course Registration**

1. The Mayborn School of Journalism, in conjunction with the Registrar's Office, has eliminated the need for individual class codes for the majority of journalism courses. Registration will begin on the dates noted in the schedule of classes each semester. The system is a live, first come/first serve program; thus, we are unable to maintain the traditional waiting list as has been done previously.
2. By registering for this course, you are stating that you have taken the required prerequisites according to your catalog year and major/minor status. If the instructor later determines that you haven't taken and passed these requirements, then you may be dropped at any point in the semester. If you have questions about your prerequisites, please see an adviser.
3. A journalism major enrolled in any restricted 3000 and 4000 level classes must have taken and passed the GSP test, all pre-major courses, and Math 1680 and also have applied for major status. Students must earn and maintain a 2.5 UNT and/or overall GPA (depending upon catalog year) to be eligible for major-level courses. **Pre-majors** must file a formal application for major status in the final semester of pre-major status to be eligible for early registration of major-level classes in the following semester.

### **Re-taking Failed Courses**

Students will not be allowed to automatically take a failed journalism course more than two times. Once you have failed a journalism course twice, you will not be allowed to enroll in that course for 12 months. Once you have waited 12 months after failing a course twice, you may make an appeal to the professor teaching the course to be allowed to enroll a third time.

### **SETE**

The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a university-wide online evaluation and a requirement for all UNT classes. The Mayborn School of Journalism needs your input to improve our teaching and curriculum. This short survey will be available at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to comment on how this class is taught. Prompt completion of the SETE will mean earlier access to final semester grades. You're a critical part of our growth and success. We look forward to your input through SETE.

### **First Class Day Attendance**

Journalism instructors reserve the right to drop any student who does not attend the first class day of the semester.

### **Acceptable Student Behavior**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at [www.unt.edu/csr](http://www.unt.edu/csr)

### **Mayborn School of Journalism Academic Integrity Policy**

The codes of ethics from the Society of Professional Journalists, American Advertising Federation and Public Relations Society of America address truth and honesty. The Mayborn School of Journalism embraces these tenets and believes that academic dishonesty of any kind – including plagiarism and fabrication – is incongruent with all areas of journalism. The school’s policy aligns with UNT Policy 18.1.16 and requires reporting any act of academic dishonesty to the Office for Academic Integrity for investigation. If the student has a previous confirmed offense (whether the first offense was in the journalism school or another university department) and the student is found to have committed another offense, the department will request the additional sanction of removing the student from the Mayborn School of Journalism. The student may appeal to the Office for Academic Integrity, which ensures due process and allows the student to remain in class pending the appeal.

## Statement of Student Learning Outcomes, UNT Journalism

Since 1969, the UNT Department of Journalism (Mayborn School of Journalism effective September 1, 2009) has been accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. This national accreditation also extends to the Mayborn Graduate Institute of Journalism, the only accredited professional master’s program in Texas.

About one-fourth of all journalism and mass communication programs in the United States are accredited by ACEJMC. National accreditation enhances your education here, because it certifies that the department and graduate institute adhere to many standards established by the council. Among these standards are student learning outcomes, covered by journalism courses in all sequences.

This course, JOUR 2310, will help to meet the student learning outcomes that have been checked by your professor, Kathie Hinnen.

Each graduate must:

1.  Understand and apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practice;
2.  Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
3.  Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications;
4.  Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
5.  Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
6.  Think critically, creatively and independently;

7.  Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
8.  Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
9.  Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
10.  Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
11.  Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

