COMM 2315: Media Writing

Course Description
This course focuses on advanced news-gathering and writing skills. It concentrates on the three-part process of producing news stories: discovering the news, reporting the news, and writing the news in different formats. (2 Lec., 3 Lab)

Course Purpose
This course focuses on advanced news-gathering and writing skills. It concentrates on the three-part process of producing news stories: discovering the news, reporting the news, and writing the news in different formats. Additionally, students in this course will be expected to produce stories for the Et Cetera newspaper and website. This is a continuation course from COMM 2311, and students are expected to advance their reporting skills by adding more depth, more insight, better reporting and more multimedia and social media skills. At the same time, they should be honing the essential reporting skills needed in all fields of communication.

Course Objectives
To learn the basics of writing for several types of media, including newspapers, the World Wide Web, broadcast news (radio and TV) and public relations. By the end of this course you should be able to research, report and write a news story for several platforms. You will learn to write in a concise, accurate and fair manner, and to work on deadline. You also will brush up your grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP Style skills.
Student Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- Evaluate the newsworthiness of information.
- Demonstrate an understanding of story idea creation.
- Comprehend the basic structure and format of a news story (lead, body, and conclusion).
- Demonstrate an understanding of beat reporting and feature writing.
- Demonstrate an understanding of multimedia journalism and alternative story forms.
- Demonstrate an understanding of journalistic ethics.

Required Course Materials and Supplies
- Digital voice recorder and headphones
- Twitter and other social media accounts
- Blackboard access
- Dropbox access

Communications Program Learning Outcomes
Upon receiving an associate’s degree in a journalism field of study you should be able to show mastery of the following student learning outcomes. Each of these will be taught in this course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Amendment</th>
<th>Journalism students should value the implications the First Amendment has throughout their journalistic work.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Journalism students should be able to edit and communicate messages verbally and non-verbally for different media outlets and audiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td>Journalism students should be able to identify newsworthy events, gather information about the same, and communicate those to audiences of different media outlets after editing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Journalism students should demonstrate the use of different technologies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>Journalism students should apply the codes of ethics as well as legal rights and restrictions inherent to their chosen field of journalism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Journalism students should demonstrate research skills throughout their practical and academic course work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Journalism students should discuss the diversity of their professional environment as well as their audiences.</td>
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Classroom Policies and Procedures

Attendance Policy
This is a skills class, so attendance is mandatory and essential to your success. Missed in-class assignments can not be made up unless you have an excused absence with official documentation from a medical professional or because of an official school function. With such a small group, attendance is also key for peer reviews and group assignments. If you are going to miss a class or be late, please email me because it may affect the class activity scheduled for that day. Attendance will be taken, and absences will only be excused with official documentation. After three absences, any classes you miss will result in a penalty of 5 points each. Arriving late or leaving early is a disruption to class. Arriving more than 15 minutes late to class three times will equate to one unexcused absence.
Deadlines and Missed Assignments/Tests
Journalism is a deadline-oriented business, and I take deadlines extremely seriously. Late assignments will not be accepted without providing proper documentation or getting prior approval from the instructor. Accommodations will be made for students who miss assignments or tests due to an approved extracurricular activity with the school or an illness that is accompanied by a doctor’s note.

Assignments and Grading

Midterm Project: Narrative Writing
Each student will write one long-form narrative piece for the Et Cetera newspaper. This project will include mandatory first-draft and second-draft deadlines. Turning in a complete first draft by the assigned deadline will earn you 25 points. Turning in a second draft, with significant revisions, will earn another 25 points. The final submission will be worth 150 points.  
Total for Project = 200 points (20 percent of total grade)

Final Project: Multimedia Storytelling
Each student will complete a multimedia project that includes at least two elements to accompany a written story online. This will serve as your final exam in the class.
125 possible points

Feature, News and Opinion Articles (4 total, lowest score will be dropped)
Feature, news and opinion writing assignments are a major part of this course. Failing to turn in one story will have a major impact on your grade. Students will be graded on overall news value, quality of the lead, structure, quality/number of sources, and AP Style, spelling and grammar. The lowest score will be dropped only if the student has turned in all writing assignments.
100 points each = 300 possible points (After drop)

