MM 1311 Writing for Mass Media

Instructor: Ellada Gamreklidze, Ph.D.

Office hours: I will be available on the ongoing basis over email or Blackboard Collaborate (see details below). If you prefer to have a Collaborate session, please email me, and we will schedule the time that is convenient for both of us.

E-mail: ellada.gamreklidze@angelo.edu

You can order it online at https://www.apstylebook.com/?ref=google&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIyc2Q_J3N1Q1IVhGh-Ch3ExA5MEAAYASAAEgIQgvD_BwE
You can purchase either print or electronic 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 2020) edition and that you always have access to it when you are in class or working on the course assignments.

Additional reading materials will be provided by the instructor.

Course Objectives:

Writing for the media is profoundly different from any other forms of writing. You will have to forget everything you’ve learned or known so far about writing and start anew. Do not be intimidated though. At the end of this course you will be proficient writers for various forms of media who will have a solid basis for building more advanced writing skills in more specific areas of mass communication.

About the course:

During this course you will learn how writing for the media differs from other forms of writing, get familiar with the AP style, get to know the importance of ethics, and, of course actually master the writing standards and techniques that you need to become a proficient mass communication writer. You do not need to have exceptional writing talent to be a very good media writer. All you need to do is pay attention and work hard.

Specific Objectives:
The objectives of this course are fourfold:
  a) To develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the filed most closely related to this course.
  b) To apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving and decisions).
  c) To develop skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing.

Now, how are we going to accomplish this?

Course Structure
Through some reading, occasional online sessions, graded practice and 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 from lectures and practice only. They should also come from exchange of opinions and
constructive criticism. I encourage your active engagement during the scheduled online sessions. Science is positive – you learn better when you talk about the subject, ask questions and exchange feedback.

**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 be present when necessary, 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.

I expect you to have read and/or watched the assigned (if any) material prior to the scheduled date, practice and complete your 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. Email me or schedule an online session. 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 but are not limited to 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 log in and be “present” at all scheduled Collaborate sessions. Logging in, if you are not paying attention and engaging in discussions, however, is not going to earn you much knowledge.

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. By attendance, in this case, I mean logging in to the scheduled Collaborate sessions and participating in them.

If you are more than 10 minutes late logging in to a session or leave the session 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 have an excused reason listed in the University policy https://www.angelo.edu/student-handbook/community-policies/class-absences.php, your will not lose any points, but you are responsible for TIMELY informing me about your “absence” (based on the above policy), completing the assignments (if any are due at that time), catching up on the missed material, making up class practice, and bringing yourself up to date with the class progress.

Having said this, I am here to help and guide you in this process. Catching or keeping up can be overwhelming, especially under the current circumstances. You don’t need to go through this alone. Let me know, ask for help, email me if you are in a tough spot. I am here for you. Please, also check the following webpage for the circumstance-specific university policies: https://www.angelo.edu/covid-19/

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, email me either prior to the date when (and if) you know you will be “absent” or immediately after you are back. There will be no extensions granted if you haven’t requested one within seven days from the first day you are back.

The above policy is in place to help us all stay on track and successfully complete this course. We, however, are all facing challenging times, and the unfortunate reality is that individual circumstances can change in a day. I am here to see that your specific situation is accommodated as best as possible and you do not fall behind. If at any point during the semester you are unable to participate in the class/log in or will find yourself in a position where you cannot be “present” or complete other course requirements for some time, please, do let me know ASAP. I will do everything possible to help you and find a solution to your situation that will allow you to come out of it with best possible result.

**Course Requirements:**

**Assigned Readings:**
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.

**Assignments:**
Assignments (12): 53 points each for the total of 636 points. Throughout the semester, you will need to complete 12 assignments that will help you cement what you learn about the media writing skills and related concepts.

If you have any questions, or need additional guidance, please email me before the deadline. I will provide detailed instructions and rubrics for the assignments as scheduled, so do check Blackboard. Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are due via Blackboard by midnight of the day indicated in the assignment.
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 apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving and decisions).
✓ To develop creative capacities and learn how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.

Graded Practice:
Graded practice (14): 26 points each for the total of 364 points.
You will have to complete 14 practice assignments. Detailed instructions, including deadlines for each are on Blackboard. You need to be prepared for each, meaning you need to have “attended” a relevant Collaborate session and have read the assigned material. You also need to have asked any questions/sought help based on the instructions and policies in this syllabus.

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I will distribute detailed instructions for each assignment on Blackboard. Unless something changes, you need to follow the schedule there.

Also, unless I notify you otherwise, ALL completed assignments and practice need to be uploaded on Blackboard. I will NOT accept assignments, quizzes or practice 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.

Opportunities:

Throughout the semester, you will have an opportunity to “revise and resubmit” one assignment of your choice (not practice). You will have 72 hours 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 November 20, 2020.

You may 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.

**Tweeting, videotaping, audio recording, and more**
Not allowed during Collaborate sessions 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 will have 10 points deducted from their final grade.

**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.
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 these documents:

Angelo State University Student Handbook
Angelo State University Catalog

Grade Distribution:

Class total: 1,000 points

Assignments (12): 636 points (53 points for each assignment)

Practice (14): 364 points (26 points for each practice)