

Sam Houston State University » Department of Mass Communication
MCOM 1332 Writing for Mass Media, Section 04» Fall 2017
M/W/F 2 p.m.-2:50 p.m. Room 205 Dan Rather Communication Building

Instructor: Michael Harmon » mjh055@shsu.edu
Office: Dan Rather Communications Building, RM 308
Office hours: M/Wed 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. or by appointment

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 (6-9th edition), by James G. Stovall, Published by Allyn & Bacon

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 three unexcused absences will result in a letter grade drop for each additional absence.
- 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	900 points and above
B	800-890
C	700-790
D	600-690
F	590 & below

Assignment/exam points

Attendance & participation	200
Exercises & quizzes	100
Grammar Module Completion	50

Assignments*

Assignment 1 (Grammar Module)	150
Assignment 2 (Print)	100
Assignment 3 (Broadcast)	100
Assignment 4 (AP Style Test)	50
Assignment 5 (Public relations)	100

Exams

Midterm Exam	150
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*** Guidelines for each assignment will be handed out during class time**

MCOM Writing Lab

As part of your requirements for this class, you have been automatically enrolled in the MCOM Grammar/Writing Lab. The Writing Lab is composed of three sections, and all must be successfully completed before you will be allowed to file a degree plan in this department, declare as a major or minor or register for any upper-level (3000 or 4000) courses.

The Writing Lab is available on Blackboard, and all three Modules must be completed before the end of this semester. (Intermediate deadlines apply.) If you wish to early-register for 3000-

or 4000-level courses for the following semester, you must earn a score of 80 percent or better on the Grammar Assessment before the fifth week of this class.

Pearson Grammar Module

Your instructor will help you sign up for the Pearson Grammar Lab during the first week of classes, and during week two, you will take the Writing Skills Learning Path Test. Students will need to study and master each Writing Skills section in which they are deficient and then take the Mastery Test. Students will take the mastery test in class (see class schedule).

Students who do not earn an 80 or better on the Mastery Test will not be able to register for upper level (3000-4000) Mass Communication courses until they do so. Students who need additional instruction can work with their instructors during office hours, utilize the online grammar resources in Module II of the Lab or visit the Sam Writing Center Website for additional grammar study handouts. The Mastery Test will count for approximately **15 percent of your Final Grade** for this class. This test is one exam in the total of six exams. (<http://www.shsu.edu/~wctr/Handouts.html>)

AP Style Module

The AP Style Module in the MCOM Grammar/Writing Lab will open to students on the first day of classes and will remain open until the last week of the semester. You may work on the AP Style Module at your own pace. You may take the AP Style Quiz up to (but no more than) three times this semester to improve your score. The final grade on the AP Style module will be recorded from the proctored taking of the exam at the end of the semester and will count for one fourth of your final exam grade. This is approximately **5 percent of your Final Grade** for this class.

Students who do not make an 80 or better on the AP Style Quiz will be required to repeat the AP Style Module in subsequent semesters and may be blocked from registering in certain advanced courses until proficiency is achieved.

Grades for the Lab

All test and quiz grades for the Grammar Lab are Pass/Fail Grades. Students who earn an 80 or better on the Grammar and AP assessments will receive a P grade for the assessment. Students who do not earn an 80 or better will receive an F grade and 0 points for the failed assessment.

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 Fall 2017 Course Schedule (Subject to change)

	Section	Topics	Readings	Assignments
Aug 23 – Week 1	Introduction	Syllabus and Grammar Module		
Aug 25 –		Professional writing for the media	Stovall, Ch. 1	
Aug 28 – Week 2		Continued		
Aug 30		Writing mechanics	Stovall, Ch. 2	Grammar Module Check
Sep 1		Lab Day		
Sep 4– Week 3		LABOR DAY NO CLASS		
Sep 6		Introduction to style	Stovall, Ch. 3	Grammar Module Completion Grade
Sep 8		Grammar Module Test		Assignment 1 – Grammar Module Test
Sep 11 – Week 4		The elements of news	Stovall, Ch. 4	
Sep 13		The reporting method		
Sep 15		Lab Day		
Sep 18 – Week 5		Collecting information		
Sep 20	Writing for print media	Leads and story focus	Rich, “Leads and nut graphs,” pp. 131-144 (Blackboard)	

Sep 22		Lab Day		
Sep 25 – Week 6		Basic news writing	Stovall, Ch. 5	
Sep 27		Putting it all together for print news		
Sep 29		Lab Day		
Oct 2 – Week 7		Feature lead and feature writing	Rich, “Leads and nut graphs,” pp. 145-156. (Blackboard); Stovall, Ch. 6	
Oct 4		Magazine and advanced story order		Assignment 2 due
Oct 6		Lab Day		
Oct 9 – Week 8	Legal and ethical issues	Legal and ethical issues in journalism	Stovall, Ch. 12	
Oct 11		Ethical case study		
Oct 13		Lab Day		
Oct 16 – Week 9				Midterm Exam
Oct 18	Writing for broadcast	Broadcast story forms	Stovall, Ch. 8	
Oct 20		Lab Day		
Oct 23 – Week 10		Broadcast writing style		
Oct 25		News scripts		
Oct 27		Lab Day		
Oct 30 – Week 11		Script writing		

Nov 1	Writing for the web	Nonlinear storytelling & presenting information online	Stovall, Ch. 7	Assignment 3 due
Nov 3		Lab Day		
Nov 6- Week 12		Writing headlines, summaries		
Nov 8	Writing for Public Relations	Public relations process	Stovall, Ch. 11	
Nov 10		Lab Day		
Nov 13 – Week 13		Campaign case study		
Nov 15		Press releases		
Nov 17		Lab Day		
Nov 20 – Week 14	Advertising	The product and target market, Advertising formats	Stovall, Ch. 10	
Nov 22		Lab Day		
Nov 24	Thanksgiving break NO CLASS			
Nov 27 – Week 15		Writing advertising copy		
Nov 29		AP TEST		Assignment 4- AP TEST
Dec 1		Lab Day		
Dec 4-8 – Week 16	Final Exam			Final Exam (Assignment 5)