

# Reporting

Journalism 2346–Section 001 | II Summer 2011

**Instructor: Dr. Erika Pribanic-Smith**

**Office:** 2114 Fine Arts Building

**Hours:** 10-10:30 a.m. Mon. & Thurs., and by appt.

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Note: Because of other department and university duties, office hours will occasionally be cancelled. Cancellations will be posted on the office door and, when possible, announced in class or by email.

**Prerequisite:** Completion of JOUR 1345 with grade of C (2.0/4.0 scale) or higher.

**Course Description:** Students will receive information on and practice in the crafting of complex journalistic stories, with an emphasis on ethics, interviewing, and writing of general news stories, features, and specialized stories. This course will focus primarily on the mastery of print journalism, with additional instruction in convergence strategies.

**Learning Goals and Objectives:** Students will learn how to refine and research a story idea, gather facts and opinions from news sources, write the story, and develop it into a publishable article. Students will write longer, more complex articles for a range of traditional print “beats.” The following learning goals and objectives have been set for students in this class and all classes in the journalism sequence:

- Discuss the concepts, ideas and foundation of freedom of speech and press, including the role media play in today’s society.
- Conduct research while using ethical and legal principles to produce quality work.
- Identify the theories and principles of reporting for the media, including the presentation of information via images, graphics, visual communication and the written word.
- Discuss today’s news and information disseminated through various local and national media.
- Demonstrate creative, critical and independent thinking to interview sources, conduct research and write unbiased media stories.
- Discuss fundamental numerical and statistical concepts and demonstrate them in the writing and reporting of articles.
- Operate basic communication technology and software.
- Demonstrate correct Associated Press style and grammar when reporting and writing articles, and edit stories utilizing journalistic style, ethics and principles.
- Write quality journalistic stories, specifically news and feature stories, while working under deadlines.
- Critique their own work and the works of others according to the principles of accuracy, fairness, clarity, style and grammatical correctness.

**Textbook and Materials:**

- Writing and Reporting News* by Carole Rich (latest edition)
- When Words Collide* by Lauren Kessler & Duncan McDonald (latest edition)
- The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (latest edition; REQUIRED)
- The Fort Worth Star-Telegram* – Arlington edition (available online and by FA 118)
- The Shorthorn* (available online, by FA 118 and by Einstein in FA North)

**Suggested supplies:** A jump drive for saving class work, a tape recorder for interviews, a notebook for interview notes, a dictionary and/or speller

*NOTE: Students need to bring their AP Stylebook and textbooks to every class.*

## Course Policies

**Course Requirements:** Students' grades for this course will be based on several major assignments, quizzes, and various in-class writing and participation activities.

**Out-of-class assignments.** Students will have four story assignments to complete outside of class to practice the reporting strategies and skills they are learning each week. The instructor will distribute assignment sheets detailing the requirements for each assignment. The assignment lengths will vary from 500 to 1,000 words per story. General story requirements are outlined later in the syllabus.

**Quizzes.** Students will have quizzes EVERY MONDAY. Each quiz will cover the front page of the *Star-Telegram's* Arlington section for Monday through Thursday of the previous week, as well as the AP Style sections noted in the syllabus for that week.

**In-class activities/participation.** Throughout the course, students will engage in team and individual activities and writing projects designed to prepare them for their outside assignments and to practice skills discussed in class.

## Grade Calculation

Assignment	% of grade	Grading scale
Out-of-class assignments	40	A – 90-100 percent
In-class assignments/participation	40	B – 80-89 percent
Quizzes	20	C – 70-79 percent
		D – 60-69 percent
		F – below 60 percent

**Work Expectations:** This course is intensive. Students often will be working on several projects and/or homework assignments at the same time in addition to keeping up with readings for classes and quizzes. Lectures cannot cover in sufficient depth everything students need to know about reporting. Students are expected to be prepared for class by reading their textbooks.

