

News Writing & Reporting

Fall 2011
MCPM 2003 - 3 credit hours
10 a.m. Wednesday & Online
Walker Center, Room 117

Professor:

Kenna Griffin
Office: WC 117
Twitter: @profkrgr

E-mail: kgriffin@okcu.edu or kennagriffin@gmail.com
Office phone: 208-5043
Website: www.profkrgr.com/newswriting

I have an open-door policy and am happy to discuss journalism with you at any opportunity. You do not have to schedule an appointment to discuss course-related matters with me. However, if you want to guarantee an uninterrupted one-on-one that will take longer than 15 minutes, I encourage you to schedule that time to ensure that we can provide one another our undivided attention.

Required Texts:

Harrower, Tim. (2009). *Inside Reporting 2nd Ed.* St. McGraw-Hill Higher Education: Columbus, Ohio.

Goldstein, Norm. Ed. (2011) *The Associated Press Stylebook*. Perseus Publishing: Massachusetts.

Recommended Texts:

Good journalists are well-informed news consumers. You should read *The Oklahoman* (newsok.com) and *The Campus* (mediaocu.com) every day. I recommend that you get into the habit of reading at least one daily metropolitan newspaper (ex: *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, etc.) and a weekly news magazine. I also recommend that you watch at least one televised newscast each day.

In addition, I recommend that you subscribe to and participate in discussions on my journalism blog, profkrgr.com. The site acts as a resource for student journalists and an open forum for discussion of trends in our profession. Subscribing to the site will allow you to receive e-mail alerts when it is updated. You also can follow the blog and other journalism news on Twitter @[profkrgr](https://twitter.com/profkrgr) or on Facebook by searching Prof KRG.

RSS Feeds are an excellent way to consume a lot of news daily. I am happy to help you set up one for yourself if you're interested and uncertain how to do so.

Good reporters and responsible citizens are avid news consumers. Information is the key to a democratic society. Develop the habit of daily news consumption now if you haven't already.

Course Description:

In this course you will learn the elements of information gathering, reporting and writing including proper grammar and correct Associated Press style – the writing style used by professional news agencies.

You will learn these aspects of journalism through participating in lecture, practical writing assignments, regular readings, weekly quizzes, and comprehensive examinations.

You will write, revise and rewrite, and can expect some of your class writing to be published in the student newspaper, *The Campus*; on the newspaper's Web site, *MediaOCU*, and/or in the student yearbook, *The Constellation*.

You must be able to accept and learn from critique of your writing.

Upon completion of the course you will know the basics of news writing and reporting necessary for a journalism and/or multimedia writing career.

Attendance:

Journalists must be reliable. Missing deadlines can cost you your job.

Course attendance and participation are required. This is especially important because this course is an independent study. If you see in advance that you cannot attend the course, let's reschedule it. Otherwise, you are expected to arrive to class on time and leave when class is complete.

Participation:

You must always attend class prepared for participation. This includes having paper, writing utensils, books, etc. during every class session. Again, this is especially important because this is an independent study. It will be important for you to be up-to-date on your readings and be ready to ask questions. Please do not approach this class in a casual way because of its flexible structure.

Technology:

Please turn off your cell phone during our course session. We aren't spending a lot of time meeting, so it's important for us to focus while we're together.

Writing assignments must be completed outside of class unless otherwise directed by me. All assignments must be typed and stapled. Please print your assignments before class and have them ready to submit.

Malfunctions of the equipment in the computer lab (or elsewhere) will not constitute an excuse for late assignments.

Materials for this course will be posted in two locations.

First, the course has a page on my media blog at www.profkrig.com/newswriting. The majority of the course's supplemental readings and discussion posts will occur here.

Second, the course is listed on the university's Desire 2 Learn online course management system. This is where I will post internal information about the course such as grades and assignment dropboxes.

To access D2L, visit <https://ocuonline.okcu.edu/>. You will log on using your OCU network username and password.

