

**Sam Houston State University**  
**Syllabus for MCOM 1332**  
**Fall, 2017**

**Course title:** Writing for Mass Media  
**Course number:** MCOM 1332.05  
**Credit hours:** 3  
**Semester:** Fall, 2017  
**Classroom:** Room 205 Dan Rather Building  
**Class times:** 8 – 9:20 am

**Instructor:** Charlotte Ann Meador  
**Office Location:** Dan Rather Building  
**Office hours:** 11 – 12:30 am Tu/Thur and 12:30-2 pm M/W  
**Office phone:** none  
**Email:** cxm023@shsu.edu

**NOTE:** *NOTE: Although I monitor email regularly, do not send email a few hours before class and assume I will see it before class convenes. I have to commute to Huntsville and will be on the road.*

### **Course Description**

MCOM 1332 is designed as a gateway course for majors and minors in the Department of Mass Communication at Sam Houston State University. ALL students who intend to major or minor in Mass Communication at SHSU must pass MCOM 1332 with a grade of C or better before they will be accepted as a major or minor, allowed to file an MCOM degree plan or allowed to register for any 3000- or 4000-level classes in the department. This class is designed to introduce writing for media across a wide spectrum of disciplines and to provide hands-on practice in basic writing skills for news, broadcast, the web, and public relations. Emphasis is placed on the enhancement of language and grammar skills. Prerequisite: 'C' in ENG 1301 or equivalent.

### **Course Objectives**

The purpose of MCOM 1332 is to provide students in the Department of Mass Communication with a safe and stimulating environment in which they can learn and exercise ethical and effective professional writing skills. It is the goal of this class to produce students who are well informed, professionally skilled and personally responsible. This class will prepare students to enter the Department of Mass Communication by developing the following competencies:

- Writing for professional print and broadcast media, online, and PR;
- Committing to and practicing professional ethics;
- Improving skilled use of the English language; and
- Achieving a broader understanding of the American media environment.

### **Textbooks**

1. *Writing for the Mass Media*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. by James G. Stovall;

2. *Associated Press Stylebook* (2009 edition or later) or *Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law* (2013 edition or later);
3. *The Elements of Style* (any edition) by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White; and
4. *A good dictionary and thesaurus*.

**Note:** You will need and reference these texts in most of your subsequent classes in this department and throughout the course of your career. These texts are required not only for this class, but for a lifetime of success in your chosen field of study.

Supplemental materials may be put on reserve in the Newton Gresham Library and assigned for class reading. It will be your responsibility to go to the library to access them.

### **Additional Required Materials**

- Access to a PC or Mac computer or campus computer lab with high-speed Internet service;
- A **portable storage device** for back-up storage of class exercises;
- A personal datebook or calendar for keeping up with class assignment deadlines, scheduled quizzes and exams; and
- All required texts and resource materials.

**Note:** PC computers and DTP software will be provided in this lab for all assignments given. You may use other computers, but software may not be compatible. Please do NOT use substitute software! SHSU will post lab hours for open computer labs on campus.

## **Course Requirements**

### **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.

### **Exams**

Six exams are scheduled for this class. The Pearson Grammar Mastery Test will be your first exam grade. All exams count the same in this class. See class schedule below for dates and material to be covered on each exam.

### **Assignments**

Daily class exercises will be given in class to prepare you for the writing portions of the exams. Although class exercises may not be graded, they are an important source of feedback from the instructor to prepare you for the written exams. These are your opportunity to get one-on-one work with the instructor.

No extra credit will be given. Points may be taken off final exam for excessive absences (see attendance).

You are expected to have read the textbook material and to be in class every time it meets. You may also be assigned out-of-class readings, and you may need to work on additional exercises outside scheduled class times. You should expect to spend at least two out-of-class hours of preparation for every hour you spend in class. Grading criteria includes accuracy, spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as adherence to specific guidelines provided for the assignment.

### **Assignment Formatting**

When an outside assignment requires written material, that material must be typed using

Microsoft Word, double-spaced, on one side of the paper. Hand-written assignments will not be accepted. Emailed assignments will NOT be accepted without prior approval of the instructor.