Effective communication requires practice, so students can expect to write every week (if not every day) and to complete both out-of-class and in-class assignments. Students will need to begin their projects in advance and not start working on them the night before they are due. If students are struggling with the material or the workload, they should see the instructor during office hours to discuss it.

**Assignment Expectations:** Writing complex journalistic stories will require students to attend certain events, both on and off campus. Students will be given advance notice of these required events so they can arrange their schedules accordingly. When possible, students will be given a choice of days and times for required events such as government meetings. Other instructor-approved substitutions may be made, such as attending a city council meeting in a town other than one in the greater Arlington area. Substitutions for required events only can be made with approval in advance.

Reporting requires writing on deadline and some event and meeting stories may require students to turn in completed stories a few hours after events conclude. This means students will have to (a) arrange their schedule to accommodate the story as well as the event and (b) arrange access post-event to an Internet-connected computer.

Assignments will be accepted as Word document email attachments only. Students must have access to a computer equipped with Word to write assignments as well as to communicate via e-mail. Students do not have to own a computer, but they must be able to access a computer and Internet connection on-campus or off-campus.

**Behavior expectations:** Students are learning to be communication professionals and are expected to model the following professional behaviors in class:

- Arrive to class on time and ready to participate.
- Turn cell phones to silent/vibrate.
- Respect others; don't speak when someone else is speaking.
- Listen closely and disagree calmly with others opinions.
- Do not text message, check personal e-mail, instant message, surf the Web or study for other classes during lab time.

**Students WILL be asked to leave the class if they are inattentive and/or using the computer for activities not related to JOUR 2346, and they will not be given an opportunity to make up missed work.** Students should NOT be on the computers unless working on an assignment that requires it.

**Attendance Expectations:** Students are to treat the class like a job; they are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. Note that work completed in class weighs heavily on the student's grade; therefore, failure to come to class will affect students' grades adversely. Students will receive zeros for work completed during the student's absence, except for one free unexcused absence during the term and **documented** excused absences (see below). In those cases, students must make arrangements to make up missed writing practices and quizzes (if applicable) within 24 hours of the absence. Group discussions cannot be made up for any reason.

**Tardiness will not be tolerated.** Students who do not arrive by 8:05 will be counted absent and will not be permitted to use a free unexcused absence to make up work.

**Late work:** Out-of-class assignments are due as a Word document attachment via email by 5 p.m. on the due date. The assignment will continue to drop 10 percent for every calendar day it is late (including weekends). Therefore, out-of-class assignments submitted between 5:01 p.m. on the due date and 5 p.m. the following day will have 10 percent deducted. Twenty percent will be deducted for assignments submitted between 5:01 p.m. on the second day and 5 p.m. on the third day. An out-of-class assignment that is more than three days late without prior permission will not be graded, and the student will receive a zero on the assignment. Late assignments also are ineligible for regrading.

Because assignments are submitted electronically, students are expected to submit assignments even if they will not attend class on the due date. If **extreme circumstances** prevent a student from completing an assignment on time, the student must request an extension AHEAD OF TIME if at all possible and present documentation as outlined for absences below. Note that only **unexpected emergencies (such as a death, grave illness or debilitating injury)** will excuse a student from completing an assignment; because of the length of time students are given to complete assignments, they should plan accordingly for religious, personal or professional obligations that may arise around the time that an assignment is due. Computer and Internet malfunctions will NOT be given consideration for late assignments. Students should give themselves plenty of time to complete assignments so that they may regroup in the wake of a technological snafu.

In-class assignments are due by 10 a.m. on the class day, unless otherwise specified. The same late penalty applies.

The instructor will respond to student submissions with a confirmation email. Students who do not receive a confirmation email within 12 hours of submitting an assignment can assume the instructor did not receive it.

**Excused absences:** Students must contact the instructor BEFORE the absence via email or phone in order for it to be excused (consideration given for serious injuries and illnesses).

