Course Number & Name: JRN 141 Writing for the Mass Media

Credit Hours: 3.0       Contact Hours: 3.0       Lecture: 3.0       Lab: N/A       Other: N/A

Prerequisites: Grade of “C” or better in ENG 096

Co-requisites: None       Concurrent Courses: ENG 101

Course Outline Revision Date: Fall 2010

Course Description: This introductory course explores content, structure, and the nature of writing for print, broadcast (TV/Radio) and electronic journalism.

Course Goals: Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. demonstrate accurate, fair and factual oral and written communication skills in reporting, revising, covering and editing of relevant news stories acceptable by professional journalism standards;
2. conduct effective research, interviews and evaluation of news;
3. demonstrate knowledge of fundamental concepts and theories in the presentation of news;
4. identify, access and apply appropriate technological and multi-media tools in writing and evaluating critical information and in layout and design of publishable news stories; and
5. explain the historical (professional, institutions), social (diversity, cultural), economic (businesses, advertisers) perspectives, and ethical guidelines and practices that govern the journalism profession, including the legal implications and constraints that inform the profession.

Measurable Course Performance Objectives (MPOs): Upon successful completion of this course, students should specifically be able to do the following:

1. Demonstrate accurate, fair and factual oral and written communication skills in reporting, revising, covering and editing of relevant news stories acceptable by professional journalism standards:
   1.1 write and report information clearly in formats and journalistic styles appropriate for mass media;
   1.2 use critical and analytical thinking skills in the process of structuring, writing and covering of the news;
   1.3 use the Associated Press Style and other media style and forms in writing, revising and editing stories for publication; and
   1.4 identify news formats in various newspapers – local, national and international
Measurable Course Performance Objectives (MPOs) (continued):

2. Conduct effective research, interviews and evaluation of news:
   2.1 conduct effective research;
   2.2 identify qualitative and quantitative research in the daily practice of news;
   2.3 describe major news elements in news articles (e.g., impact, proximity, engagement, etc.); and
   2.4 conduct news interviews relevant to write and report news stories

3. Demonstrate knowledge of fundamental concepts and theories in the presentation of news:
   3.1 write news leads based on the inverted pyramid (e.g., broad to narrow idea);
   3.2 organize body paragraphs including the nutgraph (2 – 3 sentences per paragraph);
   3.3 present information based on journalistic style and format; and
   3.4 write clear and concise sentences

4. Identify, access and apply appropriate technological and multi-media tools in writing and evaluating critical information and in layout and design of publishable news stories:
   4.1 use computers to gather data and information necessary for news reporting and coverage;
   4.2 identify information from news wire services (e.g., the Associated Press, United Press International, etc.) that compile and distribute news for a fee to subscribing publications; and
   4.3 use the library, multi-media and others, including scholarly works from various locations, as information sources

5. Explain the historical (professional, institutions), social (diversity, cultural), economic (businesses, advertisers) perspectives, and ethical guidelines and practices that govern the journalism profession, including the legal implications and constraints that inform the profession:
   5.1 explain the historical and social implications of journalism in American society;
   5.2 describe the economic potential of advertising in mass media;
   5.3 articulate the ethical guidelines and practices that govern the journalism profession; and
   5.4 describe the legal implications and constraints that inform the profession

Methods of Instruction: Instruction will consist of lectures, discussions, written and oral presentation projects (3 – 4 articles per semester for publication in the College newspaper, ECCO), editing, and critique of readings from textbooks, newspapers, and/or magazines (e.g., Time, The Nation, Newsweek, local, national and international newspapers, etc.).

Outcomes Assessment: Test and exam questions are blueprinted to student learning objectives. Checklist rubrics are used to evaluate sampled student writing of news stories (e.g., writing three to four articles for the College newspaper – ECCO) for course objectives including the recognition of news elements (e.g., impact, proximity, engagement, etc.). A checklist rubric is used to evaluate students’ presentations as they analyze and critique print, broadcast and electronic news for clarity, accuracy, and the presence of course objectives. Finally, a survey is administered at the end of the semester to evaluate students’ attitudes, perceptions, and skills regarding the basics of writing, reporting and presenting news clearly in forms and styles appropriate to the journalism profession.
Course Requirements: All students are required to:

1. Write a diagnostic essay on the first day of class.
2. Maintain regular attendance.
3. Complete textbook readings, conduct research and interviews, and check grammar and sources before writing 3 – 4 articles for the College newspaper (ECCO).
4. Complete all tests and exams using the Associated Press style.

