Welcome to the wonderful world of journalism, one of the greatest professions in the world. In this class, you will learn the basics of media writing and the basics of using writing to communicate to a mass audience. You will also enhance your appreciation of this remarkable craft.

Accordingly, we have six specific objectives:

1. **Help your writing.** This will be accomplished through weekly out-of-class writing assignments and weekly assignments in the lab to be completed during the allotted time. We will also teach you some writing tips that you will be expected to memorize for the final. One of the main goals of this class is to produce a final project worth remembering, worthy of showing you that you can be a good writer. Writing, as you know, is a help no matter where you end up.

2. **Help develop your reporting skills.** We will teach the very basics of information gathering for reporting with an emphasis on library research, interviewing and developing a “documents state of mind.” Can you imagine a place where research and interviewing skills won’t be an incredible, lifelong asset?

3. **Help improve your understanding of journalism in the larger society.** We will lecture you on the role of journalism and its place within the Constitution of the United States. You will be expected to understand some basic concepts for the final. Is there something to be more passionate about than your country?

4. **Develop a passion for truth.** This is why journalism matters. As Clark Kent once said, essentially, “A reporter’s first priority is to the truth. The people are counting on us, and we can’t let them down.”

5. **Help improve your understanding of current events.** Expect regular, unannounced quizzes on current events. Some examples of identification of important people we might focus on include the following: Ehud Barak, John Ashcroft, George W. Bush, Dennis Hastert, Trent Lott, and Ziang Zemin. If you do not know them, begin to play closer attention to the news, notably the Scroll, the Idaho Falls Post-Register and The Wall Street Journal. We will subscribe to the Wall Street Journal.

6. **Learn how to write a lede and a top.** One of the most important things you will learn is how to begin a story. We will teach you two ways — the traditional lede and the more featurey “top” approach, though both overlap.
Grading:

Grading will come from seven sources:

1. **Quizzes.** Expect regular, approximately 12, quizzes that will cover two things: Current events and “tips”. Current Events will involve identification of a person or thing. You may also be asked about current events from the front page of the Wall Street Journal. Also, each day in class we will provide you writing tips and reporting tips. These “tips” will help you solve problems in writing and reporting. I will expect you to memorize all of the tips and provide them by memory for the final. The quizzes will also test to see if you can apply these tips. I may also ask if you’re current on your reading. Expect quizzes to be worth about 10 to 15 percent of your final grade.

2. **Attendance.** You are expected to attend each class and each lab. You are in college and can be responsible for your own work. If you choose to come late, expect to miss some quizzes or bonus points. Expect, as well, to miss relevant materials for successful completion of the course. If you miss for anything other than an excused absence that you can clear with a doctor or clear with me ahead of time, don’t expect me to give you notes you missed. Get them from someone else. If I find chronic attendance problems, I may begin taking roll, but I hate the paperwork, so I’ll let you know.

4. **In-lab writing assignments.** Each Friday, you will have timed writing assignments in the lab. These will be due at the end of the lab. Late assignments will be marked down. These will count for about 20 to 25 percent of your grade.

5. **Out-of-Class assignments.** Each Friday, you will receive an out-of-class assignment. These are due at 5 p.m. on Fridays or at the beginning of class, depending on what I say. Again, deadlines are firm. One of the assignments will be a review of non-fiction, journalistic works. I will give you some suggestions in class. These will count about 20 to 25 percent of your grade.

6. **Final Project, the Representative profile.** This is explained at the back of the syllabus. This counts about 20 percent of your grade.

7. **Examination.** You will receive a comprehensive final. It will cover the text, the lectures, any readings and current events. You will be expected to memorize the “Tips” and will be asked to list them. This will equal about 20 percent of your grade.

I reserve the right to count the Representative Profile more if it will help your grade improve. This is my version of extra credit.
Prerequisites:

To register for Communications 211, you should have accomplished the following:

A willingness to learn to write and work hard on improving that skill.

Keyboarding skills of at least 35 words per minute.

It is helpful, but not required, to have accomplished the following:

Computer Experience.

Required books, materials and other media consumption:


The Wall Street Journal. We will subscribe in class. Also, regularly read The Scroll, The Post Register and other news publications. Watch Headline ne. Check MSNBC’s news regularly on the net or other news sites.

A thesaurus, recommended, not required.

Handouts and Readings as assigned.


At least Three 3-1/2 inch, high-density disks for use in the computer lab.

