

# Mass Media Writing

Oklahoma City University  
Fall 2014  
MASC 1213 - 3 credit hours  
9-9:50 a.m. MWF  
Walker Center, Room 122

## **Professor**

Kenna Griffin                      Email: [kgriffin@okcu.edu](mailto:kgriffin@okcu.edu)  
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*I have an open-door policy and am happy to discuss writing 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 & Course Materials**

Associated Press. (2015). In Minthorn, D., Jacobsen, S. & Froke, P. (Eds.), *The Associated Press Stylebook*. New York, NY: The Associated Press.

Handley, A. (2014). *Everybody Writes: Your Go-To Guide to Creating Ridiculously Good Content*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Zinsser, W. (2006). *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Provided handouts

Materials posted in the course Facebook group, which I will invite you to join.

*NOTE: Others will be added during the semester.*

## **Recommended Texts**

Good media practitioners are well-informed news consumers. You should read *The Oklahoman* ([newsok.com](http://newsok.com)) and *The Campus* ([mediaocu.com](http://mediaocu.com)) every day. I also recommend you get into the habit of reading at least one daily metropolitan newspaper (ex: *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, etc.). 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 media blog, [www.profkrgr.com](http://www.profkrgr.com). The site acts as a resource for student journalists and an open forum for discussion about 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 [@profkrgr](https://twitter.com/profkrgr) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/profkrgr](https://www.facebook.com/profkrgr). Please review my social media policies (<http://www.profkrgr.com/krgr/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 shared a post on how to set up a feed reader in the course's Facebook group.

Good media practitioners 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 mass media writing in the digital age through participating in lecture, practical writing assignments, regular readings, weekly quizzes, and examinations. Through the course, you will gain experience writing for print, broadcast and online media.

You will write, revise and rewrite. You must be able to accept and learn from critique of your writing. You can expect some of your class writing to be published in the student newspaper, *The Campus*, or on the student news web site, *MediaOCU*. Any content published from the class is considered separate from any paid work you might do for Student Publications.

Upon completion of the course you will know the basics of writing and reporting necessary for media practitioners.

## **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/reading discussions/labs/news tips – 30 %
- 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 to track your attendance. If you will miss class for a university-sanctioned happening, I must have a notice beforehand from the appropriate university official. 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 make arrangements with me and submit any due assignment on your return class session.*

## **Griffin's Grades**

It is important to me that you understand that 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 revision.

- **F** – Copy does not meet even minimal standards for the assignment. This grade also is received if a name is misspelled in the writing. It’s pointless to have written a piece at all if you don’t name sources correctly.

*NOTE: This is NOT an English course. It is imperative for your success in this course that you know the parts of speech, how to write complete sentences and all other elements essential to correct grammar practices. The AP Stylebook should be used for all writing assignments. You are responsible for correct spelling, grammar and AP Style usage from the start of the semester. These elements of writing will be graded, but basic grammar and punctuation will not be taught.*

## **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 in the course Facebook group.

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 **9 to 9:50 a.m. Oct. 14**. It is worth 20 percent of your final grade, but is worth 45 percent at midterm.

The final exam is **8 to 10 a.m. Dec. 16**. 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, its value and its due date.

## **Reading Discussions**

You will read two “mainstream” (non-textbook) books during the course. The first book is *Everybody Writes: Your Go-To Guide to Creating Ridiculously Good Content* by Ann Handley. The second book is *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction* by William Zinsser.

These books can be purchased through the university or local bookstores, online, and in eBook format. There also should be one copy of each book in the university library.

You will bring a simple summary of the assigned readings to each class session. The summary should be typed, stapled (if necessary) and include the following:

- One or two paragraphs summarizing the content,
- A paragraph on what surprised you or caught your attention in the readings, and
- A reflective paragraph that ties the readings back to the course and/or your future role as a media practitioner.

I will collect these summaries at the beginning of the assigned class sessions. Each summary is worth 100 points. Summaries are “all or nothing” credit. If you are present on time and your summary is correct, you will receive full credit. You will receive no credit if you are late or if your summary is poorly written (not clear, concise or containing good grammar), incomplete or inaccurate.