Lab Assignments (6)
Students will be given six lab assignments relating to the writing process.
25 points each = 125 possible points

AP Style/Current Events/Readings Quizzes (5)
There will be five AP Style, Current Events and Readings quizzes. The AP Style portion will be open book.
20 points each = 100 possible points

Social Media
Students must Tweet at least 3 times per week starting Jan. 25. Tweets should focus on local, state, or international news events OR campus news. When applicable, they should link to related stories and include your own commentary. At least one of the Tweets should be campus-based or should directly affect Eastfield students. These Tweets should emphasize how readers are affected, not simply tell them about an event on campus.
50 possible points

Portfolio
Students will compile a digital portfolio on www.contently.com of all published stories and selected lab assignments that can be easily shared with others.
50 possible points

Classroom Participation
Students will be graded on participation in classroom discussions and assistance with peer reviews of student stories.
Value: 50 Points
Total Possible Points in Course: 1,000

Grading Scale
A = 900-1,000 points
B = 800-899 points
C = 700-799 points
D = 600-699 points
F = 0-599 points

Submitting Work
All work must be turned in through eCampus or in class, based on the instructor’s directions. Please do not send in any assignments through email unless you ask the instructor first. If you have any problems submitting, please let me know immediately. To avoid technical glitches, it’s best not to wait until the last minute to submit quizzes and assignments since you have an entire week to complete them in most cases. Note that I am much more understanding about extenuating circumstances if you communicate with me before the due date and if you are an active student in the class who regularly meets the posted deadlines for your assignments.

Eastfield College Email Policy
Faculty and students must have and use a DCCCD account* for all correspondence relating to academic coursework. I cannot communicate with you about grades via email unless you are using a DCCCD account. If you do not have a DCCCD account and wish to discuss your grade, you will need to contact me via telephone or set up an appointment to meet on campus.

*For information on setting up a DCCCD student email account, go to: http://www.dcccd.edu/SS/OnlineSvs/Pages/MSOffice.aspx. You may email the instructor through your DCCCD account or through eCampus by clicking on the Send Email option under Tools. DO NOT send messages through Course Messages because it does not send me a notification when you do.

Withdrawing from the Class
If you are considering dropping this class, please contact me immediately. Many times, there might be a better alternative than dropping a class. If we cannot find a more satisfactory solution, then it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to withdraw formally from the course or courses. The last day to withdraw with a grade of “W” for the Spring 2019 semester is April 17. Failure to drop or withdraw officially from a course will result in you receiving no credit for any remaining assignments and will like result in a failing grade for the course. For more information, please follow this link: http://www.eastfieldcollege.edu/ari/Drop.asp

Students on Financial Aid
If you are receiving Financial Aid, you must attend and participate in this class prior to the certification date of Feb. 4. Do not drop or stop attending any class without consulting the Financial Aid Office. Changes in your enrollment level and failing grades may require that you repay financial aid funds.

Academic Honesty
Your enrollment indicates acceptance of the DCCCD Code of Student Conduct published in the DCCCD Catalog at https://www1.dcccd.edu/catalog/ss/code.cfm. Academic dishonesty is a serious offense that includes, but is not limited to, cheating on tests, plagiarism and collusion.

*Cheating includes copying from another student’s test or homework paper, using unauthorized materials, collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test, knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, or soliciting the contents of an unadministered test, and substituting for another person to take a test or complete an assignment.
*Plagiarism* involves partially or entirely copying an author’s sentences or words and presenting it as your own work in a paper, quiz, blog, or discussion post. You cannot mix the author’s words with your own or “plug” your synonyms into the author’s sentence structure. The author’s words, phrases and sentences must be put in your words, in your style of writing. When you do this, you are demonstrating understanding and comprehension. **If you summarize, paraphrase or directly quote from an author, you must use quotation marks and the appropriate documentation because the ‘idea(s)’ still belong to the author. Simply citing a source is not enough when taking information word for word from another source.**

*Collusion* is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of course requirements.

