

NEWS REPORTING I – FALL 2008

Rowan University

CRN 40164/02310-1
Tuesday/Thursday
10:50 a.m. - 12:05 p.m.
Bozorth 131

Instructor: Mark Berkey-Gerard
Office: Bozorth 107

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course teaches students basic reporting and writing skills. Students learn standard newspaper style and report and write stories that deal with events like accidents, obituaries, construction, statistics, speeches, interviews and polls. Students take weekly news and style quizzes to sharpen skills.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Develop reporting and writing skills.
- Gain an understanding of standards of journalism through hands-on experience reporting, interviewing, writing, fact checking, and editing.
- Sharpen critical thinking and news judgment.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Melvin Mencher's News Reporting and Writing by Melvin Mencher, 11th Edition
The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law by Norm Goldstein (editor)

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

Introduction to News Writing: Topics and Techniques by Kathryn Quigley
Elements of Style by William Strunk and E.B. White

REQUIRED NEWS READING:

You are required to keep yourself informed about international, national, regional, and local news. We will discuss specific events and articles in class. There will be regular quizzes on significant news events and AP style. Start reading a newspaper (New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, and/or Courier Post) everyday. In addition, I recommend:

- NYTimes.com (for international/national news)
- USA Today (for national news)
- Morning and/or evening broadcasts of National Public Radio at 91 FM (for national news)
- Philadelphia Inquirer or Philly.com (for regional news)
- Courier Post (for local S. Jersey news)
- The Whit (for Rowan University news)

TEACHING METHODS:

This is a practical news reporting and writing course. We will cover the fundamentals of the craft of journalism, principals of good reporting, and the standards of news writing. The bulk of your work will be done outside of the classroom. You will report, write, edit, and rewrite assignments for publication. I will serve as your editor and will give the same instruction and suggestions that

I would give to professional journalists. There are substantial reading assignments and in-class activities. Please plan ahead for each assignment and use the full time given for each assignment.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is essential for academic success in this course. Students are expected to be in class on time. More than 5 unexcused absences will result in a drop in one letter grade. Excused absences include medical reasons, death in family, and pre-approved school-related activities.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Do not use words, photos, or other kinds of content without proper attribution and copyright permission. This includes copying content from the Internet. Plagiarism also includes passing off another student's work as your own or giving your work to another student. When in doubt, ask. For Rowan's complete academic honesty policy, download the Student Information Guide from <http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/infoguide/pdf/infoguide0809.pdf>. (See pages 27-28 in guide.)

Anyone caught plagiarizing will receive an F for the course.

ACCOMMODATION POLICY

Your academic success is important. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me. Students must provide documentation of their disability to the Academic Success Center to receive official university services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856-256-4234 and is located in Savitz Hall, 3rd floor. The staff is available to answer questions about accommodations or assist you.

OFFICE HOURS:

I welcome conversations with students outside of class. My regular office hours are posted on my office door at Bozorth 107. I will also be available other times as well. If you would like to make an appointment, feel free to email or call. If you have questions about assignments anytime throughout the week, please email me and I will respond as soon as I am able. I will also email you between classes, responding to your work and offering suggestions. Please check your email throughout the week to ensure that you receive messages.

COMPUTER LAB:

We will often use the computers for in-class assignments. When we do use the computers, please refrain from unrelated multi-tasking (i.e. web surfing, checking your email, updating your facebook page, IM-ing etc.) When we are not using the computers for in-class assignments, please turn them off.

GRADING:

Journalism is a craft best learned through a process of trial and error. Success is not doing everything perfectly the first time, but taking risks and learning from each experience.

You will report and write a series of news articles over the course of the semester. Most articles will be 500 to 1,000 words in length. All assignments must be typed, double spaced, and include a list of people you talked to with their contact information (phone and/or email). If you do not list your sources and contact information, points will be deducted from your grade.

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date assigned. Please note: NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED. Please plan ahead. If you cannot be in class when an assignment is due, you must send it to class with someone or email it to me PRIOR to the time class starts. Do not send email attachments. Put the text of your article in the body of the email.

There will also be twelve quizzes over the course of the semester on significant news events, the reading assignments, and AP style. Your 10 highest quiz scores will count toward your final grade.

Students will receive a class participation grade for attendance, reading and preparation for class, and class activities.

