

Sam Houston State University » Department of Mass Communication
MCOM 1332 Writing for Mass Media, Section 06 » Fall 2017
M/W Room 205 Dan Rather Communication Building

Instructor: Mia Parker msp028@shsu
Office hours: by appointment only

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce writing for media across a wide spectrum of disciplines. It will provide hands-on practice in basic writing skills for news, broadcast, the web, public relations and advertising. Emphasis is placed on the enhancement of language and writing skills.

Course Objectives

This course serves as the foundation for the sequence of writing courses required of mass communication majors, whether they are pursuing journalism, film, broadcast production or public relations and advertising. This course is designed to provide you with:

- The development of creative capacities in writing for print and broadcast media, public relations, advertising, and online
- An in-depth understanding of ethical writing based upon accuracy and verification
- The ability to communicate effectively through the use of different writing styles
- To achieve a broader understanding of the US media environment

Required Textbooks

Writing for the Mass Media (8th edition), by James G. Stovall, Published by Allyn & Bacon, 2011

Associated Press Stylebook, any edition 2010 through 2013 (Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law), by the Associated Press

Supplemental readings will be available through the course's online Blackboard site.

Course Guidelines

Attendance Policy – The Student Handbook states that regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student at Sam Houston State University and that it is expected that each faculty member will keep a record of student attendance. Therefore, the following attendance policy will be adhered to for this course:

- Absences will adversely affect the student's grade (see below for attendance grade weight as part of the overall grading plan). More than five unexcused absences will result in a failing attendance grade and additional or excessive unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course.
- Exceptions are for documented illnesses, family emergencies or for students attending SHSU activities in an official capacity. Documentation for illness or emergency should be presented

upon the student's return to the classroom. Documentation for activities should be presented prior to the absence and contain the signature of the SHSU employee sponsor.

- Each semester hour of credit entails at least two additional hours of work outside the classroom per week: so for this 3 credit course, you should expect to do at least an additional 6 hours of work a week beyond class time. This is on average; some weeks may require more, others less.

Grading scale

A	90% and above
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	59% & below

Assignment/exam weights

Attendance & participation	20%
In-class exercises & quizzes	10%

Assignments*

Assignment 1 (Print)	10%
Assignment 2 (Broadcast)	15%
Assignment 3 (Online)	10%
Assignment 4 (Public relations)	10%
Assignment 5 (Advertising)	10%

Exams

Midterm Exam	15%
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*** Guidelines for each assignment will be handed out during class time**

E-mail – You must be able to receive e-mail via your “@shsu.edu” account. You will be responsible for any messages you miss if you do not use this university-assigned address. Class announcements may also be posted on Blackboard.

Deadlines – Late major assignments will be marked down five points per day after they have been graded. Thus, an “85” assignment that is two days late will receive a “75.” No assignment will be accepted late unless you have notified the instructor *in advance* with an explanation. No assignment will be accepted more than five weekdays after it is due. Except in exceptional and documented situations, all make-up work (arranged prior to your absence) must be completed within two (2) calendar weeks of the set due date or the grade reverts to a zero.

Academic Dishonesty – All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[Dean of Student's Office](#)

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy – Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/documents/861001.pdf

Students with Disabilities Policy – It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

http://www.shsu.edu/~vaf_www/aps/811006.pdf

The Sam Houston Writing Center, located in Farrington 111, is open from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. Monday through Friday in person or Skype. Writing tutors will work with you at any stage of the writing process (brainstorming, generating a draft, organizing a draft, or revising a draft) for any written assignment. The Writing Center operates on an appointment system, so please call (936) 294-3680 to schedule a session with a writing tutor. Skype sessions are available for distance students, and a tutor is available at the University Center. See website for more information: www.shsu.edu/wctr.

MCOM 1332 Spring 2017 Course Schedule (Subject to change)

	Section	Topics	Readings	Assignments
Aug 23 – Week 1	Introduction			
Aug 28 – Week 2		Professional writing for the media	Stovall, Ch. 1	
Aug 30		Writing mechanics	Stovall, Ch. 2	
Sep 4 – Week 3	Labor Day	DO NOT COME TO CLASS		
Sep 6		Introduction to style	Stovall, Ch. 3	
Sep 11 – Week 4		The elements of news	Stovall 7 th edition, Ch. 4, pp. 75-82 (Blackboard)	News quiz
Sep 13		The reporting method	Stovall, Ch. 4	
Sep 18 – Week 5	Writing for print media	Collecting information		Grammar & Style Quiz 1
Sep 20		Leads and story focus	Rich, “Leads and nut graphs,” pp. 131-144 (Blackboard)	
Sep 25 – Week 6		Basic news writing	Stovall, Ch. 5	News quiz
Oct 27		Putting it all together for print news		
Oct 2 – Week 7		Feature lead and feature writing	Rich, “Leads and nut graphs,” pp. 145-156. (Blackboard); Stovall, Ch. 7 pp. 142-144	News quiz
Oct 4	Legal and ethical issues	Magazine and advanced story order	Stovall, Ch. 7, pp. 131-141	Assignment 1 due
Oct 9 – Week 8		Legal and ethical issues in journalism	Stovall, Ch. 13	News quiz

	Section	Ethical case study		Style Quiz 2
Oct 11		Topics	Readings	Assignments
Oct 16 - Week 9	Writing for broadcast			Midterm Exam
Oct 18		Broadcast story forms	Stovall, Ch. 9	
Oct 23 - Week 10		Broadcast writing style	Stovall, Ch. 8	News quiz
Oct 25		News scripts		
Oct 30 - Week 11	Writing for the web	Script writing		News quiz
Nov 1		Nonlinear storytelling & presenting information online	Stovall, Ch. 10	Assignment 2 due
Nov 6 - Week 12		Writing headlines, summaries		News quiz
Nov 8		Journalism and blogging	Lemann, "Amateur hour," (Blackboard)	
Nov 13 - Week 13	Writing for Public Relations	Blog writing		Style Quiz 3
Nov 15		Public relations process	Stovall, Ch. 12	
Nov 20 - Week 14		Campaign case study		Assignment 3 due News quiz
Nov 22	Advertising	Press releases		

	Section	The product and target market, Advertising formats	Stovall, Ch. 11	
Nov 27 – Week 15		Topics	Readings	Assignments
Nov 29		Writing advertising copy		Style Quiz 4 Assignment 4 due
Dec 4	Review			
Dec 6	Final			Final Exam (Assignment 5)