If you need help logging onto the site, please call 405-208-7777 or e-mail helpdesk@okcu.edu. I cannot help you with login problems, as I have no access to that part of the system.

If you are unable to open course files, try turning off your individual computer's "pop-up blocker." This may alleviate this problem. If not, please contact the Help Desk as directed above.

I will make every effort to update the site as much in advance as possible. However, I encourage you to check both sites regularly.

Assignments/exams:

I will provide a handout for each assignment due. I encourage you to keep these handouts and follow them carefully.

Assignments must be submitted by the provided due date. Assignments should be printed and stapled. They should include your name and the name of the assignment, based on the assignment sheet.

Missed assignments are not an option. I will not accept assignments sent to class with your peer.

Skill Labs:

You will have a skill lab and a Stylebook quiz due by noon each Friday.

Each quiz will consist of 10 multiple choice questions. You will be required to choose the correct Stylebook usage in each sentence. A guide of which words to study will be posted on D2L under "Stylebook Quiz handouts" the week before each quiz. The quiz itself also will be on D2L.

The lab assignment handouts also will be located on D2L. You will submit the labs in a D2L dropbox.

Failure to submit either of these assignments by noon on the due date will result in you receiving zero credit, no exceptions.

News Tips:

You will submit a weekly news tip based on an item of interest to the campus community. These tips should be submitted to the D2L dropbox before the class at 10 a.m. Wednesday. The tips cannot be about a news happening that already has been reported by Student Publications, although the tips will be "passed on" to the Student Publications editor-in-chief for consideration. It also should not be simply a calendar listing of an event that is about to occur.

News tips should include:

- A short description of the story idea and what makes it news worthy.
- Time, date and place if necessary
- Contact names and telephone numbers; one of which should be for a student.
- Possible art, graphics, video, and links to include with the story.

Grading:

I will attempt to grade all class assignments and return them to you within a week of their submission.

You are welcome to visit my office to discuss any questions or concerns you have about your grades on individual assignments or in the course as a whole.

Your grade for the course will consist of grades in four categories:

Final exam – 25 %

Midterm exam - 25 % (50 % at midterm)

Writing assignments/weekly labs/news tips – 35 %

Weekly quizzes – 15 %

Griffin's grades:

My grading of writing is not arbitrary. I award writing grades based on the following standards:

- **A** – Copy is publishable with little editing.
- **B** – Copy is publishable with minor editing and revisions.
- **C** – Portions of the copy would need to be rewritten and closely edited before the story could publish.
- **D** – Copy contains major factual, structural, writing, and usage flaws. It is doubtful whether it could be published. It definitely could not be published without major work.
- **F** – Copy does not meet even minimal standards for the assignment. This grade also is received if a name is misspelled in the writing. Remember that if you don't correctly name sources it's pointless to have written the story at all.

NOTE: The AP Stylebook should be used for all writing assignments. You are responsible for using correct spelling, grammar and usage from the start of the semester.

Deadline Recap:

Here is a summary of your weekly deadlines:

- Stylebook quiz – completed by noon Friday
- Lab – completed by noon Friday
- News tips – by 10 a.m. Wednesday
- Readings – before the course on 10 a.m. Wednesday

All other assignments will be given via handout during the class session and will be due at the beginning of the following course session unless otherwise specified.

Course schedule:

This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please complete all course reading the week before it is assigned.

Week 1:

- Introduction

Week 2:

- Lecture: *Today's Journalism*
- Read Harrower **Chapter 1: The story of journalism**

Week 3:

- Lecture: *News Value*
- Read Harrower **Chapter 2: How newsrooms work**

Week 4 :

- Lecture: *Getting Info*
- Read Harrower **Chapter 4: Reporting basics**

Week 5 :

- Lecture: *Writing with Style*
- Read Harrower **Chapter 3: Newswriting basics**

Week 6 :

- Lecture: *Quoting Sources*

Week 7 :

- Lecture: *Working Beats*
- Read Harrower **Chapter 5: Covering news**

Week 8 :

