Course Objectives:

“I have to always remember, writing is really hard. I hope that I really respect that.”
David Remnick, Editor, The New Yorker, April 4, 2010
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/05/business/media/05remnick.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Writing… “I love to do it… I find that the stimulation and the getting it wrong, and the getting it wrong, and, finally, figuring out what it is you think, or the process of making a story out of reality that actually is true is enormously, endlessly exciting. And, so, I love doing it.”
David Remnick, Editor, The New Yorker, June 2, 2011
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDP__ooAIw4

“I think story choice is a little like dating. You meet somebody and you don’t necessarily immediately project into the future 20 years, but you need some spark. You need some click. And the fact is, often you can’t even articulate what that is.

With stories, I feel that very much. There’s not a focus group that goes on in my head, thinking this will be a good story because people will want to read it. None of that. It’s some purely visceral reaction that I have where I think, “Oh, that’s interesting.” And then the next click in my head needs to be: I could see where that could be a story.

I’m perfectly happy knowing nothing about the subject. In fact, that’s usually much more appealing to me. What really matters is that I want to learn more.”
Susan Orlean, Writer, April 24, 2015

“I absolutely treat myself like a factory. A word factory. That’s been really helpful for me because writing is very mysterious, and the creative process is very mysterious. It’s comforting to have a few mechanical tools at hand to help balance that sense of mystery.

First of all, if you don’t have a deadline, give yourself one and take it seriously. Secondly, I am thoroughly dependent on having a daily word count as a goal that I have to hit. If I get it done in
an hour, I have the afternoon off. If it takes me until midnight, it takes me until midnight. The value of that is it makes concrete a process that otherwise seems ephemeral…

I also think if you’ve got writer’s block, you don’t have writer’s block. You have reporter’s block. You only are having trouble writing because you don’t actually yet know what you’re trying to say, and that usually means you don’t have enough information. That’s the signal to walk away from the keyboard, think about what it is that you don’t really know yet, and go do that reporting.”

Susan Orlean, Writer, April 24, 2015

“As I have tried to show, modern writing at its worst does not consist in picking out words for the sake of their meaning and inventing images in order to make the meaning clearer. It consists in gumming together long strips of words which have already been set in order by someone else, and making the results presentable by sheer humbug. The attraction of this way of writing is that it is easy. It is easier — even quicker, once you have the habit — to say In my opinion it is not an unjustifiable assumption that than to say I think. If you use ready-made phrases, you not only don't have to hunt about for the words; you also don't have to bother with the rhythms of your sentences since these phrases are generally so arranged as to be more or less euphonious…

…Probably it is better to put off using words as long as possible and get one's meaning as clear as one can through pictures and sensations. Afterward one can choose — not simply accept — the phrases that will best cover the meaning, and then switch round and decide what impressions one's words are likely to make on another person. This last effort of the mind cuts out all stale or mixed images, all prefabricated phrases, needless repetitions, and humbug and vagueness generally. But one can often be in doubt about the effect of a word or a phrase, and one needs rules that one can rely on when instinct fails. I think the following rules will cover most cases:

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.

2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.

3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.

4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.

5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.”
About the course:
The quotes above pretty much sum up what this course is about. That’s right, it’s about writing. Good writing. Captivating writing. Exciting writing. Vivid writing. Can’t-put-it-away writing. Bigger-than-just-the news writing; in short, feature writing. The kind of writing that tells a story; that uses words to bring images, people, places, events and experiences to life; that informs, educates, explains, provides context and entertains; that leaves you with the sense of having accomplished something substantial… The kind of writing you will learn in this class.

Specific Objectives:
The objectives of this course are threefold:
- a) To develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course.
- b) To develop skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing.
- c) To develop creative capacities and learn how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.

Now, how are we going to accomplish this?

Course Structure
This is a writing-intensive course, duh… It will also involve reading, class discussions, graded in-class activities as well as in-class practice and take-home assignments.

Your active participation in class discussions is highly encouraged. While there will be a lot of guidance and teaching from me, the skills and knowledge we are seeking to develop should not come only from lectures and practice. They should also come from exchange of opinions and constructive criticism.

