MM 2311 News Reporting and Writing

Instructor: Ellada Gamreklidze, Ph.D.

Office: LIB 306H

Class meeting times and location: T/R 9:30 – 10:45 a.m. in LIB326

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 10 a.m. to noon and/or by appointment. If you want to schedule an appointment beyond office hours, please, email me at least a day in advance.

E-mail: ellada.gamreklidze@angelo.edu

You can order it online at https://www.apstylebook.com/?ref=google&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIyc2Q_J3N1QIVhGh-Ch3ExA5MEAAYASAAEgIQgvD_BwE
You can purchase either print or online version. Which one you choose makes no difference for the purposes of this course. Important thing is that you get the latest (currently, it is the 2019) edition and that you always have access to it when you are in class or working on the course assignments.

Additional reading materials are available for rent at ASU and/or will be provided by the instructor.

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“In the English language, it all comes down to this: Twenty-six letters, when combined correctly, can create magic. Twenty-six letters form the foundation of a free, informed society.”
John Grogan

“News is something someone wants suppressed. Everything else is just advertising.”
Lord Northcliff

“All the words I use in my stories can be found in the dictionary—it’s just a matter of arranging them into the right sentences.”
Somerset Maugham
Source: http://www.writersdigest.com/writing-quotes

News writing is different from other types of writing in many ways. If you excelled in English essay courses, you may not necessarily find news writing easy. It does not mean you won’t be able to master news writing; it just means you will need to break all your writing habits and start
anew. Conversely, if essay writing is not your forte, do not despair; you can be an excellent journalist, if you are willing to learn.

News writing has its quirks, it has standards, it has procedures and it has rules. Journalism is storytelling, so good writing skills are essential. Journalism means presenting and interpreting important reality as accurately as possible, so proper research and information gathering are a must. Journalism is also public service, so news writers always bear this in mind.

This course will cover all of the above. It will tell you about journalism and it will teach you journalism. It will tell you about news writing and it will teach you news writing.

With this in mind, the course objectives are:

✓ 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 gain a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories).

Now, how are we going to accomplish this?

Course Structure
This is a writing-intensive course, duh… It will also involve some reading, class discussions, a lot of 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 only come from lectures and exercises. They should also come from exchange of opinions and constructive criticism.

Responsibilities
We all have responsibilities and 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 work according to instructions and 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 timely, clearly and cordially communicate with others, complete assignments by 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 (if any) material prior to coming 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, do not understand something, are overwhelmed or just want to talk. I am always there to talk/listen/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 I eat, drive, or am in a meeting or in a store).

Email me. If I know the answer, I will email back right away. If I don’t know the answer, I will email as soon as I know it. Do not wait until it is too late to do something about anything (examples include waiting a day or several days to email me after you missed an assignment deadline or had technical issues either uploading or having access to an assignment; not getting back to me after I email you that we need to meet to discuss your current situation and find a solution; waiting until all the deadlines pass to meet with me; and other similar situations).

Keeping up with ALL the deadlines (including the ones for assignment makeup opportunities) is YOUR responsibility. The syllabus informs you about everything and provides instructions on when and how, your job is to follow, accordingly. I will NOT be reminding you about the deadlines and the opportunities. This is why it is ESSENTIAL that you read the syllabus and all other instructions closely and carefully and check Blackboard regularly (several times a day). Having said that, I am ALWAYS open and available to answer any questions about both the opportunities and the instructions.

**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.

Your attendance is graded. By default, at the beginning of the semester, each of you has four extra credit points for attendance on top of your overall grade. Every time you are absent without excuse, you will lose one of these extra credit points. After you run out of extra points (four unexcused absences), every unexcused absence will result in a five-point deduction from your grade for this course.

If you are more than 10 minutes late to class or leave before it is over, it will count as an unexcused absence. If you think you will be late for more than 10 minutes or have to leave early, you need to talk to me in advance. Depending on the reason, I will or will not excuse you.

If you are sick (see the relevant policy), or there is another excused 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 will not lose any points, BUT you are responsible for TIMELY providing the relevant justification of your absence (based on the above policy), 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 absences, 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.

Course Requirements:

Assigned Readings
Although writing-intensive, this course does involve some reading. I will assign what to read as we go. You must complete the assigned reading before the day it is listed on the course schedule; therefore, ALWAYS check Blackboard.

If there is reading assigned for a particular day of the course, you will have a three-open-ended-question quiz at the beginning of the class session on that day. The quiz will be based on the assigned reading materials. It is a perform-to-the-best-of-your-abilities kind of quiz. Performing to the best of your abilities means clearly demonstrating the overall familiarity with and understanding of the assigned content, knowing the relevant terminology (if applicable), and knowing the relevant particulars (e.g., proper punctuation of source attribution). What is required from you is a brief answer that can demonstrate all or some of the above.

These will be open-book, open-notes quizzes, but you will be timed. You will have seven minutes to answer/find answers to the quiz questions, after which, finished or not, you will turn in your responses. Since the quizzes will be conducted at the beginning of the class sessions, it is essential to be on time.

The quizzes will be evaluated based on pass or fail principle (you will have to have answered at least two questions to the best of your abilities to pass). Depending on the number of quizzes throughout the semester, if you pass at least 80 percent of them, you will not lose any points. If you fail more than 20 percent of the quizzes, you will have 10 points deducted from the overall grade for this course. Those of you who pass 100 percent of the quizzes will get 10 extra points added to the overall grade for this course.