Methods of Evaluation: Final course grades will be computed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Components</th>
<th>% of final course grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 3 or 4 ECCO articles</td>
<td>10 – 25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students conduct research and interviews and check grammar and sources to write 3 – 4 articles for the College newspaper (ECCO). These articles will be published in ECCO, providing evidence that the students’ work met course objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion, participation and analysis of news stories on TV/Radio/Internet, or newspapers</td>
<td>10 – 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations on analysis and critique of print, broadcast and electronic news will be graded for clarity, accuracy, and the presence of course objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 4 or more Tests</td>
<td>20 – 40%</td>
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<td>Tests will show evidence of the extent to which students meet course objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Associated Press-style Exam</td>
<td>15 – 25%</td>
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<td>The final exam will examine the extent to which students have understood and synthesized all course content and achieved all course objectives.</td>
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Note: The instructor will provide specific weights, which lie in the above-given ranges, for each of the grading components at the beginning of the semester. Students must score at least 80% for the overall grade to pass the course.
**Academic Integrity:** Dishonesty disrupts the search for truth that is inherent in the learning process and so devalues the purpose and the mission of the College. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- plagiarism – the failure to acknowledge another writer’s words or ideas or to give proper credit to sources of information;
- cheating – knowingly obtaining or giving unauthorized information on any test/exam or any other academic assignment;
- interference – any interruption of the academic process that prevents others from the proper engagement in learning or teaching; and
- fraud – any act or instance of willful deceit or trickery.

Violations of academic integrity will be dealt with by imposing appropriate sanctions. Sanctions for acts of academic dishonesty could include the resubmission of an assignment, failure of the test/exam, failure in the course, probation, suspension from the College, and even expulsion from the College.

**Student Code of Conduct:** All students are expected to conduct themselves as responsible and as considerate adults who respect the rights of others. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. All students are also expected to attend and be on time for all class meetings. No cell phones or similar electronic devices are permitted in class. Please refer to the Essex County College student handbook, *Lifeline*, for more specific information about the College’s Code of Conduct and attendance requirements.
**Course Content Outline:** The recommended texts and suggested newspapers and magazines for the class are as follows:


Read and critique columns and articles from various magazines such as *Time, The Nation, Newsweek, US World Report*, and *The Republic*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content/Topics/Readings</th>
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</table>
| 1    | Welcome students; Diagnostic essay  
|      | Introductions – teacher and students  
|      | Read WMM: Sit down and write  
|      | Read AP: What’s news  
|      | Discussion of suggested readings and exercises |
| 2    | Read WMM: Basic tools of writing  
|      | Read AP: Ideas and how to get them  
|      | Read AP: Listening to America  
|      | Discussion of suggested readings and exercises |
| 3    | Read WMM: Style and the stylebook  
|      | Read WMM: Journalistic style  
|      | Read AP: About writing  
|      | **Test #1** |
| 4    | Read WMM: Writing in the media environment  
|      | Read WMM: The importance of accuracy  
|      | Read AP: Profiles and the art of the sit down interview  
|      | Exercises |
| 5    | Read WMM: Writing for print  
|      | Complete exercises  
|      | Discussion on databases and other traditional sources (AP) |
| 6    | Read WMM: Writing for print continued  
|      | Read AP: General assignment or generalization  
|      | Read AP: Covering a beat: The courts  
<p>|      | <strong>Test #2</strong> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Content/Topics/Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 7    | Read *WMM*: Writing leads  
      | Read *AP*: Covering a beat: television  
      | Read *AP*: Covering a beat: politics  
      | Review |
| 8    | Read *WMM*: Writing for the web  
      | Read *WMM*: Forms of writing  
      | Review |
| 9    | Read *WMM*: Writing for broadcast  
      | Read *WMM*: Broadcast writing style  
      | Read *AP*: Covering a beat: Working in Washington  
      | **Test #3** |
| 10   | Read *WMM*: Writing advertising copy  
      | Read *WMM*: The advertising situation  
      | Read *WMM*: Writing the ad  
      | Read *AP*: Reporting overseas  
      | Read *AP*: Recreating reality  
      | Exercises |
| 11   | Read *WMM*: Writing for public relations  
      | Read *WMM*: Writing news releases  
      | Read *AP*: Saving a child  
      | Review  
      | **Test #4** |
| 12   | **Oral Presentations**  
      | Read *WMM*: The writer and the law  
      | Read *WMM*: The First Amendment  
      | Read *AP*: The tools of investigative work |
| 13   | Read *AP*: Investigations: A mental patient’s health  
      | Read *AP*: Pretty horses; doctors and tobacco  
      | Review |
| 14 – 16 | Review  
      | **Final Exam** |