

JOURNALISM 220 • MEDIA WRITING

Instructor: Jason Nix

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Office hours: 12:30 p.m. until 1:15 p.m. and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Journalism 220 is an introduction to newswriting techniques and the news industry, with an emphasis on defining news judgment, recognizing the components of different types of news stories and practicing different types of traditional newswriting. Journalism 220 is intended for non-journalists interested in becoming more savvy consumers of news as well as those who intend to pursue a career in serious journalism.

GOALS OF JOURNALISM 220

Upon completion of Journalism 220, students will be able to write basic news stories that are clear, concise, accurate and interesting. Students will also be able to better interpret others' news stories by evaluating elements such as accuracy, thoroughness, spin and voice.

This course requires that each student develop a clear understanding of:

- Interviewing techniques
- Efficient and accurate use of quotations
- Gathering of accurate and relevant information
- Writing clearly for a general newspaper audience
- The Inverted Pyramid and other story structures
- Writing according to AP style
- Proper use of press releases
- Covering speeches, news conferences and meetings
- Covering a beat
- Slant, spin and bias
- Journalistic ethics
- Role of objectivity in journalism
- Computer-assisted reporting (CAR)
- Developing a professional resume

TEXTS

Harrower, Tim. *Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism*. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2007.

A current edition of the *Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* (optional).

Various Internet sites, newspapers, and class handouts.

The class website located on the SFCC home page.

GRADING

Your grade in this course will be based on writing assignments, quizzes, and a final exam, as well as class participation and attendance.

Here's the percentage for each:

Writing assignments:	65 percent
Tests and Quizzes:	20 percent
Attendance:	10 percent
<u>Final Exam:</u>	<u>5 percent</u>
Total:	100 percent

Your final grade will be converted from percentage to grade points in the following manner:

total pts	gpa	letter grade equivalent	total pts	gpa	letter grade equivalent
96-100	4.0	A+	76	2.2	C (average achievement)
95	3.9	A (superior achievement)	75	2.1	
94	3.8		74	2.0	
93	3.7	A-	73	1.9	C-
92	3.6		72	1.8	
91	3.6		71	1.7	
90	3.5		70	1.6	
89	3.4		69	1.5	
88	3.3	B+	68	1.4	D+
87	3.2		67	1.3	
86	3.1		66	1.2	
85	3.0	B (above average achievement)	65	1.1	D (minimum achievement)
84	2.9		64	1.0	
83	2.8		63	0.9	
82	2.7	B-	62	0.8	D-
81	2.6		61	0.7	
80	2.6		60	0.7	
79	2.5		59-	0.0	
78	2.4	C+			F (failure)
77	2.3				

I never give a "Z" grade, except in the case of a documented medical emergency. Do not ask me to make an exception to this policy.

Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance is required and expected in this course. Attendance counts 10 percent of your grade.

I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. If you anticipate that any health, work, or family obligations will prevent you from attending this class every day, you should withdraw from Journalism 220.

Your attendance grade breaks down like this:

<u>Days absent</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Days absent</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0	110	6	67
1	100	7	60
2-3	92	8	55
4	83	9	0
5	75		

An absence will result in a grade of zero for any missed assignment.

I accept all assignments on the same day. If you are unable to attend class on a day the assignment is due, it is your responsibility to make sure someone is able to turn it in for you.

Class roll will be checked promptly at the beginning of class. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to tell me at the end of class on that day and watch to make sure I mark you as present. Each time you arrive late or leave class early will count as one half absence.

I keep the class attendance on my computer, so you can ask me to see it at any time. Feel free to ask me about your absences or tardies at any point during the semester.

A conference with me in my office is required after your fourth absence. **Any student with more than nine absences will receive a grade of 0.0 for this course.**

Absences due to school-related events

If you anticipate having to miss class because of a college-sponsored event, such as a sporting event in which you are competing, you must have your coach/advisor provide me with a list of these dates by the third day of class. This list must include a signature and contact information so I can verify the dates.

Late Work

Turning in work after the due date means that you have taken longer than the allotted time to complete the work assigned to you. Not only does this demonstrate an inability to follow directions and complete work on time (two of the requirements to pass *any* college course), it is unfair to those students who did what was asked of them. Because of this, *you will never receive full credit for work turned in after the due date.*

Unless otherwise noted in the assignment sheet, all work is due at the beginning of class on the due date.

One letter grade will be deducted for each day an assignment is late. For example, if an assignment is due on Tuesday, and you turn it in on Thursday, the assignment will be docked two letter grades. In this case, a "B" paper would become a "D" paper. If an assignment is due on Friday, but turned in on Monday, the assignment will be docked three letter grades (one for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday).

If an assignment is more than three days late, I will not grade it. Even though you will receive no points for that assignment, you are still required to complete it and turn it in.

Absences, however legitimate, do not release you from the responsibility of turning in your work complete and on time. If you are absent on a due date, you must turn in your work the class before you leave or have someone turn it in for you on the due date.

In order to pass Journalism 220, you must complete all of the major course assignments.

Computers

This class requires basic computer literacy and familiarity with the Internet. If you need special instruction on the use of either, contact me immediately. Each student is required to maintain an active, web-based e-mail account (something like a Yahoo!, Hotmail, or G-mail account) and check it before class each day.

You will be asked to listen to audio news stories and documentaries on websites such as www.npr.org, www.thislife.org, and www.transom.org. You should be familiar with applications such as Adobe Acrobat Reader and Real Player.

I will not excuse late work because of home printer/ computer problems (see below).

Equipment required for Journalism 220:

- An inexpensive flash drive (sometimes called a “thumb drive”)
- A functioning, web-based e-mail account.

Excuses I will not accept:

- My computer crashed
- My printer stopped working
- My e-mail is no longer functioning
- I lost my flash drive
- I couldn't find anything to write about.

At the end of each writing session, it is your responsibility to save your work at least two ways: flash drive, e-mailing it to yourself, saving to a web-based hard disk, printing an extra hard copy.

If your home computer isn't functioning properly, you can use those at any public library or at SFCC free of charge.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a health condition or disability that may require accommodations in order to fully participate in this class, please contact me after class or contact Disability Support Services in Building 17-201, phone 533-4166.

You must contact this office within two weeks after the first day of class, so that I have time to prepare appropriate accommodations. You must let me know what accommodations you will need before an assignment is due. Refer to the syllabus for due dates and reading schedules.

I do not wish to know the nature of your disability, just the accommodations necessary for you to excel in this class.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, presenting someone else's work as your own, is a serious offense that will seriously damage (if not end) your academic career.

I will not hesitate reporting any case of academic dishonesty to the department chair. Refer to the *Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* for SFCC's policy on academic dishonesty.

You will receive a grade of *zero* for any work that is plagiarized.

What you can expect from this class:

Don't let the rules fool you. This class is going to be a lot of fun. You can expect a structured but informal class, and I'll expect you to actively participate every class meeting. If you really want to become a better writer and reader, I can help you do it. But you'll have to put in the amount of time and work necessary. There are no shortcuts if you want to separate your work from that of average writers in the field. Writing, rewriting and planning are still the only ways to hone your skills, but I'm willing to stick with you through every step of the process.

You'll work hard in this class, but you'll be surprised at what you can accomplish. I'll be happy to help you, but you must let me know when you need it.