- Lecture: *Victimology*

Week 9: Midterm Exam

Week 10 :

- Lecture: *Covering Events*

Week 11 :

- Read Harrower **Chapter 6: Beyond breaking news**
- Lecture: *Enterprise Reporting and Writing*

Week 12 :

- Lecture: *Online Reporting*
- Read Harrower **Chapter 8: Online reporting**

Week 13 :

- Lecture: *Promoting Content*

Week 14 :

- Lecture: *Media Law*
- Read Harrower **Chapter 7: Law and ethics**

Week 15 :

- Lecture: *Media Ethics*

Week 16: Final Exam

Mass Communications Departmental Policies

LATE WORK:

- No late work will be accepted for full credit without prior arrangement with the instructor.
- Work is due at the beginning of the class session.

EXAMINATIONS :

- No makeup examinations will be given unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor.
- NO FINAL EXAMS WILL BE GIVEN EARLIER THAN ANNOUNCED BY THE INSTRUCTOR. NO EXCEPTIONS. Students who make travel plans without confirming the scheduled finals date for this class do so at their own risk.

Students who travel prior to the scheduled final exam will be unable to take the examination and must accept a zero test score.

INCOMPLETE :

Incomplete grades are not a student option except under extreme circumstances. Students seeking an incomplete must submit a written request supported by documentation verifying the need for this extension. Incompletes are given for a limited period of time.

TARDINESS/ATTENDANCE :

Students are expected to be in class on time. Entering the classroom late is unprofessional and disruptive. Repeated tardiness is unacceptable. Students should be punctual and prepared, since these are the qualities expected by the business community. Attendance will be taken at each class session. Students are expected to attend all class sessions.

GRADING SCALE :

93.0 - 100	=	A	
90.0 - 92.99	=	A-	
87.5 - 89.99	=	B+	
82.5 - 87.49	=	B	
80.0 - 82.49	=	B-	
77.5 - 79.99	=	C+	
72.5 - 77.49	=	C	
70.0 - 72.49	=	C-	
67.5 - 69.99	=	D+	
62.5 - 67.49	=	D	
60.0 - 62.49	=	D-	
Below 60.0	=	F	Not I or W

CHEATING/PLAGIARISM:

STANDARD OF RESPONSIBILITY

Oklahoma City University was founded upon strong values and high standards. Honesty in academics is a priority. Students should be advised that cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. The Academic Honesty Policy can be found online at <http://starport.okcu.edu/ad/aa>

Cheating is defined as using, or supplying information that is not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination or completing any other assignment. Cheating also includes turning in another's work and representing it as being your own.

Plagiarism is defined as a unique form of cheating where persons turn in another's work and represent it as being their own. This would include: 1) purchasing term papers and turning them in as if they are original work; 2) using a paper that has previously been turned in; 3) copying passages verbatim from books, articles, etc.; 4) submitting material for grades in which the student has not done the work required; 5) collusion – the unauthorized collaboration with another person; 6) misrepresentation of actions and 7) falsifying information.

Every student is expected to observe the highest standards of conduct, both on and off the campus. The University cannot accept the responsibility for the education of any student who is not in sympathy with the purposes and the regulations of the University.

Mass Communications students should be aware that this department considers the above described conduct to be dishonorable and dishonest. Students found cheating or plagiarizing will receive a grade of “0”, which is an “F”, on the involved examination, project or paper and, at the professor's discretion, may receive a failing grade for the entire course.

EXAMINATION EQUIPMENT :

Students are not permitted to use or access the following items during an examination:

- Dictionaries
- Electronic spellers, translators, dictionaries or calculators
- Computers
- Class notes, books

Once any examination has begun, if a student wishes to leave the room they must be prepared to turn in their examination paper and/or blue book. And, it will not be returned to them for additional work.

DISABILITY STATEMENT :

If you need an accommodation due to a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact Student Health and Disability Service Office immediately at 208-5991 or 208-5090. Advance notice is required for many accommodations.