

# News Writing & Reporting

Oklahoma City University  
Fall 2013  
MCPM 2003 - 3 credit hours  
10-10:50 a.m. MWF  
Walker Center, Room 122

## **Professor:**

Kenna Griffin

Office: WC 117

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Website: [www.profkrg.com/newswriting](http://www.profkrg.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 time to ensure we can provide one another our undivided attention.*

## **Required Texts:**

Harrower, Tim. (2013). *Inside Reporting 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.* St. McGraw-Hill Higher Education: New York, N.Y.

Associated Press. (2013). In Christian, D., Jacobsen, S. & Minthorn, D. (Eds.), *The Associated Press Stylebook*. New York, NY: The Associated Press.

## **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 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 you watch at least one televised newscast each day.

In addition, I recommend you subscribe to and participate in discussions on my journalism blog, [www.profkrg.com](http://www.profkrg.com). The site acts as a resource for student journalists and an open forum for discussion of our profession. Subscribing to the site will allow you to receive email alerts when it is updated. You also can follow the blog and other journalism news on Twitter @profkrg or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/profkrg](http://www.facebook.com/profkrg). Please review my social media policies (<http://www.profkrg.com/krg/social-media-policies>) if you choose to follow me on one or both of these accounts.

RSS Feeds are an excellent way to consume a lot of news daily. I linked a post on how to set up a feed reader on the course's website.

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 student news web site, *MediaOCU*, and/or in the student yearbook, *The Constellation*. Any content published from the class is considered separate from your work with Student Publications.

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 media writing career.

## **Grading:**

I will attempt to grade all class assignments and return them to you within a week of submission. You are encouraged 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. You are strongly discouraged from openly discussing your grades during class sessions. Your grade for the course will consist of grades in five categories:

- Final exam – 25 %
- Midterm exam – 20 % (45 % at midterm)
- Writing assignments/weekly labs/news tips – 30 %
- Weekly quizzes – 15 %
- Class attendance/participation – 10 %

*NOTE: Be certain to sign the attendance sheet during every class session. It is the method I will use for tracking your attendance. If you will miss class for a university-sanctioned happening, I must have a notice from the appropriate university official beforehand. Failure to provide such documentation will result in your absence being counted. You are encouraged to submit due assignments before your absence. If you are unable to do so, you must arrange it with me and submit any due assignment on your return class session.*

## **Griffin's grades:**

It is important to me that you understand 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 piece could be published.
- **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 piece at all.

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

## **Exams :**

You will take a midterm and a final exam in this course. The exams will cover text readings, lecture materials, handouts, and supplemental materials posted on the course website.

The exams are scheduled on the course schedule below. Each essay-style exam is worth 100 points. Partial credit will be given where applicable.

The midterm exam is **10-10:50 a.m. Oct. 11**. It is worth 20 percent of your final grade, but is worth 45 percent at midterm.

The final exam is **10 a.m. to noon Dec. 9**. It is worth 25 percent of your final grade.

I will address components of the exam as they are discussed in class. I also will provide exam reviews before the exams are administered.

You should plan to take the exams at the schedule time. Make-up exams will be given only in extreme emergencies. Make-up exams will be more academically rigorous than original exams.

Your exams will not be returned to you after they are graded. However, we will review them in class. I am happy to discuss any questions you have before or after your exams.

## **Writing Assignments :**

You will complete a variety of writing assignments during the course. I will provide a detailed handout explaining each assignment and its due date.

## **Stylebook Quizzes**

You will complete a weekly AP Stylebook quiz at the beginning of each Friday's class. You must be present to take the quiz.

The quizzes will consist of you rewriting 10 sentences using correct grammar and AP Style. They are worth 100 points each. No partial credit will be given. You must attend the class to take the quiz. You are not allowed to use your AP Stylebook on the quizzes.

The following are the dates scheduled for stylebook quizzes. I reserve the right to alter this schedule at any time during the semester.

- Quiz 1 - Aug. 23
- Quiz 2 - Aug. 30
- Quiz 3 - Sept. 6
- Quiz 4 - Sept. 14
- Quiz 5 - Sept. 20
- Quiz 6 - Sept. 27
- Quiz 7 - Oct. 4
- Quiz 8 - Oct. 25
- Quiz 9 - Nov. 1
- Quiz 10 - Nov. 8
- Quiz 11 - Nov. 15
- Quiz 12 - Nov. 22
- Quiz 13 - Dec. 6

## **Skill Labs :**

You will complete a lab during each Friday's class session. We will meet in the classroom for the weekly Stylebook quiz. Following the quiz, you will receive a lab assignment to be completed by the end of class. You will then go to the Mass Communications lab or the Newsroom to complete your lab session.

These labs could include individual assignments, group labs or free writing assignments. It is critical that you arrive on time and use your lab time wisely. I will not accept labs submitted after 10:50 a.m.

The following are the dates scheduled for lab sessions. I reserve the right to alter this schedule at any time during the semester.