### **Grading Policy**

The profession you have chosen to enter runs on strict deadlines, and you will be expected to meet the deadlines in this class just as if you are in the real world. Assignments are due on strict deadlines. Late submissions will not be accepted and will receive a grade of 0. Students who miss class for legitimate reasons and present a written excuse for absence will have an opportunity to make up missed work only with the permission of the instructor. Any work missed due to an unexcused absence will receive a 0.

### **Deadlines**

For the purpose of this class, deadline is at the beginning of class the day work is due, unless otherwise designated. **Do not come late to class.** If you are habitually late to class, it is the same as missing a deadline, and your late assignments will not be accepted. Follow professional procedures as you would for a job. Punctuality is essential; class attendance is expected and will be noted.

### **Evaluation and Grading**

Grades for this class will be recorded and averaged in the following way. There are six exams including the final and all have equal weight.

The grade scale is as follows

A = 100 – 90%

B = 89 - 80%

C = 79 – 70%

D = 69 – 60%

F = Below 60%

Ultimately, letter grades must be assigned to evaluations of course work. Under the definitions established by Sam Houston State University, students who receive the following letter grades are considered to have reached the level of attainment defining that letter. Thus, letter grades received for journalism courses may be interpreted this way:

A= Excellent

B= Well above average

C= Average

D= Barely passing

F= Failure

All exams, once they are graded, will be distributed during class for students to see and ask questions. The **exams will then be returned to the instructor during that class period.**

A final class grade will not be released over the phone or internet. It is the student's responsibility to record and keep track of their own exam grades in order to know their progress during the semester.

### **Attendance**

A commitment of your time to this course is essential. Regular attendance is expected and will be necessary for successful completion of the course. You are responsible for any assignments made during class meetings. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to email the instructor or contact a classmate who was in class. **NO late work will be accepted**, and missed class sessions cannot be made up. Students are expected to be present, to have completed the readings, do their work in class, and contribute during class discussion. **Cell phones must be put out of sight and no headphones will be allowed during class sessions. No food or open drinks will be allowed in the computer lab.**

**Attendance will be documented by a sign-in sheet as students enter the classroom. The sheet will be picked up by the instructor when class begins. It is the responsibility of the students who come in after the sheet has been picked up to see the instructor after class to be counted tardy rather than absent. Students who come into class later than 10 minutes after the class start time will be considered absent for that day. A student who signs in and then leaves the class before the class is over will be considered absent for that day.**

Department policy on attendance is as follows: **Students will not be penalized for the first three absences unless an assignment or exam has been missed. Beginning with the fourth absence, one letter grade will be deducted from your final grade for the course. Each subsequent absence will result in an additional letter grade loss. This is department policy.**

**Any student who leaves class before the class is over will be considered absent for that day.** Students attending SHSU co-curricular activities will not be penalized for absences. Appropriate documentation should be presented to the instructor prior to the absence.

If you have a legitimate and **documented** excuse for being absent on the day of an exam, the instructor will allow a make-up exam. It may be an all-essay form of exam. The make-up exam must be taken within 24 hours of your return to class. If you are absent when an assignment is due, and you have a **documented** excuse, you may turn it in at the next class meeting. After that time, you will receive a zero for that exam or assignment. It is your responsibility to contact the instructor to arrange to turn in an assignment late or take a make-up test. For a university-sanctioned absence with documentation, you may schedule to take a regular exam (not essay) before or after the absence.

In the event that a student is unable to complete the course requirements due to illness or another emergency, he or she may apply for an X in the course. Any student who has missed more than 10 percent of the class meetings or assignment materials, including exams, (six absences or more) cannot qualify for an X grade. These students should counsel with the Dean's Office regarding options for hardship withdrawal. To apply for the incomplete, the student must submit in writing to the instructor a documented explanation. The request will be submitted to the Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Mass Communication for a final decision.

### **Academic Honesty**

This institution of learning has a strict policy regarding academic honesty, and I encourage you all to familiarize yourself with it. It is printed below. For the sake of this class and future classes in this department, carefully consider the following:

It is easy in today's environment of ready-made, touch-of-a-button information to confuse what we read, download and write. Make a real investment in your future this semester by developing the following habit and following it religiously: Every time you download **ANYTHING** from the Web, highlight it and apply a bright color (red, orange, neon green etc.) to it.