Responsibilities
We all have responsibilities, and we all have to be active contributors and proactive inquisitors. My responsibility is to supply you with all the necessary knowledge, information and pedagogical support. Yours, on the other hand, is to attend the class regularly, listen carefully, participate actively, study diligently and complete your homework on time. I will not make content accommodations for this course, so you need to be open-minded and respectful to diverse viewpoints and your peers.

Some more expectations
Because you are preparing to be professionals, you are also expected to demonstrate professional conduct. For example, professionals must clearly and cordially communicate with others, complete assignments prior to the deadline, meet their obligations and effectively manage their time.
Your work does not end in class. I expect you to have read the assigned material (if any) prior to class and complete your take-home assignments. As a rule, for each hour you are in class, you should plan to spend at least two hours on preparing for the next class and completing assignments.

I expect and encourage you to ask questions and let me know right away if you are having problems or do not understand something. I am always there to help. My goal is your success. Come see me during the office hours or make an appointment. We will discuss your issue and think of a solution. I check and answer my emails from the time I wake up until the time I go to bed (with the exception of the times when eat, sleep or drive). Email me if there is a problem. If I know the answer, I will email back right away. If I don’t know the answer, I will respond as soon as I know it. Do not wait until it is too late to do something about anything.

**Attendance**
It is in your best interest to attend each class. Attending the class, if you are not paying attention, engaging in discussions and completing assignments, however, is not going to earn you much knowledge. You are responsible for all of the above. There is no other way to be successful in accomplishing the course objectives.

If you are sick, or there is another reason listed in the University policy [https://www.angelo.edu/student-handbook/community-policies/class-absences.php](https://www.angelo.edu/student-handbook/community-policies/class-absences.php), your absence will be excused, BUT you may be responsible for providing the relevant documentation justifying your absence. You will be responsible for completing the assignments (if any are due at that time), catching up on the missed material and bringing yourself up to date with the class progress. Please remember, I do not allow any makeup work unless you had an excused absence. For the deadline extensions connected with the excused absence, please, see me either prior to the date when (and if) you know you will be absent or immediately after you are back in class. There will be no extensions granted if you haven’t requested one within seven days from the first day you are back to school.

**Course Requirements:**

*Assigned Readings:*
It’s impossible for you to participate in class discussions, complete graded in-class activities and practice unless you have read the assigned material. The readings also provide context essential to what you will be learning. Some of the readings I already included in your course schedule, some I will assign and upload as we go. Most of the readings we will be discussing in class. This is essential for your understanding and mastering of feature writing skills. I will be asking specific questions, so read carefully and pay attention to the details I will be focusing on in class. All the readings must be completed before the day they are listed on the course schedule, therefore ALWAYS check Blackboard for the assigned reading materials.

*Assignments:*
Assignments (7): 490 points – 70 points for each assignment.
You will have to complete seven assignments:
- ✓ Story Ideas
Query Letter
✓ Idea and Research Plan for Story
✓ Story Introduction
✓ Story Progress
✓ Story Conclusion
✓ Story Critique

I will post detailed instructions for each assignment as we go. All assignments are due via Blackboard by midnight of the day indicated in the syllabus.

Why are we doing this?
✓ To develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course;
✓ To develop skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing;
✓ To develop creative capacities and learn how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.

Graded In-Class Activities:
Graded in-class activities (6): 120 points - 20 points for each activity.
You will have to complete six in-class activities. The course schedule gives you a general idea what some of the activities will be about. I will provide detailed instructions for each at the beginning of the class on the day a given activity is scheduled.

You will complete a self-evaluation form based on the given activity rubric at the end of each activity. This form will help you keep track of your progress and identify area(s) where you might need to focus your efforts. You can always come and talk to me about these areas. I am here to help. Having said this, I will not be doing your work for you but I will provide you with all the guidance necessary for you to succeed. It is your job to apply this guidance to improve your performance.

Why are we doing this?
✓ To develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course;
✓ To develop skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing;
✓ To develop creative capacities and learn how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.

Story:
Story: 390 points - 195 points for the first draft and 195 points for the final story.