- **Lab 1** - Aug. 23
- **Lab 2** - Aug. 30
- **Lab 3** - Sept. 6
- **Lab 4** - Sept. 14
- **Lab 5** - Sept. 20
- **Lab 6** - Sept. 27
- **Lab 7** - Oct. 4
- **Lab 8** - Oct. 18
- **Lab 9** - Oct. 25
- **Lab 10** - Nov. 1
- **Lab 11** - Nov. 8
- **Lab 12** - Nov. 15
- **Lab 13** - Nov. 22
- **Lab 14** - Dec. 6

### **News Tips:**

You will submit a weekly news tip based on an item of interest to the campus community. The tips cannot be about a news happening already 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 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.

The following are the due dates for News Tips:

- **Tip 1** - Sept. 9
- **Tip 2** - Sept. 16
- **Tip 3** - Sept. 23
- **Tip 4** - Sept. 30
- **Tip 5** - Oct. 7
- **Tip 6** - Oct. 21
- **Tip 7** - Oct. 28
- **Tip 8** - Nov. 4
- **Tip 9** - Nov. 11
- **Tip 10** - Nov. 18
- **Tip 11** - Dec. 2

### **Deadlines:**

Deadlines are critical in the news business. Do not attempt to submit work after the deadline. It will not be accepted. There are few exceptions.

### **Missed assignments:**

Missed assignments cannot be made up without my approval. I will not accept assignments sent to class with peers. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain any assignments, handouts and notes that you miss. I will not contact you regarding your absence. I also will not save copies of course materials distributed during individual class periods. If you need an extension on an assignment because of an absence, you must schedule a time to privately discuss it with me. If you miss an assignment and are allowed to make it up, you must do so at the scheduled time or you will not receive credit.

## **Attendance :**

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

Course attendance and participation are required and will be counted as 10 percent of your final grade. You are expected to arrive to class on time and leave when class is complete. At this point in your academic career you should understand the concept of decisions and consequences. You are free to make your own decisions regarding your attendance.

However, it's important that you are aware that lack of attendance in any class will result in you missing important material that will not be repeated. In addition, repeat absences will result in the lowering of your final grade. If you cannot avoid missing class, you must notify me prior to the class session. Do not assume that I know you will not be present.

Communicate with me regarding every necessary absence. Notification of an absence from anyone but yourself will not be considered adequate. Do not send word of your absence via another classmate. I will give excused absences on a case-by-case basis. Remember: ***You make choices. You live with the consequences.***

## **Participation :**

You are required to participate in class. Participation could include commenting on readings, interactive lecture, and careful and active note taking. Asking questions always is encouraged. Discussion of things unrelated to class is discouraged. You are not allowed to be disruptive in any way that takes class value away from your classmates. In addition, you must always attend class prepared for participation. This includes having paper, copied notes, writing utensils, etc.

## **Technology :**

You are allowed to use a laptop, iPad or smart phone to document class notes during the course session.

You are not allowed to have your cell phone ringer or alert notification on during class.

Students found texting or using cell phones or computers for anything other than note taking during class will be asked to discontinue this practice or leave. Repeated issues will result in lowering of your attendance/participation grade.

## **Printing :**

Writing assignments must be completed outside of class. All assignments must be typed and stapled. You will not be excused from class to print assignments. Do not come to class to discuss printing with me. It is up to you to determine if you should be late to class to print. If you do not have access to a computer and/or printer, you are welcome to use the mass communications computer lab at the front of our department. Malfunctions of the equipment in the computer lab will not constitute an excuse for late assignments.

## **Course schedule :**

*This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please complete the readings before the class session for which they are assigned. Also, please check the course website each week for updates.*

### **WEEK 1 :**

**Monday, Aug. 19 - Introduction**

**Wednesday, Aug. 21**

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

**Friday, Aug. 23**

- Stylebook Quiz 1
- Lab 1

**WEEK 2:**

**Monday, Aug. 26**

- Read Chapter 2: How newsrooms work
- Lecture: *News value*

**Wednesday, Aug. 28**

- Lecture: *News value*

**Friday, Aug. 30**

- Stylebook Quiz 2
- Lab 2

**WEEK 3:**

**Monday, Sept. 2 - Labor Day. No Class**

**Wednesday, Sept. 4**

- Lecture: *News Value*

**Friday, Sept. 6**

- Stylebook Quiz 3
- Lab 3

**WEEK 4:**

**Monday, Sept. 9**

- Read Chapter 3: Newswriting basics
- Lecture: *Inverted pyramid*
- News Tip 1 due

