

**What:** Writing for Mass Media, COMM 2311-007, Spring 2016  
**Who:** Marti Harvey  
**When:** MWF 11 to 11:50 a.m.  
**Where:** Classroom - FA411A  
**More where:** My office - Fine Arts Building 2120  
**How:** [mharvey@uta.edu](mailto:mharvey@uta.edu)  
**How:** 817-272-2163 (Department of Communication)  
**More whens:** My office hours - MWF 9 to 10 a.m. or by appointment  
**About me:** <https://www.uta.edu/mentis/public/#profile/profile/view/id/12427/category/1>  
**If there is an in-class emergency:** call 817-272-3003

**Here's what you'll need:**

- Rich, C. (2014). *Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method*, Wadsworth:Boston, (Seventh Edition)
- 2015 Associated Press Stylebook
- News U Language Primer
- A current MAV ID card with funds available for printing in class
- Regular access to Blackboard
- Something for note taking

**Here's what you'll need to do:**

**Bring your AP Stylebook to class every day. Also, save your work frequently and in more than one place. Computer crashes that result in lost work will not count as an excuse for not turning in an assignment on time.**

**What this course is about:**

It is an introduction to the theories and techniques of information gathering and basic media writing with an emphasis on proper mechanics and AP Style.

**Here is what you should expect to learn:**

- Be able to explain the definitions of news
- Be able to explain the concepts of libel, ethics and responsible journalism
- Be able to demonstrate basic writing skills including correct use of grammar, punctuation and AP Style
- Be able to write effective leads
- Be able to demonstrate basic copy editing skills
- Be able to demonstrate college-level research and interviewing skills
- Be able to demonstrate skills needed for media writing
- Be able to explain and write in journalistic style

**Assumptions – The instructor assumes that the student:**

- Will learn the information outside of the classroom setting if the student is absent
- Has the necessary technical skills to use Blackboard, the Internet and word processing software
- Will monitor his/her grades weekly
- Has the ability to contact the instructor via UTA email for questions or concerns
- Has the basic English skills for writing a correct, complete sentence and paragraph
- Can purchase and read the materials required for the class

- Can actively focus and participate in class and outside of class
- Has access to a computer and printer

### **Here's what you'll do:**

- review assigned materials with the expectation of practicing important concepts in class
- write, interview, research, learn AP style, etc. for in-class writing assignments – these will be graded
- complete a final writing assignment on your own outside of class using all the elements learned about media writing
- discuss weekly current events and apply them to writing assignments
- take an AP Style exam and a final exam
- *NEWS U Language Primer* assignments

### **Final Grade Average in the Course will be based on:**

Tests 30%

*NewsU Language Primer* 10%

Writing Assignments 60%

*Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources if their performance drops below satisfactory levels.*

#### **Tests 30%**

Tests will consist of an AP style test worth 100 points, 10 current events quizzes worth 10 points each and 10 in-class exercises worth 10 points each. These will be given during class and will cover material from the textbook, Blackboard postings, lecture and in-class discussion.

#### ***NewsU Language Primer* 10%**

Students must enroll in *NewsU Language Primer* (an instructional supplement) at <http://www.newsu.org/courses> according to instructions given in class and on Blackboard. Students who are not enrolled in the NewsU portion of the class by the deadline given will receive a zero for all NewsU work. If you have technical problems enrolling in NewsU you must communicate that to the instructor BEFORE the sign up deadline.

All components of the *NewsU Language Primer* together make up 10 percent of the final course average. NewsU deadlines will be announced in class and posted in announcements on Blackboard.

#### **Writing Assignments 60%**

Assignments include, but are not limited to, concept practice, work samples (written and computer-based), current event discussion forms, active class participation, before-and-after class preparation and assigned readings. All assignments must be turned in **typed**. Handwritten assignments will not be accepted. All assignments must be turned in **by the deadline announced in class or posted on Blackboard** to be accepted for evaluation.

During the semester you will be required to keep a folder with all of your current events quizzes, in-class exercises and major writing assignments. Occasionally I will ask you to utilize these in class or with outside assignments. If you do not have this folder with you or you have not kept previous work, your grade could be affected. This folder will be 25% part of your last writing grade.