Students may be excused from class with proper documentation for the following reasons:

- Religious holidays.** A memo MUST BE TURNED IN BEFORE the holiday to count as an excused absence.
- Documented medical excuses** (a doctor's note or prescription). This may include a documented medical excuse for a family member or pet.
- Documented legal excuses** such as a jury duty notice or court summons.
- Death in the family.** Students must provide a funeral program and the phone number of the funeral home for verification. Unfortunately, a few unscrupulous students in the past have forged these documents, so the instructor has to have the phone number to call and verify.
- Car accidents.** Students must submit a copy of the report filed with the police department.
- Course-related activities for other university classes.** Students must provide a dated letter of request from the instructor of the conflicting class BEFORE the absence.
- University competitive events** (athletes, not fans). Students will need to submit a letter from the coach or athletic department BEFORE the absence.
- Paid employment excuse.** The student's supervisor must request the absence in a signed letter on business letterhead. Students may have only ONE of these during the semester, and it needs to be cleared BEFORE the absence.
- Job/internship interview.** Students must turn in a memo BEFORE the absence. A business card or letter on company letterhead confirming the interview must be turned in as well (this can be submitted after the absence). Students may only have ONE of these during the semester.

**Grading procedures:** Effective media writing requires attention to spelling, grammar, AP style, and factual accuracy. On each writing assignment, the instructor will assign a basic content grade based on the story's completeness, accuracy, lead, organization, transitions, flow, and creativity. Points for spelling, grammatical, stylistic and factual errors will be deducted from the content grade as follows:

- Spelling – 1 percentage point per error (2 percent for name misspellings)
- Grammar – 1/2 percentage point per error
- AP Style – 1/2 percentage point per error
- Fact errors – 5 percentage points per error

Students who fabricate information not included in the fact sheets distributed for in-class assignments will receive an automatic zero on the assignment and will not be given an opportunity to redo the assignment.

**Basic story instructions:** The following is a list of requirements that students should follow with **every story** unless otherwise specified in their assignment sheet:

- Unless otherwise specified, each story must have at least FIVE HUMAN sources **CITED WITHIN THE STORY** (just listing them on the source list does not mean they were used).
- The following do NOT count as official sources EVER: information that has been printed in books, newsletters, magazines and newspapers, or information that has been broadcast on television or the radio. Internet sources must be cleared by the instructor in advance.
- Sources need to be appropriate to the story subject. For example, if students are writing a story about a new treatment for a disease, they should talk to health professionals and researchers. Students also may interview disease sufferers and/or their families or members of disease-related organizations (American Diabetes Association, American Cancer Society, etc.). Interviewing random students would be inappropriate to the story.
- For each outside assignment, students will submit a source list that includes the names and contact information for everyone students spoke to for the story. The instructor randomly pulls these source lists and contacts people on the list. Official documents (when required) also must be listed. **The instructor will not grade assignments that are missing a source list.** It may be resubmitted but will be penalized according to the late policy.

**Extra credit:** Students may earn extra credit by having class work published or demonstrating editorial prowess.

**Publications.** Students cannot turn in already-published material for a class assignment. However, if students are able to get a story published after they have turned it in, then they are eligible for 10 extra percentage points on assignments that appear in professional publications, 5 extra percentage points on assignments that appear in University publications (such as *The Shorthorn*, UTA Magazine, and University-related Web sites). There is no limit on the number of stories for which students can get publication extra credit, as long as the stories are published DURING THE SEMESTER that students are in this class.

**Professional errors.** The first person to bring in a spelling, grammar, style or factual error from a professional newspaper (not *The Shorthorn* or other student newspaper) will receive 2 points of extra credit on the in-class writing assignment grade. A maximum of 20 points for finding errors may be earned during the semester. To get extra credit for an error, the student must write a short memo that includes his or her name, the section number, the date and a one-sentence description of the mistake. Attach a copy of THE ARTICLE ONLY with the error circled; this may be a clipping from the magazine or newspaper or a photocopy.

