Mass Media 1311 – Writing for Mass Media

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Office hours: To be announced once the semester gets going, more than likely, the hour before and the hour after this class. However, regardless of the hours, you are urged to make an appointment so that I will be sure to be there. Please feel free to talk to me at any time.

Texts: Telling the Story, The Missouri Group

Course description: The fundamentals of purpose, context, voice, techniques and structure for effective written and broadcast communication.

Objectives: The Mass Media program at ASU has three objectives. They are:

1. Synthesize information for transmission to the public through media channels.
2. Create effective messages for dissemination to the public.
3. Recognize and understand key legal and ethical implications of synthesizing and producing information for transmission to the public through media channels.

All the assignments, quizzes, tests and activities in this class are designed to meet these objectives.

Course objectives: By the end of this course, you should:

- Be able to recognize what makes a good news story.
- Have a command of proper newspaper and broadcast styles in news writing.
- Recognize the legal and ethical pitfalls associated with mass media writing.
- Understand the need for balance and fairness in all news writing.
- Have developed creative capacities (writing, inventing, designing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.).
- Have developed skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing.

Evaluation: The primary makeup of this course will be writing. The main purpose of the course is to teach students the rudiments of news writing style, organization and to recognize what makes a good news story and how to commit it to print or electronic format.

The above course objectives will be assessed by using the writing assignments developed in and out of class. Each assignment will be judged on whether the writer used proper news values, effective quotes, correct style and punctuation and whether the assignment is complete and balanced.

Methods of evaluation: As much as 70 percent of the total grade in this class will be based on writing assignments. There will be midterm and a final examinations and a quiz every Friday, all of which will make up the other 30 percent. Students earning 90 percent or more of the total available points will receive grades of A. Students earning 80 to 89 percent, 70 to 79 percent and 60 to 69 percent will receive grades of B, C or D, respectively. Students earning less than 60 percent will not pass the course.

Because deadlines are so important to any writing for mass media, late work will not be accepted.

Assignments due each day will be placed in a folder when it is due. If an assignment is not in the folder it is considered late and will receive a zero. If you must miss a class period, email me and I will give you the day’s assignment if possible.
Attendance: It is absolutely mandatory that you attend class each day if you are to be successful in this course. It is departmental policy that you cannot pass a course unless you attend at least 75 percent of the courses each semester. In accordance with departmental and University policy, attendance will be taken each day. As an added incentive, if you do not miss any classes, three points will be added to your final grade. Other points will be awarded as follows: one absence, two points; two absences, one point.

Academic Honesty Code: Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both the print and web versions for the Student Handbook. The current student handbook is found on the ASU web site under publications at the URL: www.angelo.edu/cstudent/documents/pdf/Student_Handbook_2007_2008.pdf

Americans with Disabilities: Persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, in order to request such accommodations prior to any accommodations being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so appropriate arrangements can be made.

Academic Advising: The College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Communication, Mass Media and Theatre require that students meet with a faculty adviser as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Faculty Adviser will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, faculty Adviser, and the department chair. Communication or Mass Media majors who have questions about advising or declaring a major in the department, can call 942-2031.

Grade Appeal Process. As stated in Angelo State University Operating Policy and Procedure (OP 10.03 Student Grade Grievances), a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see Operating Procedure 10.03 at http://www.angelo.edu/opmanual/docs/Section_10_Academic_Policies-Students/OP_10.03_Grade_Grievance.doc.

Class schedule (subject to change)

Week 1:
   AP style
Week 2:
   The lead of a news story
Week 3:
   The lead of a news story
Week 4:
   Writing stories for print
Week 5:
   Writing stories for print
Week 6:
   Writing stories for print
Week 7:
   Midterm examination
Week 8:
   Writing stories for print

Week 9:
   Writing stories for print
Week 10:
   Writing for the Web
Week 11:
   Writing for broadcast
Week 12:
   Writing for broadcast
Week 13:
   Writing for public relations
Week 14:
   Writing for public relations
Week 15:
   Writing for public relations

Final examination review

Final examination: Wednesday, May 9, at 9 a.m.