The following dates are scheduled for reading discussions, as noted in the course schedule below. I reserve the right to alter this schedule at any time during the semester.

- RD 1 – Aug. 31
- RD 2 – Sept. 14
- RD 3 – Sept. 21
- RD 4 – Sept. 28
- RD 5 – Oct. 5
- RD 6 – Oct. 26
- RD 7 – Nov. 2
- RD 8 – Nov. 9
- RD 9 – Nov. 16
- RD 10 – Nov. 30
- RD 11 – Dec. 7

Please also feel free to discuss these readings, quotes that stand out to you, etc. in the course Facebook group.

## **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, but I will give you a handout of list entries to review for each quiz.

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. 28
- Quiz 2 – Sept. 4
- Quiz 3 – Sept. 11
- Quiz 4 – Sept. 18
- Quiz 5 – Sept. 25
- Quiz 6 – Oct. 2
- Quiz 7 – Oct. 9
- Quiz 8 – Oct. 30
- Quiz 9 – Nov. 6
- Quiz 10 – Nov. 13
- Quiz 11 – Nov. 20
- Quiz 12 – Dec. 4
- Quiz 13 – Dec. 11

## **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 assignment.

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 9:50 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. 28
- **Lab 2** – Sept. 4
- **Lab 3** – Sept. 11
- **Lab 4** – Sept. 18
- **Lab 5** – Sept. 25
- **Lab 6** – Oct. 2
- **Lab 7** – Oct. 16
- **Lab 8** – Oct. 23
- **Lab 9** – Oct. 30
- **Lab 10** – Nov. 6
- **Lab 11** – Nov. 13
- **Lab 12** – Nov. 20
- **Lab 13** – Nov. 23
- **Lab 14** – Dec. 4

## **News Tips**

You will submit a weekly news tip based on an item of interest to the campus community. The tips cannot be about news already reported by Student Publications, although the tips will be “passed on” to the Student Publications editor-in-chief for consideration. They 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. 14
- **Tip 2** – Sept. 21
- **Tip 3** – Sept. 28
- **Tip 4** – Oct. 5
- **Tip 5** – Oct. 12
- **Tip 6** – Oct. 26
- **Tip 7** – Nov. 2
- **Tip 8** – Nov. 9
- **Tip 9** – Nov. 16
- **Tip 10** – Nov. 23
- **Tip 11** – Dec. 7

## **Deadlines**

Deadlines are critical in the media 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 sessions. 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**

Media practitioners 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 be absent. 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.

## **Engagement & Note-taking**

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

## **Technology**

You are not allowed to have your cell phone ringer or alert notifications 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 the lowering of your attendance/participation grade.

## **Printing**

Writing assignments must be completed outside of class, unless otherwise directed. 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 a late assignment. Also, the lab does not open or close at any specific time.

## **Course schedule**

*This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please complete the readings before the class session for which they are assigned. I will move ahead in the lecture if we complete a subject early.*

### **WEEK 1:**

**Monday, Aug. 24 - Introduction**

**Wednesday, Aug. 26**

- Lecture: *Why Media Writing?*

**Friday, Aug. 28**

- Stylebook Quiz 1
- Lab 1

### **WEEK 2:**

**Monday, Aug. 31:**

- Read Zinsser, Introduction and Part 1: Principles
- Reading Discussion 1 due
- Lecture: *News value*

**Wednesday, Sept. 2**

- Lecture: *News value*

**Friday, Sept. 4**

- Stylebook Quiz 2
- Lab 2

### **WEEK 3:**

**Monday, Sept. 7 - Labor Day. No class.**

**Wednesday, Sept. 9**

- Lecture: *Inverted pyramid*

**Friday, Sept. 11**

- Stylebook Quiz 3
- Lab 3

### **WEEK 4:**

**Monday, Sept. 14**

- Read Zinsser, Part 2: Methods
- Reading Discussion 2 due
- Lecture: *Leads*
- News Tip 1 due