*NOTE: Bonus/ Extra Credit points will be available during the course based on instructor choices and decisions. Extra credit assignments will be posted in Blackboard periodically during the semester. If you receive a zero on one of the six writing assignments or a test, you will not be allowed to receive extra credit points. You may attempt up to 50 points of extra credit during the semester.*

**FINAL GRADES:**

900-1000 points - A

800-899 points - B

700-799 points - C

600-699 points - D

Below 600 points - F

**Work out of class:** A general rule of thumb is this: for every credit hour earned, a student should spend three hours per week working outside of class. Hence, a 3-credit course might have a minimum expectation of nine hours of reading, study, etc.

**Read the material and ask questions:**

I encourage you to ask questions in class. You can also make an appointment if you need to discuss questions you have regarding the materials covered. You can reach me at the email address on the top of the syllabus to set up a time.

**IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU REVIEW THE MATERIAL BEFORE CLASS.** Read the material and be prepared to apply it to in-class assignments.

**Come to class on time:**

You need to be in class to learn concepts through discussion and collaboration with others. You are expected to attend every class session and arrive on time. It will be difficult to pass my class if you do not attend regularly. You should not miss more than four classes in the semester. If you are late and have missed an in-class, graded assignment, you will receive a zero. No exceptions.

On exam day you are expected to arrive on time for the exam. Once the last person has completed the exam, I will consider the exam period closed. If you arrive to take the exam after everyone else has completed it, you will not be allowed to take the exam. If you are ill the day of the exam, you must send me an email before the end of the exam time, provide a doctor's note and schedule a time to complete the exam.

**I'll excuse you from assignments if:**

You will only be allowed to make up an assignment if you have an excused absence. Absences will be excused only if you are able to provide official documentation proving mandatory participation in a University-authorized athletic or academic activity; observance of a religious holy day; jury duty; serious illness; debilitating injury; or the death of an immediate family member. Outside of these parameters, I will be the judge of what constitutes an excused absence. Family functions, vacations, etc., do not constitute excused absences. In order to make up an assignment, you must notify me within three days of the missed assignment and the assignment must be turned in within five days of the missed assignment. To make up an assignment, you must contact me to make arrangements for turning in the assignment. I will not seek you out. If you miss the three-day deadline for contacting me you will receive a zero for the assignment. ALL assignments must be turned in BEFORE the last day of class to be accepted for evaluation.

Please find a friend in class who will fill you in on any information you miss due to an absence. I will not give private instruction sessions for those who miss class. If you have questions about information you missed in class, see me during my office hours listed above, but you are responsible for getting any notes, handouts, etc.

**Learn to use Blackboard:**

I use Blackboard to post assignments and information for class. If you do not know how to use Blackboard, ask someone to show you. I will use it extensively during the semester. Inability to access Blackboard due to technical problems or password issues is an issue you must discuss with the OIT department. I do not have the ability to solve technical issues with Blackboard. Inability to use Blackboard or inability to access a computer is not an excuse for incomplete assignments.

**Here are some things to know about my grading:**

- Writing assignments must be completed by the end of class unless I say otherwise.
- I'm obsessed with structure so make sure you tell your stories well

Your will get points for each of these elements:

- a well-written summary lede
- your story written in inverted pyramid style
- relevant and accurate quotes
- relevant research information and background information
- complete identification of sources and contact information
- stories written in journalistic style

Here's what I will count off for:

- AP style (-5 pts. each mistake)
- missed attributions (-5 pts. each mistake)
- incorrect quote construction (-5 pts. each mistake)
- improper grammar (-5 pts. each mistake)
- incorrect punctuation (-5 pts. each mistake)
- inaccurate information (-5 pts. each mistake)
- not following instructions (-10 pts. each mistake)

While the above is only a guideline, it will provide you with an idea of how I will grade your assignments. You will be provided with a specific rubric for each assignment which will further detail the grading of the assignment.

**If you think I graded you unfairly:** Any appeal of a grade in this course must follow the procedures and deadlines for grade-related grievances as published in the current undergraduate/graduate catalog. You can find the policy at [http://wweb.uta.edu/catalog/content/general/academic\\_regulations.aspx#19](http://wweb.uta.edu/catalog/content/general/academic_regulations.aspx#19).