Then, when you begin to write, do so in black text so that your words and writing will stand apart and not be easily confused with that of others. When you are finished, submit your work through an online writing tool (Grammarly or PaperRater are good places to start) to double check that you have not inadvertently copied someone else's work without credit.

If you are lazy or sloppy in your work, you might as well say you don't care whether you steal or not. But others will, and eventually you will be punished for your indifference. Better writers than you have lost jobs, careers and influential appointments for nothing more than a few words or ideas "borrowed" from another without reference.

Once your record and reputation are marked, it's there for life, and there's nowhere you can go that it will not follow and haunt you. Whether plagiarism is deliberate or just a product of laziness or sloppiness, it is theft, and it is stupid and inexcusable. Don't think you can get away with it in this class. You will pay for it with a failing grade or worse.

### **A Few Words on Ethics and Honesty**

The profession into which you are seeking entrance requires that you observe a clear understanding and practice of journalistic ethics. The credible exchange of information is based on this foundation, and any cracks in that foundation endanger everyone who works in the field. You risk your reputation, your credibility and your career if you engage in unethical behavior, and the best way to avoid it is to be absolutely honest. My criterion for academic honesty is as follows:

- **Do your own work.** This includes daily work as well as tests. If you cheat or are dishonest about your work, you will earn a failing grade for this class. This includes "tag-teaming" this class with a friend or classmate.
- We will be looking at a lot of copyrighted materials this semester. These resources are the product of others' hard work and time. **DO NOT** copy or share resource materials with anyone not enrolled in this class. This includes assignments, tests, quizzes and lab materials. If you share materials with others, it constitutes theft, and you will be subject to disciplinary action if you do so.
- **DO NOT** plagiarize. This means, in essence, that you do not copy anything, from any source, and pass it off as your own work. It also means that you do not use an idea, argument, thought or theory formulated by someone else as your own. It means that if you do reference someone else's work, that you give them full credit for their contribution to your writing. Plagiarism will not only earn you disciplinary action, or a failing grade. It could very well earn you permanent expulsion from this institution.

The following definition of plagiarism – about as clear as you will find for our journalistic purposes, from the home of one of the nation's leading journalism schools – is borrowed from the University of Indiana Student Handbook:

Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else's work, including the work of other students, as one's own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged, unless the information is common knowledge. What is considered "common knowledge" may differ from course to course.

a) A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, opinions, theories, formulas, graphics, or pictures of another person without acknowledgment.

b) A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever:

- Directly quoting another person's actual words, whether oral or written;
- Using another person's ideas, opinions, or theories;
- Paraphrasing the words, ideas, opinions, or theories of others, whether oral or written;
- Borrowing facts, statistics, or illustrative material; or
- Offering materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment.

Any student in MCOM 1332 who plagiarizes or is dishonest in his/her work for this class will receive a failing grade on the assignment for the first offense. A second offense will result in a more severe final semester grade penalty, up to and including an F for the course and/or disciplinary referral to the dean.

### **SHSU's Policy on Academic Honesty**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their 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.

### **Proper Classroom Demeanor and Rules of Conduct**

According to the Student Handbook, "Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Please turn off or mute your cellular phone and/or pager before class begins.

Students are prohibited from eating in class, using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking among themselves at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a directive to leave class, or being reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy."

The students' right to speak on the topics of their choice will be upheld in the class. Choice of topic, values and beliefs will not be judged. Audience members are expected to respect the views of their classmates.

**In this class, these rules apply.**

- Eating and drinking is not allowed in the computer lab (Room 205). Drinks with secure lids may be brought into the room in book bags, but not consumed there.
- Beepers, ipods, cell phones and other electronic communication devices may not be brought out during class. Anyone using any of these devices will be asked to leave the classroom.
- You may not read other material/newspapers/magazines and/or **work on material for other classes during this class.**
- You may **NOT** surf the Internet, read email, text, Tweet or conduct other cyberspace business not related to this class. When class begins, all computer screens should be on screen saver mode, unless that day's class work involves use of the computer. Anyone who does not comply will be asked to leave the classroom.
- All students are expected to be attentive during presentations by the instructor and participate in class discussions. If you do not render this common courtesy, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

### **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/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/811006.pdf>

### **Religious Holidays**

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. 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.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

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). This request must be made two weeks in advance of when the absence(s) will occur. The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examination are to be completed.