The quizzes are subject to the excused absences policy, including makeup request deadlines (please, see above). You will get the same amount of time and are subject to the same policies during your quiz makeups as during the regular class sessions.

Assignments
You will have eight assignments to complete throughout this semester. Each is worth 125 points:

✓ AP Style
✓ Story I
✓ Story II
✓ Story III
✓ Story IV
✓ Story V
✓ Story VI
✓ Story VII

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 gain a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories).

I will distribute detailed instructions for each assignment on Blackboard. Unless something changes, in which case I will inform you either in class or over the email, the days when the assignments are posted on Blackboard as well as the deadlines for each assignment are included in the syllabus.

Also, unless I notify you otherwise, ALL completed take-home assignments need to be uploaded on Blackboard. I will NOT accept assignments over the email. If you experienced technical difficulties and thus failed to upload your assignment, you need to let me know right when it happened. You also need to call the eLearning Center as soon as you can after the problem occurred and ask for the proof of your upload attempt. Send it to me, and I will accept your assignment for full credit.

My general advice is to try to upload a file (even if your assignment is not yet complete) before the eLearning closes on the day when your assignment is due. You will have unlimited upload attempts until the deadline, so your new file will just override the one already uploaded. If you have problems during your trial upload, you will be able to call eLearning and get help before the deadline hits, and it is too late to do anything about it.

AP Style:

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 included in the study sheet. Every AP style error in your take-home assignments (after the AP style part of the course is over) will result in a two-point deduction.

Opportunities:

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 May 1, 2020.

You will have some extra credit opportunities. There may be a few or one that will come as we go. One is discussed in one of the following sections.
There is no midterm and no final.

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

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 (by excused, I mean it will only take your grade for a given assignment down 20 percent). After that, you will receive a zero if you spell any proper 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 practice 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 five-point 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 at Angelo State University**

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. The University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other types of Sexual Misconduct. Sexual Misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination including: sexual assault, sex-based discrimination, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, public indecency, interpersonal violence (domestic violence and/or dating violence), and stalking. As a faculty member, I am a Responsible Employee meaning that I am obligated by law and ASU policy to report any allegations I am notified of to the Office of Title IX Compliance. This is done in order to connect students with resources and options in addressing the allegations reported. As a student, you are encouraged to report any incidents of sexual misconduct directly to ASU’s Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator. You may do so by contacting:

**Michelle Boone, J.D.**  
Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator  
Mayer Administration Building, Room 210  
325-942-2022  
michelle.boone@angelo.edu

You may also file a report online 24/7 at [www.angelo.edu/incident-form](http://www.angelo.edu/incident-form).

If you are wishing to speak to someone about an incident in confidence you may contact the University Health Clinic and Counseling Center at 325-942-2173 or the ASU Crisis Helpline at 325-486-6345.

The Office of Title IX Compliance also provides accommodations related to pregnancy (such as communicating with your professors regarding medically necessary absences, modifications required because of pregnancy, etc.). If you are pregnant and need assistance or accommodations, please contact the Office of Title IX Compliance utilizing the information above.
For more information about Title IX in general you may 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 the syllabus and
Course schedule: subject to change:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Jan. 14</td>
<td><em>Course introduction; getting to know each other.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Jan. 16</td>
<td>Writing for the media – it is different. In-class practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Jan. 21</td>
<td>Writing for the media – it is different. In-class practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Jan. 23</td>
<td>Hard news, soft news, features. In-class practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Jan. 28</td>
<td>AP style and Stylebook. In-class practice. AP Style assignment distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Jan. 30</td>
<td>AP style and Stylebook. In-class practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Feb. 4</td>
<td>News writing basics. AP style assignment due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Feb. 6</td>
<td>News writing basics. Story I assignment distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Feb. 11</td>
<td>Information gathering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Feb. 13</td>
<td>Information gathering. Story I assignment due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Feb. 18</td>
<td>Working with sources &amp; interviewing. Story II assignment distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Feb. 20</td>
<td>Working with sources &amp; interviewing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Feb. 25</td>
<td>Quotations &amp; attribution. Story II assignment due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, Feb. 27</td>
<td>Quotations &amp; attribution. Story III assignment distributed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date, Month</td>
<td>Topic</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 3</td>
<td>The inverted pyramid: the lead.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment distributed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 5</td>
<td>The inverted pyramid: the lead.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story III assignment due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 10</td>
<td>No class. Spring Break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 12</td>
<td>No class. Spring Break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 17</td>
<td>The inverted pyramid: story organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story IV assignment distributed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 19</td>
<td>The inverted pyramid: story organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 24</td>
<td>Reporting with numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story IV assignment due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 26</td>
<td>Speeches, news conferences &amp; meetings.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story V assignment distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 31</td>
<td>Speeches, news conferences &amp; meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 2</td>
<td>Covering a beat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story V assignment due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, April 7</td>
<td>Covering a beat.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story VI assignment distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 9</td>
<td>Writing local stories.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, April 14</td>
<td>Writing local stories.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story VI assignment due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 16</td>
<td>Working with news releases.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story VII assignment distributed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, April 21</td>
<td>Working with news releases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 23</td>
<td>Writing a story across media platforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Story VII assignment due.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, April 28</td>
<td>Writing a story across media platforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 30</td>
<td>Alternatives to inverted pyramid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grade Distribution:**

Class total: 1,000 points
Take-home assignments (8): 125 points x 8 = 1,000 points