

# Reporting

Journalism 2346–Section 003 | Spring 2012

12:30-1:50 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays

Architecture 319

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

**Office:** 2114 Fine Arts Building

**Hours:** Tues. & Thurs., 9:30-11 a.m., and by appt.

**Cell Phone:** 205-239-5973

**Email:** epsmith@uta.edu

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. 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.

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.

**Required Textbook and Materials:**

- Writing and Reporting News* by Carole Rich (latest edition)
- The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (latest edition)
- 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 to every class. \*\***

## Course Policies

### Grade Calculation:

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

### Out-of-class work

*Writing Assignments (20 percent; 10 percent each).* Students will have two 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.

*Writing portfolio (10 percent).* At the end of the semester, students will submit writing portfolios that contain their three best stories from the semester as well as their resumes. The purpose of this assignment is to help prepare students to land internships and student media jobs.

*News Tweets (10 percent).* Social media is an important avenue for posting and sharing news. Students will use Twitter to see how news organizations use social media to post news, and students will share news on their own Twitter accounts with the hashtag #JOUR2346.

Each week (Monday through Friday), students will be responsible for sharing on Twitter TWO news stories:

- 1) A local story (UTA, DFW area, Tarrant County or Texas)
- 2) A national or international news story

In order to find news stories, students should follow a variety of University, metroplex, and national/international news organizations (see what the instructor follows from the @UTAReporting account for ideas).

Students may spread out their stories over the week or tweet them all at once.

The instructor will re-tweet stories from students and may share stories that students have not posted as well. Students should keep up with all news stories posted (either by the instructor or re-tweeted from students) @UTAReporting; current events quiz questions will come exclusively from these posts, and some may be discussed in class.

**Students should save a copy of all assignments (both completed in class and out of class) so they can choose their three favorite at the end of the course.** Students will have an opportunity to create and/or refine their resumes in class. Additional details will be provided at a later date.

### In-class work

*Writing practice and discussion exercises (45 percent).* Throughout the course, students will engage in team and individual discussion exercises and writing projects designed to prepare them for their outside assignments and to practice skills discussed in class. The instructor will distribute assignment sheets detailing the requirements for each assignment.

*Quizzes (10 percent).* Students will have four quizzes during the semester covering specific AP Style sections as noted in the syllabus and current events items from Twitter (see below). The AP portion of the quizzes will be open-book.

*Attendance (5 percent).* Attendance will be taken each day. For each unexcused absence (beyond one freebie for the term), students will have one full percentage point deducted from the final course grade (up to a total of 5 percent).

STUDENTS MUST PRESENT APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION **UPON RETURNING TO CLASS** FOR THEIR ABSENCES TO BE EXCUSED (see below). To take advantage of the one free unexcused absence, students must submit the freebie form (in the syllabus folder on Blackboard) **upon returning to class** to avoid the absence counting against them. **FREE ABSENCES MAY NOT BE TAKEN ON QUIZ DAYS.**

**Keep in mind that an excused absence (or free unexcused absence) does NOT excuse the student from work completed that day.** It is the student's responsibility to check Blackboard for Power Points and in-class assignments completed during the absence. Failure to submit makeup work will result in a 0.

Students should consult the instructor to set a deadline for makeup work.

Tardiness will not be tolerated. **STUDENTS WHO ARE MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES TARDY WILL BE COUNTED ABSENT for the attendance grade** but should remain in class to complete that day's work.

#### **Excused absences:**

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.

**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.

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.

Assignments will be submitted via Blackboard. Students must have access to a computer to submit 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.

**Late work:** Any assignment submitted even one minute after the deadline will be lowered 10 percent. The assignment will continue to drop 10 percent for every calendar day it is late (including weekends).

Therefore, an assignment due at 5 p.m. that is 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.

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 (above).

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.

#### **Grading procedures:**

Effective media writing requires objectivity, credible sources, and careful attention to spelling, grammar, AP style, and factual accuracy.

On each out-of-class writing assignment and in-class writing practice, the instructor will assign a basic content grade based on requirements spelled out in advance. Each writing assignment handout will include a rubric that explains exactly how the instructor will grade that assignment.

Points for nonobjective reporting (using first-person language or bias words), failure to attribute information to a source, and 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 percentage point per error
- AP Style – 1/2 percentage point per error
- Fact errors – 5 percentage points per error
- Nonobjective reporting – 2 percentage points per error
- Failure to attribute – 2 percentage points per error

**If a student has more than 10 spelling, grammar and/or style errors in an assignment, the instructor will not finish grading the assignment.** The student will be given a new due date and will be required to visit the AP, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation Lab for assistance with the assignment. When the student resubmits the assignment, he/she must also submit a form signed and dated by the lab instructor. The student will be expected to keep up with other class deadlines that may fall in the interim.

Regular late penalties will apply for assignments resubmitted after the new due date. Students who fail to resubmit the assignment will receive a zero.