**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://wweb.uta.edu/ses/fao>). **The drop date for the Spring 2016 semester is April 1.**

**Attendance:** At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I have established the following attendance policy. I will have a daily sign-in sheet. If you fail to sign in for the day, you will be counted absent. If you sign in for someone else you will be referred to the campus office of academic integrity. Class sign in sheets are state/federal documents and you could be penalized for placing false information on these sheets. I will use class participation as a factor in issuing final grades. If you attend class, participate in the practice assignments and discussions, I will take that into account if your grade is less than one percentage point from the next letter grade.

**Disability Accommodations:** UT 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)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. 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 disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the **Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)**. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting: **The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD)** [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364. **Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS)** [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671.

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.

**Title IX:** *The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit [uta.edu/eos](http://uta.edu/eos). For information regarding Title IX, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).*

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) 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.

**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" shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**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% 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.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, [which is located out the classroom door to the left, then right to the stairway at the end of the hall](#). When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

**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 visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Writing Center.** : The Writing Center, 411 Central Library, offers individual 40 minute sessions to review assignments, *Quick Hits* (5-10 minute quick answers to questions), and workshops on grammar and specific writing projects. Visit <https://uta.mywconline.com/> to register and make appointments. For hours, information about the writing workshops we offer, scheduling a classroom visit, and descriptions of the services we offer undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty members, please visit our website at [www.uta.edu/owl/](http://www.uta.edu/owl/).

**IF YOU PLAGIARIZE, YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO ON THE ASSIGNMENT WITH NO OPPORTUNITY FOR A MAKE-UP. DEPENDING ON THE SEVERITY OF THE CASE, YOU MAY FAIL THE CLASS. IF YOU ARE NOT SURE IF SOMETHING RISES TO THE LEVEL OF PLAGIARISM, ASK ME OR REFER TO PLAGIARISM GUIDELINES AT [HTTP://CRONKITE.ASU.EDU/ABOUT/PLAGIARISM](http://cronkite.asu.edu/about/plagiarism).**

**Helpful Information:**

Library Home Page..... <http://www.uta.edu/library>  
Subject Guides..... <http://libguides.uta.edu>  
Subject Librarians..... <http://www.uta.edu/library/help/subject-librarians.php>  
Database List..... <http://www.uta.edu/library/databases/index.php>  
Course Reserves..... <http://pulse.uta.edu/vwebv/enterCourseReserve.do>  
Library Catalog..... <http://discover.uta.edu/>  
E-Journals..... <http://liblink.uta.edu/UTAlink/az>  
Library Tutorials..... <http://www.uta.edu/library/help/tutorials.php>  
Connecting from Off- Campus..... <http://libguides.uta.edu/offcampus>  
Ask A Librarian..... <http://ask.uta.edu>

## **Our Weekly Schedule**

*(This class schedule is tentative and may change. You will be sent a weekly announcement each Sunday night outlining the coming week's schedule.)*

**WEEK 1 through WEEK 4 – AP Style Boot Camp – Exam#1 week 4, Sign up for NewsU, complete NewsU pretests.**

**WEEK 5 – Changing Concepts of News/Newsworthiness (Chapter 1)**

**WEEK 6 – Journalistic Style Writing, Complete NewsU Final Assessments**

**WEEK 7 – Ledes and Nut Grafts (Chapter 7), Assignment #1**

**WEEK 8 – The Basic News Story (Chapter 2), Assignment #2**

**WEEK 9 – Quotes & Attributions, Assignment #3**

**WEEK 10 – Sources & Online Research (Chapter 5), drop date April 1**

**WEEK 11 – Interviewing Techniques (Chapter 6), Assignment #4 (done outside of class)**

**WEEK 12 – Office visits to review class progress**

**WEEK 13 – Press Releases (Chapter 13), Assignment #5**

**WEEK 14 – Online Journalism (Chapter 12) & Social Media (Chapter 4), extra credit assignments due, Assignment #6 (done outside of class)**

**WEEK 15 – Media Ethics & Law (Chapters 14 & 15)**

**WEEK 16 – Final Exam**

*“As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course.” Marti Harvey*