**JOUR 2310 Introduction to Media Writing**

**Fall 2025**

***Syllabus content subject to change.***

**Professor** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
**TA** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Classroom** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Class times** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Lab times \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Lab location \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Office hours: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Contact:**

Always use the Canvas email system for both the professor and the teaching assistant.  Email sent to the unt.edu system will not be read.

* I will do my best to respond to Canvas emails within 24 hours - except on weekends. Please do not email about assignments within 24 hours of their deadline; I may not be able to respond before the assignment is due.

**Final exam:**

Check the date and time with UNT Registrar. As of May 2025, these dates have not been set.

#### ****Required textbooks:****

* "Handbook of Independent Journalism" by Deborah Potter (You can access this FREE as [a digital textbook.](https://publications.america.gov/handbook-of-independent-journalism-handbook-series/)[)](https://publications.america.gov/publication/handbook-of-independent-journalism-handbook-series/)
  + Download the [PDF version.](file:////courses/58843/files/15125591%3fwrap=1)
* 2024-2026 Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual.(You can access this **FREE** via the [UNT library website.)](https://www-apstylebook-com.libproxy.library.unt.edu/university-of-north-texas-libraries)
* LinkedIn Learning Grammar Fundamentals by Mignon Fogarty. (You can access this [FREE as a UNT student](https://it.unt.edu/LinkedInLearning).)

**COURSE INFORMATION**

This three-credit course covers the principles and procedures used by professionals to communicate across all media platforms – from traditional mass media formats such as digital/print news, public relations and marketing.

It meets three times a week - two days for lessons and one day for lab. Check this for your section.

This is an introductory class, but it is not an easy class. The skills you learn here are necessary for all future journalism classes, so please pay careful attention to the lessons and give yourself adequate time to do the assignments. Grammar, punctuation and language basics used by media writers will be stressed.

* Students will discover methods to define media audiences and connect with them across multiple platforms.
* Students will explore methods to write on deadline, interview sources and report accurate information for the web, social media, broadcast and print.
* Students will be introduced to law and ethics in media writing. Media literacy today is critical to the knowledge-base of a media writer. Therefore, issues in journalism, advertising and public relations will be examined periodically during this course.

#### ****Course prerequisites****

* Successful completion of two terms/semesters of first-year English; journalism major or minor status; consent of school.
* For journalism majors, not minors: This is a foundational class. Once you have completed all foundational requirements, you will have access to upper-level journalism courses after visiting the Office of Student Advising. If you have questions about what your foundational requirements are, please see an adviser.

#### ****Course objectives and student learning outcomes****

Students will understand and apply the basic writing techniques used by journalists and related communication professionals and:

* 1. Define news and news values as they are understood by professional broadcast, print and digital journalists as well as public relations professionals.
  2. Determine and maintain an audience for journalistic, advertising or PR use.
  3. Understand and use the AP Stylebook as well as proper English grammar, spelling, punctuation and syntax.
  4. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work. For JOUR 2310, this involves using publications, public records, databases and interviews.
  5. Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
  6. Write coherent articles for varying media platforms under deadline pressure.
  7. Describe the main legal concerns of journalists, advertising professionals and public relations professionals.
  8. Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
  9. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles (for advertising, PR and journalism) and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
  10. Think critically, creatively and independently.
  11. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
  12. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

#### About course material

#### Materials used in connection with this course are subject to copyright protection. Materials may include, but are not limited to: documents, assignments, slides, images, audio, and video. Course materials are only for the use of students enrolled in this course, for purposes associated with this course, and may not be shared to third parties without official authorization. Unauthorized retention, duplication, distribution, or modification of copyrighted materials is strictly prohibited by law. Thanks for being a diligent student and reading the syllabus. If you're the first person to use Canvas email to send me a photo of your favorite zoo animal, you'll get a $6 Starbucks gift card For more information, visit the UNT Policy office or Copyright.gov. In addition, sharing such information on websites or in other contexts may be considered a violation of the [UNT Academic Integrity Policy](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fvpaa.unt.edu%2Fss%2Fintegrity&data=05%7C02%7CKimberly.Keller%40unt.edu%7C061175afdd7241a7deb808dcc796593c%7C70de199207c6480fa318a1afcba03983%7C0%7C0%7C638604695760497417%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=KROgBEAqDJLpRxvSs%2FsF%2BFuJtcBPHOvwgkQyeCWA6Rs%3D&reserved=0)

#### ****Academic honesty****

Honesty is critical is this profession - and in this class. Use your own words. Don't cheat.