You will have to complete a major project to top your course objectives – research and write a feature story.
The course is not designed to teach you to write for scientific or highly technical journals, nor is it designed to teach you to write opinion pieces or fiction. You will write an original, nonfiction feature article and complete a major revision of it. Your story will be researched and written for a specific publication in a local, regional or national market, and your revision will be submitted for possible publication. Ideally, you want to aim for a national byline. Average feature is usually from 1,000 to 2,500 words long, but the length of your stories will be determined by the requirements of the publications you select.

**Article types.** You will choose from among the following categories:

- Current topics, problems, or issues
- Personality profile
- Historical
- Popular science or health
- How-to
- Travel

You may be comfortable with writing one type but not the other. You will have to learn how to tackle uncomfortable styles. It will help you to become a better writer and meet all three objectives of the course.

**Mechanics.** When handing in your first draft, include:

1.) your original manuscript
2.) a magazine/article analysis (we will talk about it in class)
3.) a research plan assignment (with revisions, according to my feedback)

When handing in your final draft, include:

1.) your revised manuscript
2.) the original manuscript containing my comments
3.) magazine/article analysis and research plan only if you have changed your market or done additional research
4.) your query letter

Keep a copy of the article and the letter for your files.

When writing, you must follow AP style. I will distribute an AP style study sheet that will guide you through the most common problem areas. It is your job to make sure you do not make mistakes in these areas. You should also make a habit of referring to the AP Stylebook even beyond the areas covered in the study sheet. You can purchase the latest edition of AP Stylebook here: [https://www.apstylebook.com/](https://www.apstylebook.com/)

Why are we doing this?

- To develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course;
- To develop skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing;
- To develop creative capacities and learn how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.
Throughout the semester, you will have an opportunity to “revise and resubmit” one take-home assignment of your choice. You will have a week from the day you let me know you want to revise an assignment. The letting me know should take place via email and receive a clear “go ahead” from me in response. I will stop accepting requests for “revise and resubmit” at noon on December 6.

You will have some extra credit opportunities. One of them is hidden in the class content (syllabus or assignment/in-class activities instructions – your job is to find it). One extra credit opportunity is discussed in one of the following sections.

There is no midterm and no final.

