

Opinion Writing

Oklahoma City University
Spring 2016
MCMJ 3413-01 - 3 credit hours
11 a.m. F
Walker Center, Room 117

Instructor:

Kenna Griffin

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Required Texts:

Associated Press. (2014). In Christian, D., Jacobsen, S. & Minthorn, D. (Eds.), *The Associated Press Stylebook*. New York, NY: The Associated Press.

Provided handouts

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 additional daily metropolitan newspaper and watching at least one televised newscast each day.

In addition, I recommend that you visit and participate in discussions on my media blog, www.profkrg.com. The site acts as a resource for students and an open forum for discussion of trends in our profession. You can follow the blog on Twitter @profkrg. You also may follow my blog and other industry news on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ProfKRG.

Good reporters and responsible citizens are avid news consumers. In addition, no one finds credibility in an uninformed opinion. 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 use the basic foundations of news gathering and writing to learn and practice the fundamentals of writing opinion. You will learn how to write a variety of opinion pieces including personal columns, editorials and

reviews. You will be trained to use legitimate sources to justify personal opinions and present them in a credible and newsworthy manner. You will learn these aspects of journalism through participating in classroom lectures and practical writing assignments. As part of this course your work may be published in the student newspaper, *The Campus*, or on the newspaper's Web site, *MediaOCU.com*. Upon completion of this course you will understand the basics of professional opinion writing.

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 entirely on assignment grades.

Griffin's grades:

It is important to me that you understand that my grading of writing is not arbitrary. This is especially important in this course where the writing you will do is based on your opinion. I will never grade you down as a result of your opinion. I will strongly consider how well you support your opinion with facts and how well you adhere to common journalistic writing principles. 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.

Assignments:

You will do a variety of assignments in this course. I will give you a handout for each assignment due in class. I encourage you to keep these handouts and follow them carefully. In addition, you should monitor your OCU email for class-related communication.

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.

Attendance:

Journalists must be reliable. Missing deadlines can cost you your job. If you miss a class you are likely to miss a graded assignment, which will be reflected in your final grade. Course attendance and participation are required. You are expected to arrive to class on time and leave when class is complete. If you cannot avoid missing class you must notify me as soon as possible. We will reschedule the class if one of you cannot attend.

Participation:

You are required to participate in class. Participation could include commenting on articles and interactive lecture. 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. Participation is especially important in this course because there are only two of you.

Technology

You are allowed to use a laptop, iPad or smart phone to take notes during the course session. 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 the practice or leave. Repeated issues will result in lowering of your attendance/participation grade.

Printing

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.

Malfunctions of the equipment in the computer lab or newsroom will not constitute an excuse for a late assignment.

Course schedule:

This course schedule is tentative and subject to change, according to your needs.

WEEK 1 – The why, what and how of opinion writing

WEEK 2 – Identifying audience and encouraging readership

WEEK 3 – Promoting engagement and feedback

WEEK 4 – Writing editorials

WEEK 5 – Writing personal columns

WEEK 6 – Writing entertainment columns

WEEK 7 – Writing sports columns

WEEK 8 – Writing specialty columns

WEEK 9 – Writing movie reviews

WEEK 10 – Writing book reviews

WEEK 11 – Writing about food

WEEK 12 – Writing humor columns

WEEK 13 – Using audio for commentary

WEEK 14 – Using video for commentary

WEEK 15 – TBD

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 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 Spring 2016 semester for the Mass Communications Department.

I understand the policies and agree to abide by them.

Name

B#

Date

Course Name and Number