Graded assignments include:

Place	50 points
Press Conference/Speech	50 points
Sports	50 points
Obituary	50 points
Crime/Courts	50 points
Election	100 points
Election Follow-up	50 points
Education	100 points
Q and A	100 points
Final Feature	150 points
Quizzes	150 points
Class Participation	100 points
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>1000 points</u>

GRADING SCALE FOR SEMESTER:

A	940– 1000
A-	900-939
B+	870-899
B	830-869
B-	800-829
C+	770-799
C	730-769
C-	700-729
D+	670-699
D	600-669
F	0-599

CLASS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE – FALL 2008

Week 1

Tues, Sept 2

Introduction and cover syllabus
Read Mencher Preface (ix-xiv)
Chap 1 – On the Job (p. 2- 33)
Chap 2 – Components of the Story (p. 35-57)

Thurs, Sept 4
Lecture: What is Journalism?
Read Mencher Chap 3 –What is News? (p. 58-79)

Week 2

Tues, Sept 9
Quiz 1
Lecture: What is Reporting? Or Why “Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How” Isn’t So Simple?
Read Mencher Chap 4 – Internet and Other Tools (p. 80-105)

Thurs, Sept 11
NO CLASS – Place Story Reporting
Read Mencher Chap 5 – The Lead (p.106-126)
Chap 6 – Story Structure (p. 128-142)

Week 3

Tues, Sept 16
PLACE STORY DUE
Quiz 2
Lecture: Structuring a Story and Writing a Good Lead
Read Mencher Chap 7 – The Writer’s Art (p. 143-169)

Thurs, Sept 18
Lecture: How to Improve Your Writing in “Ten Easy Steps”
Read Mencher Chap 16 – Speeches, Meetings, and News Conferences (p. 327-336)

Week 4

Tues, Sept 23
PRESS CONFERENCE/SPEECH STORY DUE
Quiz 3
Lecture: The Art of Interviewing
Read Mencher Chap 14 – Finding, Cultivating, and Using Sources (p. 281-294)
Chap 15 – Interviewing (p. 295-325)

Thurs, Sept 25
Lecture: Covering Sports
Read Mencher Chap 11 – Digging for Information (p. 230-245)
Chap 22 – Sports (p. 431-452)

Week 5

Tues, Sept 30
SPORTS STORY DUE
Quiz 4
Lecture: Obituaries and Covering Crime/Courts
Read Mencher Chap 19 – Obituaries (p. 366-382)

Chap 12 – Making Sound Observations (p. 246-268)

Thurs, Oct 2

OBITUARY DUE

Editing Conferences

Read Mencher Chap 18 – Accidents and Disasters (p. 352-365)

Chap 20 – Police (p. 383-405)

Chap 21 – Courts (p. 406-430)

Work on Crime/Courts Story

Week 6

Tues, Oct 7

Editing Conferences

Quiz 5

Thurs, Oct 9

Read Mencher Chap 24 – Local Government and Education (p. 477-509)

Week 7

Tues, Oct 14

CRIME/COURT STORY DUE

Quiz 6

Election Coverage Prep

Read Mencher Chap 13 – Building and Using Background (p. 269-279)

Thurs, Oct 16

Election Coverage Prep

Read Mencher Chap 17 – Hunches, Feelings, and Stereotypes (p. 337-351)

Week 8

Tues, Oct 21

Quiz 7

Election Coverage Prep

Read Mencher Chap 25 – Reporters and the Law (p. 513-532)

Thurs, Oct 23

ELECTION STORY DUE

Editing Conferences

Read Mencher Chap 27 – Morality of Journalism (p. 550-571)

Week 9

Tues, Oct 28

Editing Conferences

Reworking Election Stories

Thurs, Oct 30

REVISED ELECTION STORY DUE TODAY

Final Edits and Election Stories Posted Online

Week 10

Tues, Nov 4 - NO CLASS/ELECTION DAY

(Go vote or protest the vote)

Thurs, Nov 6

Quiz 8

Post Election Review Session

ELECTION ROUNDUP STORY DUE

Week 11

Tues, Nov 11

Quiz 9

Lecture: Covering Education

Thurs, Nov 13

Lecture: Q and A's

Week 12

Tues, Nov 18

EDUCATION STORY DUE

Quiz 10

Thurs, Nov 20

Q and A Subject Due

Week 13

Tues, Nov 25

Q AND A INTERVIEW DUE

Quiz 11

Thurs, Nov 27 - NO CLASS/THANKSGIVING

Week 14

Tues, Dec 2

Quiz 12

Thurs, Dec 4

FIRST DRAFT OF FEATURE DUE

Editing Conferences

Reworking Feature

Week 15

Tues, Dec 9

Editing Conferences

Work on Feature

Thurs, Dec 11

FINAL FEATURE DUE TODAY

Finals Week Dec 15-19 (Schedule TBA)