**Class Schedule (subject to change according to circumstances):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, August 26</td>
<td>Meet &amp; greet and course introduction</td>
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</table>
| Wednesday, August 28| **Feature writing and how it differs from other forms of writing:** feature publications and audiences  
Reading:  
“The New Yorker’s Susan Orlean on the Magic and Mystery of Writing” by Lillian Cunningham  
| Friday, August 30   | **Principles of good writing**                                       |
|                     | Reading:                                                             |
|                     | Introduction in “The Bullfighter Checks Her Makeup: My Encounters with Extraordinary People” by Susan Orlean. |
| Monday, September 2 | No class. Labor Day Holiday. Enjoy your long weekend☺               |
| Wednesday, September 4 | Types of feature stories                                         |
| Friday, September 6 | **Generating story ideas**                                          |
|                     | Resources for reference: Holiday Bonus: 50 Stories You Can Do  
*Story Ideas assignment distributed.* |
| Monday, September 9 | **Generating story ideas (continued)**                               |
| Wednesday, September 11 | **How to of background research (publication)**                 |
| Friday, September 13 | **How to of background research (story)**                           |
|                     | *Story Ideas assignment due.*                                       |
| Monday, September 16 | **Writing query and submission letters**                            |
Be prepared for in-class activity: you will draft a sample query letter in class to finish it at home and bring it to the next class for critique. This activity is graded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| Wednesday, September 18 | Writing query and submission letters (continued)  
Be prepared to critique each other’s’ work.  
Query Letter assignment distributed. |
| Friday, September 20   | Ethics & plagiarism  
Reading: |
| Monday, September 23   | Feature story structure |
| Wednesday, September 25 | Feature story structure  
Query Letter assignment due. |
| Friday, September 27   | Story titles  
Idea and Research Plan for Story assignment distributed. |
| Monday, September 30   | Feature leads and nut graphs  
Be prepared for in-class activity. This activity is graded. |
| Wednesday, October 2   | Feature leads and nut graphs (continued)  
Be prepared to critique examples I bring to class as well as each other’s work. |
| Friday, October 4      | How to effectively use voice in feature writing  
Idea and Research Plan for Story assignment due. |
| Monday, October 7      | Descriptive writing  
We will spend this class outdoors, practicing. Bring a notebook and a pen or laptop. This activity is graded.  
Story Introduction assignment distributed. |
| Wednesday, October 9   | Descriptive writing  
Be prepared to critique examples I bring to class as well as each other’s work. |
| Friday, October 11     | Descriptive writing  
Be prepared to critique examples I bring to class as well as each other’s work. |
| Monday, October 14     | Feature story conclusions  
Story Introduction assignment due. |
| Wednesday, October 16  | Feature story conclusions  
Story Progress assignment distributed. |
| Friday, October 18     | Interviewing techniques |
| Monday, October 21     | Interviewing techniques  
Be prepared for in-class activity. This activity is graded. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, October 23</td>
<td>Interviewing techniques</td>
<td><em>Story Progress assignment due.</em></td>
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<td>Friday, October 25</td>
<td><strong>Quotations &amp; attribution</strong></td>
<td><em>Story Conclusion assignment distributed.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, October 28</td>
<td><strong>Quotations &amp; attribution (continued)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, October 30</td>
<td>Dialogue as a storytelling tool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, November 1</td>
<td>Dialogue as a storytelling tool</td>
<td><em>Story Conclusion assignment due.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, November 4</td>
<td>Profiles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, November 6</td>
<td>Profiles (continued)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, November 1</td>
<td><strong>Current issue features</strong></td>
<td><em>Story (First Draft) due.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, November 4</td>
<td><strong>Current issue features (continued)</strong></td>
<td><em>Story Critique assignment distributed.</em></td>
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<td>Wednesday, November 6</td>
<td>How-to features</td>
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<td>Friday, November 8</td>
<td>How-to features (continued)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, November 11</td>
<td>Travel features</td>
<td><em>Story Critique assignment due.</em></td>
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<td>Wednesday, November 13</td>
<td>Travel features</td>
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<td>Friday, November 15</td>
<td>History features</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, November 18</td>
<td>History features</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, November 20</td>
<td>Popular science and health features</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, November 22</td>
<td><strong>Popular science and health features</strong></td>
<td><em>Story (Final Draft) due.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, November 25</td>
<td><strong>Popular science and health features</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, November 27</td>
<td>No class. Happy Thanksgiving!!!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, November 29</td>
<td>No class. Happy Thanksgiving!!!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, December 2</td>
<td>Review of your stories and selection of relevant magazines</td>
<td>Be prepared for in-class activity. This activity is graded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, December 4</td>
<td>Review of your stories and selection of relevant magazines (continued)</td>
<td>Be prepared for in-class activity (continued). This activity is graded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, December 6</td>
<td>Finalizing your query letters for relevant magazines</td>
<td>This activity is graded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finals Week</td>
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**Grade Distribution:**

Total course points: 1,000.

Story: 390 points - 195 points for the first draft and 195 points for the final story.

Assignments (7): 490 points – 70 points for each assignment.

Graded in-class activities (6): 120 points - 20 points for each activity.

What to do when you get my feedback to your Story Ideas assignment: See me if your idea gets rejected and you’re wondering why, if you want to go ahead with a new idea or you have a conditional approval from me and require further guidance. If you have questions/concerns even though your idea got my approval, do not hesitate to see me as well. Once you have my feedback, you will need to pick one story idea to proceed, let me know by Monday, September 23, at the beginning of the class which one you picked to start working on the idea and research plan for your first story (I will provide the guidelines for this assignment).

**Some Important Policies (you do want to read these!):**

**Factual and spelling errors**

You are expected to get your facts straight and spell the names correctly. Each factual mistake in your assignments will lower your grade for any given assignment by 20 percent. You will have one excused misspelling of a proper name. After that, you will receive a **zero** if you spell any name incorrectly.

**Cell phone and laptop use policy**

Cell phones and laptops are not allowed at any time for any reason during class (with the exception of work during the in-class assignments and if I say you need to use them). If necessary for an emergency, please slip out of the classroom to make or take a call. If you consistently violate this policy (I will be documenting), there will be no warnings, just a three percent reduction from your overall grade for this course at the end of the semester.

