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

JOUR 2320.01          News Reporting and Writing           Spring 2010

Instructor: Kathie Hinnen
Class: T/TR 11 a.m.-12:20 p.m. GAB 112
Lab: T/TR 1-2:50 p.m. GAB 112
TA’s: Rebecca Hoeffner, rebeccahoeffner@gmail.com
      Sarah Perry, sarahperry24@hotmail.com

Books and required reading:
✓ North Texas Daily newspaper (every day!)
✓ Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method, Sixth Edition,
  by Carole Rich
✓ AP Stylebook. Always have this with you.
✓ North Texas Daily stylebook (available at www.ntdstaff.com).
✓ A book of your choice to review (list provided later in semester).

Objectives: In this practical class, you work as a beat reporter for the North Texas Daily, UNT’s student newspaper. You will further develop the reporting and writing skills you learned in Journalism 2310 (or its equivalent), applying these by finding, reporting and writing your own news and feature stories for The Daily and its Web site ntdaily.com.

Part of this class is learning how to work with others, an important component of the professional world. Working closely with an assigned mentor/editor, you will learn about various reporting techniques, sources, databases, state and federal open records laws, journalism ethics and legal issues, multiculturalism and diversity, multi-platform journalism, specialty reporting, feature writing, explanatory journalism and investigative reporting.

You will develop your critical thinking skills by:
  • Learning to evaluate the credibility of sources
  • Honing your news judgment skills
  • Learning to gather information quickly on deadline, even when sources are uncooperative.

NOTE: If you are a transfer student and have NEVER written a news story before, you should consider taking Journalism 2310 before trying to tackle this class.

Major requirements: This is a pre-major course. Since you are in the class you are classified as a pre-major in journalism, not as a journalism major. When you have completed this course and the others in your pre-major, then you must apply to become a major to have access to upper-level journalism courses. By registering for this course, you are stating that you have taken the required pre-requisite course of JOUR 2310 or its equivalent. If the instructor later determines that you have not taken and passed these requirements, then you may be dropped.

You must pass this class with a C or better to proceed in your major. The professor must approve a third attempt.
Lab Format: Lab sessions are MANDATORY unless they are designated for another use. Lab is an extension of the NT Daily. Some story assignments will come directly from the newspaper editors, but you also are expected to find your own stories. You will be assigned a beat and a TA editor/mentor, who will help you come up with story ideas. Your mentor also will set deadlines and edit final versions of your stories. You are expected to keep in close communication with your mentor about your work, whether in person during lab or by phone or e-mail.

Meeting deadlines is crucial, and failure will affect your grade. You can use some lab time to write your stories, or you can write them on your own time, as long as you meet deadlines.

Several times during the semester, we will invite working journalists and PR professionals to discuss their work during lab time. You will be able to ask them about their jobs and career paths, and get valuable advice on reporting, writing and journalism jobs. Attendance is MANDATORY.

Do not schedule interviews during this period. You will be required to submit one-page speaker summaries/responses of these talks, for which you will receive points toward your grade.

Attendance: Treat this class as a job. You are expected to be present for every class and lab unless otherwise instructed. If you have legitimate reasons for an absence (illness, disaster, death), e-mail the professor and/or your mentor beforehand and present a note from a physician or other official at the next class. If you have a religious holiday, please let the professor know beforehand. After four unexcused absences, you can be dropped from the class.

Grading Criteria: You will be required to produce a portfolio of at least 12 high-quality stories, six of which must be on your beat. The compilation will serve as a professional portfolio to use when applying for internships, jobs or freelance work.

* Don’t procrastinate. Meeting the minimum quota of 12 stories will be difficult if you get behind. You’ll need to develop sources on your beat and conduct numerous interviews before you’re able to generate quality stories that can be published.

    Deadlines will be strictly enforced. Your grade will be reduced one letter grade for each day your assignment is late.

Course requirements

50%: A portfolio of at least 10 high-quality, publishable stories. Five must be on your beat, and five must have a visual element -- photo, video, graphic, chart, stats box, etc. (You need not produce photos or videos yourself.)

10%: Mid-term story -- in-depth news feature, investigative piece or profile.

10%: Final story -- in-depth news feature, investigative piece or profile.

10%: Book review and presentation. Book to be chosen from a list handed out in class mid-semester.

10%: Quizzes on textbook readings and current events.

10%: Attendance and assignments related to in-class activities in lectures and labs, including speaker responses, film responses, critiques, other assignments.

Grading standards

A: Work is superb, on time and shows excellent effort. At least six stories published in the NT Daily or instructor-pre-approved publication.

B: Work is good, on time, shows effort.

C: Work adequate, room for improvement.

D: Work needs lots of improvement, shows little effort.

F: Work incomplete or not acceptable.

* All stories must use Associated Press and North Texas Daily style, with correct spelling, grammar, punctuation and style.

Story requirements

News stories: 250-750 words (one to three pages, typed/double-spaced). Short stories must have two sources; more than 350 words must have three sources.