In this course, you must use quotation marks and refer to the original source for a string of seven or more consecutive words from other people’s work. You also must not use an extensive quote or too many quotes. Always produce your original work.

Submitting your work to this class is equivalent to stating that you have produced the entire work by yourself and you have not previously produced this work to submit to another class or any other outlet. Plagiarism, fabrication, copyright infringement, and similar uses of other people’s work are unacceptable, leading to serious consequences for you. [Read UNT Policy No. 06.003 about Student Academic Integrity](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003)

Plagiarism, which in a nutshell, is using other people’s work as your own, is a serious offense in any discipline and a firing offense in the professional world. Any situations involving potential academic dishonesty will be reported and handled through [procedures established by the UNT Office of Academic Integrity.](https://vpaa.unt.edu/fs/resources/academic/integrity)  
 **Use of AI is absolutely prohibited in this class**

All work submitted for this class must be your original work—that is, it cannot have been published already online, submitted for any other class, or created or adjusted by generative AI. Remember that many grammar-checking, paraphrasing, word processing programs also employ generative AI.

TurnItin will flag instances of plagiarism as well as the use of generative AI. The use of generative AI in this class, unless specified in the instructions of an assignment, will be considered a form of cheating, and will be assigned the same penalties as cheating. The UNT Academic Integrity Policy may be found here:  <https://vpaa.unt.edu/ss/integrity>

#### ****Accessing your grade****

You are encouraged to keep up with your grade via Canvas. Please refer to this throughout the course of the semester to track your progress. You will be required to frequently check Canvas for important announcements throughout the week.

**Preparation and Participation**

I want students to be actively involved in class and to feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions. Please read, do the homework and be prepared to share your insights/reactions in class. Be respectful of others’ thoughts, even if you do not agree.

Be respectful when others are talking during discussions or working on assignments. Stay off your cell phone during class.

In the event you are unable to attend class, please ask a classmate for an update on what was covered in class and for her/his notes to complement the lecture.

#### ****Attendance****

Treat this class as your job. You are expected to arrive on time and to meet all deadlines. You **must**attend class and lab sessions. Tardiness or leaving early may constitute an absence for that day.

If you must miss or missed a class for an excused absence, (i.e. serious illness, participation in an official university function, religious observance, etc.) **you must submit third-party documentation**within a week of your absence. Please see the UNT policy for details. While issues such as lack of sleep, computer glitches, car trouble or work schedules are awful, they are not excused absences.  
  
You will have one week to make up work for an excused absence once that documentation is received. It is your responsibility to follow-up on this.

Life happens, so you will be granted TWO free unexcused absences during the course of the semester without harm to your final grade. If you miss more than twice – or miss without a university-approved excuse – then your final grade will be impacted with a 5-point penalty for each absence. This pertains to both class meetings and labs; however, please note that you CANNOT make up missed work for an unexcused absence.

Class meetings and labs are NOT recorded, so please get notes on what you missed from a classmate.

This is the attendance policy I use. Feel free to adjust as needed. This section may have to be updated, depending on new UNT policies.

#### ****Assignment submission****

The assignments in this class will be turned in to Canvas. No assignments will be accepted if they are sent by email outside of Canvas. No exceptions. Students must be present in the Friday labs to get credit for lab assignments.

#### ****Deadlines and late work****

This class is designed to get you ready to work in the journalism or public relations fields. These professionals absolutely must meet deadlines, and so must you. Late work is NOT accepted. Assignments are due on or before the deadline– even if you are absent.