A book worth having is William Strunk Jr’s. The Elements of Style

Your Responsibilities:

Keep track of the news. Remember, all quizzes will be unannounced.

Be on time. Professionalism is a good habit to start now.

Obey the Code of Honor. I support this whole-heartedly.

Keep Deadlines. I do you no professional service by fudging here. Deadlines matter. Let’s make this clear now. As a matter of policy, I will not accept late assignments. Talk to me, of course, about extreme circumstances.
Keep copies of your returned work. Both of us are protected if one copy is lost.

Be willing to participate. I put classwork on the overhead and ask individuals questions.

Grading of writing assignments.
Your final grade will depend largely on the quality of work you hand in with special emphasis placed on improvement as the course proceeds. Writing is a process, and you will not be expected to be proficient in news format at first.
Here are some criteria:

1. Is your lede appropriate?
2. Does the story develop logically? Interestingly?
3. Have you attributed information to sources?
4. Is your information accurate and ethically construed?
5. Have you been balanced in your approach? Fair?
6. Does the story meet its audience?
7. Have you corrected spelling, grammar and punctuation errors?
8. Have you double-checked the spelling of all proper names?
9. Is the story clear and concise?
10. Is it in news style?
I pay particular attention to errors of spelling and grammar. Triple-check..
Here's some general guidelines on grading.
A. Virtually ready for publication
B. Needs limited Editing
C. Satisfactory, but requires some changes
D. Several changes needed.
F. Late or unacceptable

Maybe another thing to remember here is, of course, the guidelines I have handed you for grading purposes. Please hold onto those assignments.
If you have any concerns on ethics, come talk to me. A fine line often emerges on the border of ingenuity and unethical behavior.
**CALENDAR:**

Since this class will focus on particular needs depending on the class, be prepared for this schedule to change. We will have a field trip or two into town, so be prepared for those to be dropped in during the semester. Schedules could affect that.

1. **W** 1/10  
2. **F** 1/11  
   Read Chapter 1, 2  
   Introduction to Course

3. **M** 1/15  
   ML KING DAY  
   NO CLASS

4. **W** 1/17  
   Read Chap. 2, 4  
   Lab No. 2, news values
   **Step 1 of rep. profile due**

5. **M** 1/22  
   Read Chap. 3, 4, Lab No. 3, ledes  
   Weekly assignment No. 2 -- ledes -- due

6. **W** 1/24  
   Constitution/The Job

7. **F** 1/26  
   The lede

8. **M** 1/29  
   The lede

9. **W** 1/31  
   Advanced ledes, the top

10. **F** 2/2  
    Read Chs. 6  
    Lab No. 4, more ledes  
    Weekly assignment No. 3, **step two of rep profile due**

11. **M** 2/5  
    Inverted Pyramid, cosmic relevance

12. **W** 2/7  
    More on structure

13. **F** 2/9  
    Lab No. 5  
    Weekly assignment No. 4 due,

14. **M** 2/12  
    Interviewing

15. **W** 2/14  
    Attribution, Quotes, Interviewing

16. **F** 2/16  
    Read Chap. 9  
    Lab No. 6  
    Weekly assignment No. 5 (**step 3 of representative profile**),

17. **M** 2/19  
    President’s Day Holiday

18. **W** 2/21  
    Show, don’t Tell

19. **F** 2/23  
    Read Chap. 7, 8, 10, 11  
    Lab No. 7  
    Weekly assignment No. 6 due,

20. **M** 2/26  
    Your research friends

21. **W** 2/28  
    Broadcast Writing

22. **F** 3/2  
    Lab No. 8  
    Weekly assignment No. 7 due (**Step 4 of rep. profile**),

23. **M** 3/5  
    Whence story ideas?

24. **W** 3/7  
    eliminate wordiness
25. F 3/9  Read Appendix D  Lab. No. 9
   Weekly Assignment #8 due, READINGS Report due

26. M 3/12  Broadcast Writing
27. W 3/14  Broadcast writing – TV
28. F 3/16  Lab No. 10
   Weekly Assignment #10 due,

29. M 3/19  Read Chap. 13  Public Relations Writing
30. W 3/21  PR Writing
31. F 3/23  Lab No. 11
   Weekly Assignment #11 due,

32. M 3/26  Read Chap. 14  Advertising
33. W 3/28  TOPs and Review
34. F 3/30  SPRING BREAK

35. M 4/2  READ STYLEBOOK  Grammar/Writing
36. W 4/4  REVIEW TOPS
37. F 4/6  LAB No. 12
   Weekly Assignment #12 due, step 5 of rep profile,