**Instructor errors.** The first person to point out any unintentional spelling, grammar, style or factual errors in classroom materials will receive 2 points of extra credit on the in-class writing assignment grade. A maximum of 20 points for finding errors may be earned during the semester. To get extra credit for an error, students must write a short memo that includes his or her name, the section number, the date and a one-sentence description of the mistake. Attach a photocopy of the class material with the error circled. The instructor appreciates it when students point out mistakes on Power Point slides, but they are not eligible for extra credit.

**Revising assignments.** Any of the four major out-of-class assignments may be corrected and resubmitted for regrading (unless it was submitted late when initially due or the student violates the academic honesty policy). To earn points, students must submit BOTH of the following as SEPARATE Word document email attachments by 5 p.m. on the assigned revision due date:

- A corrected version of the story with all errors corrected according to the instructor's comments on the original version. ALL CORRECTIONS MUST BE BOLDFACED OR OF A DIFFERENT FONT COLOR THAN THE OTHER TEXT.
- An error memo that explains the changes. **Students will not regain points for any changes for which there is not a memo item.**

The error memo will describe each error and the correction made and summarize in a sentence or two the applicable style or grammar rule, attributed to the textbook, AP Stylebook, grammar guide or dictionary.

For example:

**Error:** 1212 University Avenue

**Correction:** 1212 University Ave.

**Explanation:** According to the AP Stylebook, students need to abbreviate "avenue" in a numbered address.

If the errors have been corrected properly, the student can earn back a percentage of points lost on the initial assignment at the instructor's discretion. In-class assignments are NOT eligible for regrading.

When the instructor initially returns each assignment, students will receive a due date for revisions of that assignment, and revisions must be submitted via email by 5 p.m. on that date. There is no late policy for revisions; **the instructor will not regrade any assignments that do not meet the revision deadline.**

## Department, College, and University Policies

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of federal legislation entitled *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

As a faculty member, the instructor is required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their needs for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Students should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester if they need accommodations in this course.

Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at <http://www.uta.edu/disability>. Also, students may visit the Office for Students with Disabilities in room 102 of University Hall or call them at (817) 272-3364.

**Student Support Services:** The University supports a variety of student success programs to help them connect with the University and achieve academic success. They include learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at (817) 272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.

**Bomb Threats:** If anyone is tempted to call in a bomb threat, be aware the UTA will attempt to trace the phone call and prosecute all responsible parties. Every effort will be made to avoid cancellation of presentations/tests caused by bomb threats. Unannounced alternate sites will be available for these classes. The instructor will make students aware of alternate class sites in the event that their classroom is not available.

**Guests:** Students sometimes ask to bring guests to class with them. Because guests are often a distraction, the instructor generally discourages students from bringing guests such as friends, parents, spouses, significant others and children. However, the instructor is willing to accommodate guests in the classroom on a case by case basis if a request is submitted IN ADVANCE. If the instructor approves the guest coming to class, the guest must follow class policies regarding behavior (including computer usage) and should not become a distraction to the instructor or students, or he or she will be asked to leave. Be aware that seating accommodations will be provided to the guest only if all registered students for the course have a place to sit and a computer at which to work.

**Drop policy:** It is the responsibility of the student to initiate the drop policy. Students need to go to their major departments to drop a class. (For example, if a student is a HISTORY MAJOR and wants to drop a MATH class, the student needs to go to the HISTORY DEPARTMENT to drop the class.)

**E-culture policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University e-mail address as an official means of communication with students. Through the use of e-mail, UT-Arlington is able to provide students with relevant and timely information, designed to facilitate student success. In particular, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation may be sent to students through e-mail.

All students are assigned an e-mail account, and information about activating and using it is available at <http://www.uta.edu/email>. New students (first semester at UTA) are able to activate their e-mail accounts 24 hours after registering for courses. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active as long as a student is enrolled at UT-Arlington. Students are responsible for checking their e-mail regularly.