**Plagiarism/Charting/Collusion Penalties**
If plagiarism, cheating, or collusion is discovered, it will result in a zero on the assignment or test upon the first offense. Second and subsequent offenses may result in a failing grade for the course and/or other penalties under the college’s Code of Conduct. Students who plagiarize are also unlikely to be published in The Et Cetera in the future.

**Obtaining Final Course Grades**
Final Grade Reports are not mailed. Convenient access is available online at www.econnect.dcccd.edu. Use your identification number when you log onto eConnect. Your grades will also be printed on your Student Advising Report.

**Classroom Conduct and Responsibility**
Each student should follow the DCCCD’s policies, procedures, and regulations concerning student conduct. All students shall obey the law, show respect for properly constituted authority, and observe correct standards of conduct. This class includes discussion about sensitive subjects including racism, sexism, and violence, and it is important that all students respect their classmates’ opinions. If a student fails to comply with classroom etiquette procedures and/or is disruptive in class, the student will be asked to leave the classroom and will be counted absent for that class day.

**Classroom Etiquette and Rules**
Students are expected to respect their classmates and instructor during all discussions and also adhere to the following classroom rules:
1. Turn off or silence cell phones before class begins
2. Come to class prepared by having completed readings and other assignments
3. Bring required textbooks and supplies to class
4. Notify the instructor if you know you will miss a class
5. No food is allowed in the journalism lab without consent of the instructor. Drinks must have a top and should be kept away from the computers.

**Computer and Electronics Use**
This classroom is equipped with 12 Macs which will be used for writing stories, completing lab assignments, and taking quizzes/exams. If you would prefer to use your own laptop, you are welcome to bring it. However, no computers should be used during class for any other reason. If you are on your computer or cell phone during class, I will assume you are looking up something to share with the class and will call on you accordingly. If you have an emergency that you need to take care of, please step outside the classroom.

**Key Semester Dates**

**January 23:** First day of class.

**February 4:** Certification Date. Students who have not attended class by Feb. 4 will not be certified as active class members.

**February 28 & March 1:** Professional Development Days for faculty. No classes.

**March 11-15:** Spring Break. Campus closed.

**April 17:** Final day to withdraw with a “W”

**April 19:** Holiday. Campus closed.

**May 13-16:** Final Exams

**May 20:** Course grades posted on eCampus
## Tentative Course Calendar (Will Change)

| Week 1: Jan. 23 | Introductions and Media Writing Review  
Course expectations and requirements  
Story 1 Assignments: Baseline writing  
Read over syllabus and bring any questions to class Monday |
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| Week 2: Jan. 28 and 30 | Importance of Social Media in Journalism (Chapter 8)  
Twitter Assignments  
Leads and Nut Graphs  
AP Style, Grammar and Spelling  
Word Choice  
ASAP: Find subject for Narrative Project |
| Week 3: Feb. 4 and 6 | Narrative Non-Fiction Writing  
Interviewing and Research  
Importance of Observation  
Revision/Editing: Killing Your Darlings |
| Week 4: Feb. 11 and 13 | Narrative Non-Fiction Writing  
Story Structure and Key Elements  
Importance of Dialogue |
| Week 5: Feb. 18 and 20 | Narrative Non-Fiction Writing  
Anecdotes  
Quotes and Attribution  
Scene Setting |
| Week 6: Feb. 25 and 27 | Writing for the Internet vs. Print  
Investigative Reporting |
| Week 7: March 4 and 6 | Investigative Reporting  
Working on Narrative Project with Instructor Feedback |
| Week 8: March 11-17 | SPRING BREAK and TIPA Conference  
No Assignments |
| Week 9: March 18 and 20 | Column and Editorial Writing  
Review Writing |
| Week 10: March 25 and 27 | Editorial Writing  
Column Writing  
Review Writing |
| Week 11: April 1 and 3 | Broadcast Journalism and Video |
| Week 12: April 8 and 10 | Broadcast Journalism and Video |
| Week 13: April 15 and 17 | Investigative and In-Depth Reporting  
Law & Ethics |
| Week 14: April 22 and 24 | Public Relations |
| Week 15: April 29 and May 1 | Press Release Writing  
Lab: Press Release Writing |
| Week 16: May 6 and 8 | Work on final projects |
| Week 17: May 13-16 | Multimedia Presentations during final exam period |