### **Visitors in the Classroom**

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

### **Course/Faculty Evaluations**

Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation near the end of the semester. Students are encouraged to participate in evaluations and be fair and honest in their responses.

### **Q-drops**

Students are allowed no more than five Q-drops during their academic career at Sam Houston State University. Classes that are dropped prior to the Q-drop date will not count toward the limit. Students who have used their limit of five Q-drops will need to petition their respective dean to drop a class. If the dean refuses to grant permission to drop the class, the student will be required to remain in the class.

The Q-drop limit took effect with the start of the fall 2004 semester. Any drops accumulated prior to the fall 2004 semester will not be included in the five Q-drop limit. Neither will Q-drops from other universities.

NOTE: A Q-drop is a drop made after the last day for tuition refunds (12th class day for fall/spring; 4th class day for summer) but before the date for which a drop would result in a grade of 'F' - as published in the Academic Calendar.

### **The Sam Houston Writing Center**

The Writing Center is located in Farrington Building Room 111 and is open from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. 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 you must call in advance to schedule a session with a writing tutor. See the Writing Center website for more information: <http://www.shsu.edu/wctr>. (call 936.294.3680)

## **Tentative Class Schedule for MCOM 1332      Fall, 2017**

Thurs, Aug 24	<b>Chapter 1</b> Intro to Writing for Mass Media
Tues, Aug 29	Continued
Thurs, Aug 31	Practice for grammar module test
Tues, Sept 5	Practice for grammar module test
Thurs, Sept 7	Practice for grammar module test
Tues, Sept 12	<b>Exam #1 Grammar Module on-line exam</b>
Thurs, Sept 14	<b>Chapter 4</b> Writing in media environment
Tues., Sept 19	Continued
Thurs, Sept 21	Continued
Tues, Sept 26	<b>Chapter 5</b> Reporting with text
Thurs, Sept 28	Continued
Tues, Oct 3	Continued
Thurs, Oct 5	Continued
Tues, Oct 10	Continued
Thurs, Oct 12	<b>Exam #2 Chapter 4 &amp; 5</b>
Tues, Oct 17	<b>Chapter 7</b> Writing for Print Journalism
Thurs, Oct 19	Continued
Tues, Oct 24	Continued
Thurs, Oct 26	Continued
Tues, Oct 31	<b>Exam # 3 Chapter 7</b>
Thurs, Nov 2	<b>Chapter 9</b> Writing for Broadcast Journalism
Tues, Nov 7	Continued
Thurs, Nov 9	Continued
Tues, Nov 14	<b>Exam # 4 Chapter 9</b>
Thurs, Nov 16	<b>Chapter 11</b> Writing Advertising Copy
Tues, Nov 21	<b>Exam #5 Chapter 11</b> <b>PLUS Intro to AP style test after exam</b>
Thurs, Nov 23	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday</b>
Tues, Nov 28	<b>Chapter 12</b> Writing for Public Relations
Thurs, Nov 30	Part one of Final Exam <b>AP Style on-line module test day</b>
Week of Dec 4 – 8 Final Exam Week	<b>Part two of Final will cover only Chapter 12.</b> Final Exam Week. Date and time to be announced

**Class Acceptance Form**

Provide your signature (name) and SHSU I.D. to ensure proper access to this class. (Your signature below verifies that you have read this document, understand the requirements for this class and agree to bear all penalties for failing to meet those requirements.)

I hereby confirm that I have read the Syllabus for MCOM 1332 – Writing for Mass Media – and understand all of the terms and conditions presented therein. I further confirm that I understand the requirements for this class and agree to bear all penalties for failing to meet those requirements. I guarantee that the signature provided below is my own and does not belong to anyone serving as proxy for me or acting in my stead, that I am registered for and/or approved to take this class and that I am a registered student at Sam Houston State University.

Online Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
SHSU I.D. \_\_\_\_\_