Introduction to News Writing

COMM 1610-006 | Fall 2019 | Hybrid online + Mondays, 6-9 p.m. | LNCO 2840

Professor: Glen Feighery
Contact: glen.feighery@utah.edu or Canvas
Office hours: By appointment
Office: LNCO 2864 (in hallway behind classroom)

Overview

Materials
► Required: The Associated Press Stylebook (2015 or newer)
  Other versions available at: http://www.apstylebook.com/
► Required: The Elements of Style (4th edition or illustrated edition—not an older one)
► Required: Reliable cloud storage, a memory card, or a USB drive for your work.
  You must save and revise your work for your Portfolio at the end of the semester.
► All other materials will be on Canvas or online.

Prerequisite:
Writing 2010 or equivalent. If you haven’t passed WRTG 2010, don’t take COMM 1610.

Course Goals:
By the end of this class, you should be able to:
1. Gather information, verify facts and write on deadline.
2. Write well, with correct grammar, style, mechanics and structure.
3. Write clear, compelling leads for news and feature stories.
4. Build on leads to write more complex stories.
5. Use a variety of sources to provide context, accuracy and balance.
6. Tell stories—use quotations and description to bring a narrative to life.
7. Write stories that engage with public audiences—that is, real people.

Your Responsibilities
► Commit to be in class, every week and on time (6 p.m. Mondays).
► Commit to online work, on time (11:59 p.m. Fridays).
► Commit to lots of writing. This is an intensive class with many written assignments.
► Be professional and respectful. Civility is key to professionalism.
► NO FOOD in the classroom. There are benches in the hallway if you need to eat.
University and Class Policies

► **ADA:** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities. If you need accommodation, contact the Center for Disability and Access, Union Building Room 162, 801-581-5020, [http://disability.utah.edu/](http://disability.utah.edu/).

► **Content Accommodation:** This course might expose you to things you find discomforting. I will not make accommodations in course content, requirements, or expectations. [http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php](http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php) (See Section III, Part Q)

► **Safety:** The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). [safeu.utah.edu](http://safeu.utah.edu)

► **Respect:** Violence and harassment based on sex and gender (including orientation and identity/ expression) is a civil-rights offense and is treated the same as those against race, national origin, color, religion, age, disabled status, veteran’s status, or genetic information. [https://oeo.utah.edu/](https://oeo.utah.edu/)

► **Academic Integrity:** [http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html](http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html) (See Section I, Part B2, and Section V, Part A and Part B, 1-5)

► **Attendance:** [http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php](http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php) (See Section III, Part O)
  - You must attend all classes. You get zero (0) free days. You earn points for attending and participating. You don’t if you don’t.
  - **Note:** If you are ill or have a genuine emergency, contact me within 24 hours.

► **Grading, Registration, and Incompletes:**
  [https://catalog.utah.edu/#/policy/B12v3LX0G?bc=true&bcCurrent=Grading%20Policies &bcGroup=Grade%20Information&bcItemType=policies](https://catalog.utah.edu/#/policy/B12v3LX0G?bc=true&bcCurrent=Grading%20Policies &bcGroup=Grade%20Information&bcItemType=policies)

► **Semester calendar:** [https://registrar.utah.edu/academic-calendars/fall2019.php](https://registrar.utah.edu/academic-calendars/fall2019.php)

### Grades

**Where Your Course Grade Comes From**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Participation (5 pts. x 10 weeks)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Attendance/Participation (5 pts. x 14 weeks)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (20 pts. x 6 quizzes)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Stories (26 pts. x 5 stories)</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Story</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Story with assets</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio with assets</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>600 possible points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quizzes, Stories and Portfolio**

► Unless I specify otherwise, you will submit these on paper, not Canvas.
► All stories must be your original work for this class, not repurposed material.
► Each graded assignment will have a rubric.
► Writing on deadline is a key part of this course. I cannot accept late assignments.
► Everything you submit should be serious, professional work for a public audience.
**Required Grammar Quizzes**
► To earn a grade in this course, you must pass 10 short online grammar quizzes.
► These quizzes will *not* affect your course grade.
► See “Grammar Test Instructions 2019” in Modules.