**Wednesday, Sept. 11**

- Lecture: *Leads*

**Friday, Sept. 13**

- Stylebook Quiz 4
- Lab 4

**WEEK 5:**

**Monday, Sept. 16**

- Read Chapter 4: Reporting basics
- Lecture: *Sources*
- News Tip 2 due

**Wednesday, Sept. 18**

- Lecture: *Interviewing*

**Friday, Sept. 20**

- Stylebook Quiz 5
- Lab 5

**WEEK 6:**

**Monday, Sept. 23**

- Lecture: *Quotes*
- News Tip 3 due

**Wednesday, Sept. 25**

- Lecture: *Quotes*

**Friday, Sept. 27**

- Stylebook Quiz 6
- Lab 6

**WEEK 7:**

**Monday, Sept. 30**

- Read Chapter 5: Covering the news
- Lecture: *Beats*
- News Tip 4 due

**Wednesday, Oct. 2**

- Lecture: *Victimology*

**Friday, Oct. 4**

- Stylebook Quiz 7
- Lab 7

**WEEK 8:**

**Monday, Oct. 7**

- Lecture: *Beats*
- Midterm Review
- News Tip 5 due

**Wednesday, Oct. 9**

- Midterm Review

**Friday, Oct. 11 - Midterm Exam**

**WEEK 9:**

**Monday, Oct. 14 - Fall Break. No Class.**

**Wednesday, Oct. 16**

- Review Midterm Exam

**Friday, Oct. 18**

- Lab 8

**WEEK 10:**

**Monday, Oct. 21**

- Lecture: *Beats*
- News Tips 6 due

**Wednesday, Oct. 23**

- Lecture: *Beats*

**Friday, Oct. 25**

- Stylebook Quiz 8
- Lab 9

**WEEK 11:**

**Monday, Oct. 28**

- Read Chapter 6: Beyond Breaking News
- Lecture: *Feature Reporting*
- News Tips 7 due

**Wednesday, Oct. 30**

- Lecture: *Investigative Reporting*

**Friday, Nov. 1**

- Stylebook Quiz 9
- Lab 10

**WEEK 12:**

**Monday, Nov. 4**

- Lecture: *Writing Opinion*
- News Tip 8 due

**Wednesday, Nov. 6**

- Read Chapter 8: Digital Journalism
- Lecture: *Digital Journalism*

**Friday, Nov. 8**

- Stylebook Quiz 10
- Lab 11

**WEEK 13:**

**Monday, Nov. 11**

- Lecture: *Digital Journalism*
- News Tip 9 due

**Wednesday, Nov. 13**

- Lecture: *Digital Journalism*

**Friday, Nov. 15**

- Stylebook Quiz 11
- Lab 12

**WEEK 14:**

**Monday, Nov. 18**

- Lecture: *Content Promotion*
- News Tip 10 due

**Wednesday, Nov. 20**

- Lecture: *Content Promotion*

**Friday, Nov. 22**

- Stylebook Quiz 12
- Lab 13

**WEEK 15:**

**Monday, Nov. 25**

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

**Wednesday, Nov. 27 – Thanksgiving Break. No Class.**

**Friday, Nov. 29 – Thanksgiving Break. No Class.**

**WEEK 15:**

**Monday, Dec. 2**

- Lecture: *Media Law*
- Final Exam Review
- News Tip 11 due

**Wednesday, Dec. 4**

- Final Exam Review

**Friday, Dec. 6**

- Stylebook Quiz 13
- Lab 14

**Monday, Dec. 9 – Final exam from 10 a.m. to noon**

## **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. The student must be performing at a passing level and have a legitimate reason to receive an “I.” Students cannot be assigned an “I” because they have excessive unexcused absences or because they are failing the course. If an incomplete is given, the instructor will submit information which specifies what work must be done to

remove the “I” and the grade to be assigned if the work is not complete. The student is responsible for submitting the work by the deadline assigned by the instructor. Incompletes are given for a limited period of time, not exceeding one year.

#### 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 believe that you need accommodations for a documented physical, psychiatric, or learning disability, please contact the Disabilities Services Coordinator at (405) 208-5090 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. The Student Disabilities Services Coordinator is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students a documented Access Plan, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact the Student Disabilities Services Coordinator as soon as possible. To speak with the coordinator about other concerns, such as medical emergencies or arrangements in case of a building evacuation, please make an appointment as soon as possible. Contact Brenda Johnston ([bjohnston@okcu.edu](mailto:bjohnston@okcu.edu)), director for Campus Health and Disability Services, located in the Panhellenic Quadrangle, just north of the Methodist Hall dormitory.

#### PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds, including federal loans and grants. Title IX also prohibits student-to-student sexual harassment. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk with your professor or with the Title IX Coordinator at 405-208-5075. Visit <http://www.okcu.edu/hr/titleIX/> for more information.

#### EVACUATION POLICY:

The evacuation plan for Walker Center is as follows: Everyone on the first floor proceeds out the north doors to the north parking lot. Everyone on the second floor must exit down the north stairway, out the north doors to the parking lot. The shelter locations for Walker Center are as follows: WC 143, WC 144, and the men's and women's restrooms on the first floor. These rooms are on the east side of the first floor.

POLICY STATEMENT

I have read the above stated policies for the academic year 2013-14 for the Mass Communications Department.

I understand the policies and agree to abide by them.

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Name

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Student ID# or SSN#

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Date

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Course Name and Number