**Grade policy:** Department policy prevents the instructor from sending out grade information via e-mail. Students may come to office hours to talk about their grades.

**Grade grievances:** If students feel they have been assigned a grade unfairly, they may take advantage of a grade grievance process. Please refer to the university catalog for more information.

**Academic honesty:** Academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form at The University of Texas at Arlington. All people involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University.

“Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.” (Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22).

Communicators’ professional reputation is their greatest strength. Honesty and ethical behavior build a positive professional reputation. Students are expected to model the ethical behavior in this course that they would be expected to follow as professional communicators. In addition to examples of cheating, plagiarism and collusion described in the student handbook, the following behaviors in this class also constitute academic dishonesty:

- Making up sources, information or quotes except as explicitly specified for certain class assignments
- Failing to properly attribute quotes and ideas to their sources
- Asking someone to lie about a student interviewing him or her
- Getting other people to write or edit class assignments except as explicitly authorized by the instructor
- Lying to a source to get information
- Copying a published story or using information from a published news account, Web page, database, research paper or press release without proper attribution
- Turning in a story students already have published or written for another class

The instructor takes academic honesty seriously. At the very minimum, violating the university or class standards for academic honesty will result in a zero on the offending class assignment, quiz or exam. Depending on the severity of the violation, the instructor may assign students an “F” for the course. The instructor will report any violations to the Office of Judicial Affairs and will pursue hearings there if necessary. Anyone who has received a zero for violating academic honesty policies will not be eligible for extra credit points or able to revise specified assignments to regain points.

### Course Schedule & Due Dates

The course schedule is tentative and is subject to change. Minor changes will be noted in class; major changes will result in the handout of a revised schedule. Due dates for major assignments and exams are unlikely to change. All readings for the week should be completed prior to class. The instructor will distribute supplemental material throughout the semester for which students also are responsible.

Week	Dates	Topics/Class Readings
1	July 12	<b>Course Overview/Culture of Journalism</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 1</i>
	July 13	<b>The Basic News Story and Story Organization</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 3 &amp; 9</i>
	July 14	Writing Practice **MINI-ASSIGNMENT GIVEN**
2	July 18	<b>QUIZ 1: AP Style, A-E Curiosity &amp; Story Ideas</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 5</i>
	July 19	<b>Interviewing Techniques &amp; Using Quotes</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 7</i>
	July 20	Writing Practice
	July 21	<b>Leads &amp; Nut Graphs</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 8</i> **MINI-ASSIGNMENT DUE** **ASSIGNMENT 1 GIVEN: EVENT STORY**
3	July 25	<b>QUIZ 2: AP STYLE, F-O</b> Writing Practice
	July 26	<b>Beat Reporting</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 19</i>
	July 27	<b>Speeches, News Conferences &amp; Meetings</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 20</i>
	July 28	Writing Practice **ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE** **ASSIGNMENT 2 GIVEN: ISSUE STORY**
4	Aug. 1	<b>QUIZ 3: AP STYLE, P-Z Crime &amp; Punishment</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 21 &amp; 22</i>
	Aug. 2	<b>Writing Practice</b>
	Aug. 3	<b>Features and Profiles</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 11 &amp; 18</i>
	Aug. 4	Writing Practice **ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE** **ASSIGNMENT 3 GIVEN: FEATURE STORY**

5	Aug. 8	<b>QUIZ 4: Punctuation, Media Law and Social Media Guidelines</b> <b>Online Journalism – Overview</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 2, 4 &amp; 13</i>
	Aug. 9	<b>Online Journalism – Blogging &amp; Interacting with Readers</b>
	Aug. 10	<b>Online Journalism – Reporting through Multimedia</b>
	Aug. 11	Writing Practice
FINAL	Aug. 15	<b>**ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE by 10 a.m.**</b>