#### ****Netiquette****

Netiquette, or online etiquette, refers to the way students are expected to interact with each other and with their instructors online.  Learn more with this[quick guide.](file:////courses/35051/files/7025030/download%3fwrap=1)

#### ****Technology requirements****

You must have a working computer with a keyboard, webcam and consistent high-speed internet access during the course of the semester. This is a writing-intensive course, so having a keyboard on which to write your stories is necessary.  
  
If you encounter any tech problems, please reach out to the Canvas student help desk. The link is included in the lefthand course menu. Your professor cannot assist with tech issues.

### **COURSE CONTENT**

To be successful in this class, keep up with readings and turn in all assignments on time. Your final grade is based on the total score of possible points, allocated as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **In-class writing** | 20 points | There are two in-class writing assignments.  Each is worth 10 points.  These cannot be made up. |
| **Lesson quizzes** | 130 points | There are 14 quizzes based on the weekly readings and lectures.  Each is worth 10 points.  Your lowest score will be dropped. |
| **Pitch discussions** | 45 points | You will pitch three ideas and identify sources for your articles |
| **Grammar and AP Style quizzes** | 300 points | There are 11 quizzes based on the weekly grammar lessons and AP Style material.  Each is worth 30 points.  Your lowest score will be dropped. |
| **Weekly labs** | 300 points | There are 13 weekly labs based on the material covered in the modules.  Each is worth 25 points.  Your lowest score will be dropped. |
| **Articles** | 300 points | There are three articles: a news story about a public meeting, a feature story and an article  about diversity.  Each is worth 100 points. |
| **Final** | 100 points | The final exam will cover grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. |

### **GRADING**

Your final grade is based on the total number of points you accumulate throughout the semester. Journalism majors and minors must earn a minimum of a C to successfully complete this course.

* A: (90-100%) - Outstanding, excellent work. The student performs well above the minimum criteria.
* B: (80-89.99%) - Good, impressive work. The student performs above the minimum criteria.
* C:  (70 to 79.99%) - Solid, college-level work. The student meets the minimum criteria of the assignment.
* D: (60-69.99%)- Below average work. The student fails to meet the minimum criteria
* F: (0-59.99%) - Sub-par work. The student fails to meet the minimum criteria

#### ****Other Grading Information****

* **Turn-around time:**I aim to return graded work to you within two weeks of the due date. When this is not possible, I will send an announcement to the class.
* **Grade disputes:**You are required to wait 24 hours before contacting me to dispute a grade. Within that time, I expect that you will review the assignment details and reflect on the quality of the work you turned in. If you would still like to meet, email me to set up a meeting (I cannot discuss grades over email). You should come to our scheduled meeting with specific examples that demonstrate that you earned a higher grade than you received. If you miss your scheduled meeting, you forfeit your right to a grade dispute. If you do not contact me to schedule a meeting within seven days of receiving your grade, you also forfeit your right to a grade dispute.
* **Extra credit opportunities:**There are a few extra credit opportunities in the course, so please take full advantage of them. Because these items are available to help boost your grade, I do not round up grades at the end of the semester, and I do not respond to requests asking for this consideration. In the past, all of the JOUR 2310 professors have offered extra credit via the syllabus quiz and the introduction bio. We also offered up to 10 points if students attended (and wrote a one-page summary) about a journalism student org meeting that featured a speaker. Ten points was also available if the student was published during the semester The cap for all extra credit is 30 points.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

This is subject to change pending the needs of the class. There is a lesson quiz, grammar/AP Style quiz and lab due every week. Please see the Canvas modules for full and up-to-date information.

* Week 1: Overview, journalistic writing and audiences
* Week 2: What is news
* Week 3: Research and sources
* Week 4: Leads and inverted pyramid
* Week 5: Interviewing
* Week 6: Quotes, attribution and transitions
* Week 7: Parts of a news story and how to cover meetings
* Week 8: GSP review
* Week 9: Editing
* Week 10: Diversity and data journalism
* Week 11: Feature stories
* Week 12: Writing for online audiences
* Week 13: Ethics
* Week 14: Writing for broadcast journalism
* Week 15: No class. Thanksgiving break.
* Week 16: Legal issues
* Week 17: Finals

**Mayborn Syllabus Statements (Add these to sheet AND online syllabus)**