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>80-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>76-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>66-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>63-60</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>59-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>58-60</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0-58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Week 1: Why Learn News Writing?**

**In class Monday, Aug. 19**
- Syllabus, schedule, expectations.
  - **Exercise:** Interview your neighbor and write a profile (ungraded).

**After class (and before Friday night)**
- Carefully read: This syllabus; “How to Comment and Contribute”; “Grammar Test Instructions 2019.
- Optional: Update your Canvas profile with a recent photo (for my reference only).

**Read for Next Week**

*Do this anytime before 11:59 p.m. Friday, Aug. 23*

- Comment: On all three readings.
- Contribute: A bad lead paragraph. Copy and paste the text and source or provide the URL.

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**Week 2: News Writing Basics & Leads**

**In class Monday, Aug. 26**
- Discuss news writing basics.
- Consider examples of bad leads.
- Preview grammar.
- Handouts: The P-Sheet; Rubric for In-Class Stories.
- Exercise: Practice writing news leads (ungraded).

**Read for Next Week**

*Do this anytime before 11:59 p.m. Friday, Aug. 30*

- Read: Kershner, Ch. 14, “How to Write a Strong Lead”; Oxford, Ch. 7, “Basic News Leads.”
- Comment: On both readings. Describe at least one specific thing that is clearer for you. Describe at least one thing you’re unsure about.
- Contribute: A good lead paragraph. Copy and paste the text and source or provide the URL.
## WEEK 3: NEWS WRITING BASICS & LEADS

**No class Monday, Sept. 2—Labor Day**

**Read for Next Week**  
**Do this anytime before 11:59 p.m. Friday, Sept. 6**

- **Read**: Kershner, Ch. 13, “How to Write a News Story in 15 Steps”; Kershner, Ch. 15, How to Structure a News Story”; Oxford, Ch. 4, “The Language of News.”
- **Comment**: On all three readings. For Oxford, Ch. 4, Describe at least one specific grammatical thing that is clearer for you. Then, describe at least one other grammatical thing that you’re still unsure about.
- **Contribute**: A specific example of a well-organized news story. (Copy and paste text or provide the URL.) Write 2-3 sentences explaining exactly how/why it’s well-organized.

## WEEK 4: WRITING A SHORT STORY

**Before class Monday, Sept. 9**

- **Read for Quiz 1**: The P-Sheet; AP Stylebook/Punctuation Guide (entries for apostrophe, comma, dash, semicolon); *Elements of Style*, Ch. I, “Elementary Rules of Usage.”

**In class Monday, Sept. 9**

- **Quiz 1**: Punctuation.
- Review practice news leads.
- Discuss examples of good leads.
- **Exercise**: Write brief news items (graded).

**Read for Next Week**  
**Do this anytime before 11:59 p.m. Friday, Sept. 13**

- **No Reading**: See “Contribute” below.
- **Contribute**: A specific example of a compelling short news story. (Copy and paste text or provide the URL.) Write 2-3 sentences explaining exactly what aspects of this story make it compelling.

## WEEK 5: WRITING A SHORT STORY

**Before class Monday, Sept. 16**

- **Read for Quiz 2**: AP Stylebook entries listed in AP_Style_to_Really_Know.pdf.

**In class Monday, Sept. 16**

- Review Quiz 1.
- **Quiz 2**: AP Style to Really Know.
- Review brief news items.
- Discuss examples of compelling news stories.
### Read for Next Week
*Do this anytime before 11:59 p.m. Friday, Sept. 20*

- **Read:** “Interviewing Tips”; Lloyd, Ch. 7, “Using Quotations Well.”
- **Comment:** On both readings.
- **Contribute:** A specific example of a bad interview. (Copy and paste text or provide a URL. Try YouTube.) Exactly *why* is this interview bad?