**Wednesday, Sept. 16**

- Lecture: *Leads*

**Friday, Sept. 18**

- Stylebook Quiz 4
- Lab 4

**WEEK 5:**

**Monday, Sept. 21**

- Read Zinsser, Part 3: Forms, Chapters 11-15
- Reading Discussion 3 due
- Lecture: *Sources*
- News Tip 2 due

**Wednesday, Sept. 23**

- Lecture: *Interviewing*

**Friday, Sept. 25**

- Stylebook Quiz 5
- Lab 5

**WEEK 6:**

**Monday, Sept. 28**

- Read Zinsser, Part 3: Forms, Chapters 16-19
- Reading Discussion 4 due
- Lecture: *Quotes*
- News Tip 3 due

**Wednesday, Sept. 30**

- Lecture: *Quotes*

**Friday, Oct. 2**

- Stylebook Quiz 6
- Lab 6

**WEEK 7:**

**Monday, Oct. 5**

- Read Zinsser, Part 4: Attitudes, Chapters 23-25
- Reading Discussion 5 due
- Lecture: *Quotes*
- News Tip 4 due

**Wednesday, Oct. 7**

- Lecture: *Quotes*

**Friday, Oct. 9**

- Stylebook Quiz 7
- Midterm Review

**WEEK 8:**

**Monday, Oct. 12**

- Midterm Review
- News Tip 5 due

**Wednesday, Oct. 14 - Midterm Exam**

**Friday, Oct. 16**

- Lab 7



**WEEK 9:**

**Monday, Oct. 19 – Fall Break. No Class.**

**Wednesday, Oct. 21**

- Review Midterm Exam

**Friday, Oct. 23**

- Lab 8

**WEEK 10:**

**Monday, Oct. 26**

- Read Handley, Intro-Chapter 11
- Reading Discussion 6 due
- Lecture: *Writing for Print Media*
- News Tip 6 due

**Wednesday, Oct. 28**

- Lecture: *Writing for Print Media*

**Friday, Oct. 30**

- Stylebook Quiz 8
- Lab 9

**WEEK 11:**

**Monday, Nov. 2**

- Read Handley, Chapters 12-28
- Reading Discussion 7 due
- Lecture: *Writing for Public Relations*
- News Tip 7 due

**Wednesday, Nov. 4**

- Lecture: *Writing for Public Relations*

**Friday, Nov. 6**

- Stylebook Quiz 9
- Lab 10

**WEEK 12:**

**Monday, Nov. 9**

- Read Handley, Chapters 29-40
- Reading Discussion 8 due
- Lecture: *Writing for Broadcast*
- News Tip 8 due

**Wednesday, Nov. 11**

- Lecture: *Writing for Broadcast*

**Friday, Nov. 13**

- Stylebook Quiz 10
- Lab 11

**WEEK 13:**

**Monday, Nov. 16**

- Read Handley, Chapters 41-59
- Reading Discussion 9 due
- Lecture: *Writing for Online*
- News Tip 9 due

**Wednesday, Nov. 18**

- Lecture: *Writing for Online*

**Friday, Nov. 20**

- Stylebook Quiz 11
- Lab 12

**WEEK 14:**

**Monday, Nov. 23**

- News Tip 10 due
- Lab 13

**Wednesday, Nov. 25 – Thanksgiving Break. No Class.**

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

**WEEK 15:**

**Monday, Nov. 30**

- Read Handley, Chapters 60–67
- Reading Discussion 10 due
- Lecture: *Writing for Social Media*

**Wednesday, Dec. 2**

- Lecture: *Writing for Social Media*

**Friday, Dec. 4**

- Stylebook Quiz 12
- Lab 14

**WEEK 16:**

**Monday, Dec. 7**

- Read Handley, Chapters 68-74
- Reading Discussion 11 due
- Lecture: *Media Ethics*
- News Tip 11 due

**Wednesday, Dec. 9**

- Lecture: *Media Law*

**Friday, Dec. 11**

- Stylebook Quiz 13
- Final Exam Review

**FINALS WEEK:**

**Wednesday, Dec. 16 – Final exam from 8 to 10 a.m.**

## 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 "O", 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.

#### 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 2015-16 for the Mass Communications Department.

I understand the policies and agree to abide by them.

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Name

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B#

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Date

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Course Name and Number