**A note on sources:** Unless otherwise specified, each out-of-class story must have at least four **HUMAN** sources **CITED WITHIN THE STORY**. The following do NOT count as official sources: information that

has been printed in books, newsletters, magazines, newspapers, or the Internet, or information that has been broadcast on television or the radio.

**Behavior expectations:**

Students are expected to remain focused on the task at hand for the duration of class each day.

**Students will be asked to leave the class if they are engaging in any of the following activities:**

- Using cellphones or Smartphones for ANY reason. Keep it silenced and in your pocket/bag for the duration of class.
- Speaking out of turn.
- Studying or working on assignments for other classes.
- Reading any sort of print media (unless required to do so for a lab activity).
- Utilizing the computer for any reason other than in-class assignments.
  - o When the class is not working on an assignment, keep the monitor off and mouse upside down.
  - o When the class IS working on an assignment, do not use the computer to check email or social media, surf the Web, IM, or anything else unrelated to the assignment.

**Students who are asked to leave will be counted as absent for that day (no freebie allowed) and will not be given an opportunity to make up missed work.**

## **Department, College, and University Policies**

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/ses/fao>).

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline by calling 817-272-6107, sending a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or visiting [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory will be asked to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS) about the course and how it was taught. Instructions on how to access the SFS system will be sent directly to students through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback data is required by state law; student participation in the SFS program is voluntary.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10 percent or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.


**Academic Integrity:** At UT Arlington, academic dishonesty is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any form, including (but 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” (UT System Regents’ Rule 50101, §2.2). Suspected violations of academic integrity standards will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from the University.

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

### 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 distribution of a revised schedule.

Week	Dates	Topics/Class Readings
1	Jan. 17	<b>Course Overview</b>
	Jan. 19	<b>Culture of Journalism/News &amp; Society</b>
2	Jan. 24	<b>Beat Reporting</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 19</i>
	Jan. 26	<b>Curiosity &amp; Story Ideas</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 5</i>
3	Jan. 31	<b>Paraphrasing, Quotes &amp; Attribution</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 7</i>
	<b>Feb. 1</b>	<b>CENSUS DATE</b>
	Feb. 2	<b>Writing Practice: Paraphrasing, Quotes &amp; Attribution</b>
4	Feb. 7	<b>QUIZ 1: AP Style A-E and current events Jan. 17-Feb. 3</b>
	Feb. 9	<b>Leads &amp; Nut Graphs</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 8</i>
5	Feb. 14	<b>Writing Practice: Leads</b>
	Feb. 16	<b>The Basic News Story and Story Organization</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 3 &amp; 9</i>
6	Feb. 21	<b>Writing Practice: Inverted Pyramid Story</b>
	Feb. 23	<b>Interviewing Techniques</b>
7	Feb. 28	<b>Writing Practice: Interview Write-up</b>
	March 1	<u>EVENT ASSIGNMENT GIVEN</u> <b>QUIZ 2: AP Style F-O and current events Feb. 6-Feb. 28</b>
8	March 6	<b>Speeches, News Conferences &amp; Meetings</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 20</i>
	March 8	<b>Writing Practice: Government Meeting</b>
	March 13	<b>NO CLASS</b>
	March 15	<b>NO CLASS</b>
9	March 20	<b>Crime &amp; Punishment</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 21 &amp; 22</i>
	March 22	<b>Writing Practice: Police Story</b>
10	March 27	<b>**EVENT STORY DUE BY 5 P.M.**</b> <b>Writing Workshop: Event Story</b>
	<b>March 29</b>	<b>LAST DAY TO DROP</b>

	March 30	<u>ISSUE ASSIGNMENT GIVEN</u> <b>QUIZ 3: AP Style P-Z and current events March 1-29 (excluding spring break)</b>
11	April 3	<b>Disasters, Weather &amp; Tragedies</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 23</i>
	April 5	<b>Writing Practice: Tornado Story</b>
12	April 10	<b>Online Journalism – Overview</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 2, 4 &amp; 13</i>
	April 12	<b>Online Journalism – Blogging &amp; Interacting with Readers</b>
13	April 17	<b>Online Journalism – Reporting through Multimedia</b>
	April 19	<b>Online Journalism – Writing Practice: Web Package, Part 1</b>
14	April 24	<b>Online Journalism – Writing Practice: Web Package, Part 2</b>
	April 26	<b>QUIZ 4: AP Style Punctuation, Media Law and Social Media Guidelines and current events March 30-April 25</b>
15	May 1	<b>Media Jobs and Resume Workshop</b> <i>Writing and Reporting News: Ch. 24</i>
	May 3	<b>**ISSUE STORY DUE BY 5 p.m.**</b> <b>Writing Workshop: Issue Story</b>
FINAL	May 10	<b>Portfolio due to FA Room 118 by 1:30 p.m.</b>