### WEEK 6: REPORTING, INTERVIEWING & VERIFYING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before class Monday, Sept. 23</th>
<th>• <strong>Read for Quiz 3:</strong> <em>Elements of Style</em>, Ch. IV, “Words and Expressions Commonly Misused.”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In class Monday, Sept. 23</td>
<td>• Review Quiz 2.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• <strong>Quiz 3:</strong> Misused words and expressions.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Exercise:</strong> Write a short story <em>(graded)</em>.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*No Friday work on Canvas for next week.*

### WEEK 7: PREPARE FOR MIDTERM STORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In class Monday, Sept. 30</th>
<th>• Review Quiz 3.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review short story.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assignment Given: Midterm Story on scooters or campus construction (due Oct. 14).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Exercise:</strong> Generate reference materials, human sources, and interview questions for Midterm Story.</td>
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### WEEK 8: FALL BREAK

### WEEK 9: COMPLETE MIDTERM STORY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In class Monday, Oct. 14</th>
<th>• Workshop time to complete, review and submit Midterm Story.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• **Due in class, on paper, by 9 p.m. <em>(graded).</em></td>
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### Read for Next Week
*Do this anytime before 11:59 p.m. Friday, Oct. 18*

- **Read:** Rich, Ch. 18, “Speeches, News Conferences and Meetings.”
- **Comment:** On the reading. How useful are the tips on p. 349 and the checklist on p. 351? *(No Contribution this week.)*
# Week 10: Speeches & Meetings

**Before class Monday, Oct. 21**
- **Read for Quiz 4**: AP Stylebook entries listed in More_Useful_AP_Style.pdf.

**In class Monday, Oct. 21**
- **Quiz 4**: More Useful AP style.
- Review Midterm Stories.
- **Exercise**: Write a short story from a speech (graded).

**Read for Next Week**
- **Read**: Rich, Ch. 17, “Profiles and Obituaries.”
- **Comment**: On the reading.
- (No Contribution this week.)

## Week 11: Profiles & Obituaries

**Before class Monday, Oct. 28**
- **Read for Quiz 5**: AP Stylebook (entries for capitalization, Facebook, Google, holidays and holy days, Instagram, Tweet, Twitter); Brooks, Ch. 3, “Subjects and Objects” (partial).

**In class Monday, Oct. 28**
- Review Quiz 4.
- **Quiz 5**: Proper use of proper names.
- Review speech stories.
- Alumni Profile: Select your subject and confirm before leaving class (ungraded but required).

**Read for Next Week**
- **Read**: Profiles of John Warnock and Amy Van Prooyen.
- **Comment**: Name a description or quote that works.
- (No Contribution this week.)

## Week 12: Finish Alumni Profile

**In class Monday, Nov. 4**
- Review Quiz 5.
- Assignments Given: Final Story and Portfolio.
- Workshop time to complete Alumni Profile.
- **Due in class, on paper, by 2 p.m.** (graded).

**Read for Next Week**
- **Read**: Opinion columns by Brad Rock and Andrea González-Ramírez.
- **Comment**: Name a description or quote that works.
- (No Contribution this week.)
**WEEK 13: OPINION WRITING**

*Before class Monday, Nov. 11*

- **Read for Quiz 6**: AP Stylebook/Briefing on Media Law. Skip to heading “Legal Principles of Publication” and read through “The five things a successful libel plaintiff must prove.” Then, skip to “Invasion of privacy” and read through the end section, “Limitations on copyright.”

*In class Monday, Nov. 11*

« Today is the deadline for passing the required grammar quizzes. «

- **Quiz 6**: Libel, privacy, and copyright.
- Review Alumni Profiles.
- Opinion Column: Consider a topic. Do basic research. Then, confirm your topic before leaving class (ungraded but required).

**No Friday work on Canvas for next week—Complete your Opinion Column.**

**WEEK 14: COMPLETE OPINION COLUMN**

*In class Monday, Nov. 18*

- Review Quiz 6.
- Workshop time to complete Opinion Column.
- **Due in class, on paper, by 9 p.m. (graded).**

**Do for Next Week**

Do this anytime before 11:59 p.m. Friday, Nov. 22

- **No Reading**: See “Contribute” below.
- **Contribute**: Propose a topic for your Final Story. Be specific about an event you will cover (when? where?), and actual people you will interview (who? how?). *Plan now so you can finish this by Dec. 2.*

**WEEK 15: FINAL STORY PROPOSAL & WORKSHOP TIME**

*In class Monday, Nov. 25*

- Review opinion columns.
- Discuss Final Story topics and reporting.
- Workshop time for Final Story and Portfolio.

**No Friday work on Canvas—Complete your Final Story and Portfolio.**

**WEEK 16: LAST WEEK OF CLASS**

*In class Monday, Dec. 2*

- Workshop time for Final Story and Portfolio.
- **Due in class, on paper, by 9 p.m. (graded).**