**Tweeting, videotaping, audio recording, and more.** Not allowed during class are the following: tweeting, blogging, vlogging, Snapchatting, Facebooking, Instagramming, video or audio recording, and/or anything remotely similar or dissimilar. Exceptions apply when any of the above is part of the coursework, and you receive instructions from me to do it. Violators, please, see the policy and the penalty above.
Class content
No recording (audio or video) of class content and distribution of those recordings or class notes is allowed without my permission. This is intellectual property.

Questions and/or concerns about a grade
I will be happy to answer questions about how you are doing in the class. That said, if you have any questions or concerns about a specific grade, contact me in person no earlier than 24 hours and no later than one week after receiving a grade and feedback. You must bring the assignment, due date, date it was turned in and the specific issue that warrants consideration.

Extra credit!
If more than 85% of students complete the student evaluation for this course, I will reward the entire class with a 1-point increase in the individual total grade. For example: if your overall grade averages out to an 89 (a B+) and 85% of the whole class fills out the evaluation I award 1 point to your average, giving you a 90 and an A-!

ASU Policies:

Student Disability Services
ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAAA), and subsequent legislation.

The Office of Student Affairs is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability, and it is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request by contacting:

Ms. Dallas A. Swafford
Director of Student Disability Services
325-942-2047
dallas.swafford@angelo.edu
Houston Harte University Center

Title IX Statement
Angelo State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. In accordance with Title VII, Title IX, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE), and other federal and state laws, the University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, and other types of Sexual Misconduct. Sexual Misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature. The term includes sexual harassment, nonconsensual sexual contact, nonconsensual sexual intercourse, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, public indecency, interpersonal violence (domestic violence or dating violence), sexual violence, and any other misconduct based on sex.
You are encouraged to report any incidents involving sexual misconduct to the Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator, Michelle Boone, J.D. You may submit reports in the following manner:

Online: www.angelo.edu/incident-form
Face to Face: Mayer Administration Building, Room 210
Phone: 325-942-2022
E-Mail: michelle.boone@angelo.edu

Note, as a faculty member at Angelo State, I am a mandatory reporter and must report incidents involving sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator. Should you wish to speak to someone in confidence about an issue, you may contact the University Counseling Center (325-942-2371), the 24-Hour Crisis Helpline (325-486-6345), or the University Health Clinic (325-942-2171).

For more information about resources related to sexual misconduct, Title IX, or Angelo State’s policy please visit: www.angelo.edu/title-ix

Student Absence for Observance of Religious Holy Days
A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. See ASU Operating Policy 10.19 Student Absence for Observance of Religious Holy Day for more information.

Incomplete Grade Policy
It is policy that incomplete grades be reserved for student illness or personal misfortune. Please contact faculty if you have serious illness or a personal misfortune that would keep you from completing course work. Documentation may be required. See ASU Operating Policy 10.11 Grading Procedures for more information.

Student Conduct Policies
Academic Integrity
Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in all work. Any student found guilty of any form of dishonesty in academic work is subject of disciplinary action and possible expulsion from ASU.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is a serious topic covered in ASU’s Academic Integrity policy in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism is the action or practice of taking someone else’s work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one’s own. Plagiarism is literary theft.

In your discussions and/or your papers, it is unacceptable to copy word-for-word without quotation marks and the source of the quotation. It is expected that you will summarize or paraphrase ideas giving appropriate credit to the source both in the body of your paper and the reference list.
Papers are subject to be evaluated for originality via Turnitin. Resources to help you understand this policy better are available at the ASU Writing Center

**Copyright Policy**
Students officially enrolled in this course should make only one printed copy of the given articles and/or chapters. You are expressly prohibited from distributing or reproducing any portion of course readings in printed or electronic form without written permission from the copyright holders or publishers.

**General Policies Related to This Course**
All students are required to follow the policies and procedures presented in these documents:

Angelo State University Student Handbook
Angelo State University Catalog

**Help**
For further assistance uploading your CV and/or syllabus into your Blackboard course(s), please contact the eLearning Center at 325-486-6263 or email us at elearning@angelo.edu. Be sure to visit the Blackboard Support Courses as well as our website http://www.angelo.edu/services/e-learning/