In-depth stories: 800 to 1,000 words, with at least four human sources. They should not be event coverage.

Source lists
All stories must have a list of sources and their contact information (phone, e-mail). No story will be accepted without the list.
**Cell phone and computer policy:** Cell phones should NEVER be used in class. Computers should NEVER be used in class unless part of a class assignment.

**Note:** Computer technicians can see anything on your computer screen.

**Honesty and Conduct:** Academic misconduct includes the following: use of materials without giving credit from another author, including information from publications, Web sites, e-mails, newspapers, magazines, books or any other copyrighted or non-copyrighted material that someone else wrote. Plagiarism constitutes not only use of verbatim materials from other authors without attribution, but also words or ideas that are very similar. You must attribute every source you use in your stories.

You may never fabricate quotations, facts, sources or any other information in your stories, nor may you misrepresent them. Plagiarism and fabrication are major offenses in journalism and other professions; commit either in this class and you will receive a ZERO on the assignment and perhaps for the class.

All work in this class must be original. You may not use assignments you turned in for other classes previously or that you are working on for current classes without permission from the instructor. She reserves the right to give you a failing grade for committing any of these offenses and to refer any academic dishonesty or misconduct to UNT’s Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities. Remember, you are representing the Mayborn School of Journalism and the *NT Daily* in this class. Anything you do that is unethical will reflect not only on you, but also on the newspaper and the school.

Check out the University of North Texas Code of Student Conduct’s categories of misconduct at: [http://www.unt.edu/csrr/student_conduct/misconduct.html](http://www.unt.edu/csrr/student_conduct/misconduct.html)

**Disabilities:** The journalism school, in cooperation with the Office of Disability Accommodation, complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodation for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request before the 12th class day.

**Be prepared:** For class discussions, each week you should read the assigned chapters in your textbook and any handouts provided in class. You also must read:

- The *North Texas Daily* (daily!) and *The Denton Record Chronicle*, both available free.
- *The Dallas Morning News* and/or the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, available online.

Also, check out *The New York Times* for examples of excellent reporting and writing. The local alternative weeklies, the *Dallas Observer* and *Fort Worth Weekly* also will help you develop story ideas and make you a better writer and reporter.

- Current events items in quizzes will be based on KRLD 1080 AM and KERA 90.1 FM.
Class Schedule:

**Week 1, Jan. 19, 21**: Introduction and review. Introduction to AP style.  
Read Chapters 1 and 2: Changing concepts of news and blogs;  
Read Chapter 19: Beat reporting. We will assign beats and mentors in lab this week.

**Week 2, Jan. 26, 28**: Objectivity, accuracy and fairness. In-depth reporting, interviewing and research techniques. AP style on numbers/quiz.  
Read Chapter 5: Curiosity and story ideas.  
Read Chapter 3 & 8: Basic story organization, leads and nut graphs.

**Week 3, Feb. 2, 4**: Searching public records. Open records, open meetings, online resources, background checks. Read Chapter 21: Government and statistical stories. AP style on abbreviations/quiz. Lab GUEST SPEAKER.

**Week 4, Feb. 9, 11**: Six paths to a story. Writing features and profiles. You will receive a reading assignment to discuss in class. Read Chapter 11: Storytelling and feature techniques, and Chapter 18, Profiles. AP style on capitalization/quiz. Lab GUEST SPEAKER.

**Week 5, Feb. 16-18**: Interviewing techniques, getting sources to talk to you, dealing with difficult sources. Read Chapter 7: “Interviewing Techniques.”


**Week 8, March 9, 11**: Multimedia reporting. Read Chapter 4 & 13: Convergent Media Writing, online journalism. Lab GUEST SPEAKER.

- **Thursday, March 11**: MIDTERM STORY and six-story PORTFOLIOS DUE at beginning of Lab

**Week 9, March 23, 25**: Investigative reporting, projects, FOIA and open records letters.

**Week 10, March 30, Apr. 1**: Law and ethics. Read Chapter 5, “Accuracy and Media Law,” and Chapter 6, “Media Ethics.” Class exercise on ethics. Lab GUEST SPEAKER.

**Week 11, Apr. 6, 8**: Diversity and sensitivity. Read Chapter 17, “Multicultural Sensitivity.” Class exercise on diversity and sensitivity; Survival math.

**Week 12, Apr. 13, 15**: Film, “All the President’s Men.” Response to film. Lab GUEST SPEAKER.

**Week 13, Apr. 20, 22**: Read Chapter 24: Jobs, internships, careers in journalism. Resumes and cover letters.

**Week 14, Apr 27, 29**: Graphics, Web exercises

**Week 15, May 4, 6**: Book review presentations.

- **Tuesday, May 4**: Portfolios due (except for final story) at beginning of lab.

- **Thursday, May 13**: FINAL STORY due during final exam period: 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
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 2320, 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.