36 M 4/9  Read Ch. 15, Appendix C  ETHICAL QUESTIONS
37 W 4/11  Truth & More, Courtroom terms
38 F 4/13  Lab No. 13
   Weekly Assignment (Step 6 of Rep. Profile) due,

39 M 4/16  Libel, Privacy
40 W 4/18  In-Class critiques
41 F 4/20  Lab No. 15

   The Profile is due

42 M 4/23  Last day of class–In-class final
43: F 12/13  7:30 a.m. “FINAL”.  In-CLASS PRESENTATION
Final Project: Representative Profile

Assignment

A representative profile is the story of a person who exemplifies the lives of similar people. It shows the human side of a larger story, a story in its final form that will include research and other interviews. You are picking a topic that interests you and trying to find a person that enables you to make it work.

This assignment will be your first and last assignment for this course. You will begin the project this week and finish it as your final story for this course. In developing the final story, you will write other stories along the way.

This assignment could result in one long story or a series of two or more parts. Once you’re far enough along with the project, you may wish to discuss it with an editor of the Scroll or another publication to see if he or she is interested in publishing the final results. If so, the publication may wish to cooperate on photos and design.

Like any large project, this one is best accomplished in steps. This is the biggest assignment you’ll have in the course, but don’t be overwhelmed. I will be helping you along the way. Deadlines may shift as we go, be alert to announcements in class!

Broadcasters may opt to produce a script. P.R. students may shorten their piece and include a press release of the findings for broader release with a plan of how you would publicize the research. (Each of those is a one-page document.) Talk to me for more specific instructions.

Step 1: Find a person
Identify a local person who will be willing to spend time with you every week. This person should not be a family member or a close friend or an important acquaintance. Here are a few examples:
A medical professional, a person with a chronic disease, a person going through a divorce, a woman considering a mission, a person struggling with an addiction, a recent convert, a custodian, a foreign student at Ricks struggling, a rock musician, a farmer struggling or not, a homeless person, a student denied acceptance at Ricks, a person struggling with a weight-loss problem. You get the idea
These examples are by no means exclusive. You can think of numerous other examples. Just let them be people willing to meet with you several times during the semester and examples of a larger issue.
The first step in the assignment is to get basic information about the person you have found. Include name, occupational status, address, telephone. I will discuss any problems I see with you. In picking your person, identify yourself as a journalist and that your work is for possible publication. No confidential sources with-
out clearance. Do this and you will receive full credit for the assignment. Having trouble finding someone? First, try an organization in town -- United Way -- to see if they might be able to help you. You might also, literally, randomly call four or five people in the student directory until you find someone. Though religious topics are significant and helpful, they can be difficult to research, so use caution there. Also, don’t hesitate to change what the subject is about as you learn more about it.

**Step 2: Develop a profile**

Spend time with the person each week. Capture the flavor of the person’s life in your observations of the physical surroundings. Describe the workplace and/or home in detail in your notes. Also make notes on the person’s physical and behavioral traits. Keep an accurate record of your conversations, marking material with potential for your final story. **You will submit at two-page report on your subject.** Identify one to three possible themes for the entire story. Describe what you have found about this person to illustrate those themes. This will not be graded, but it must be turned in or you will lose points for not completing this critical step in the process.

**Step 3: Interview story — bringing real people into it.**

Identify a minimum of three human sources (more would be better) who can address the issue(s) you have identified as the focus of your final piece. Interview them and write a 500-word story (more or less) based on what they say about the topic. You are trying to write this as a news story with a focus on timeliness in inverted pyramid style. You’re looking for people who can explain the topic to you and can, if needed, be a further source of information for you as the weeks progress. You won’t include much, if any, information about the focus of your final story. In fact, try to avoid mentioning your focus person at all. Write about the issue itself using these experts. This will be graded as a weekly writing assignment. In talking about each person interviewed, talk about that person’s stake in the story, whether it be personal or merely professional. Try to humanize those people. For example: “John Jones is the executive director of AIDS Awareness of Idaho. He has seen three of his closest friends die of the disease. Although he is a hemophiliac, he has not contracted HIV. With each infusion of blood clotting factor; however, he wonders if he will continue to beat the odds.” If the story were about lung cancer, for example, you’d interview doctors, other patients with it, research scientists, a nurse giving care, family members of people suffering . . . you get the idea, I hope.

**Step 4: Profile story — begin putting it together.**

Take the information you have been gathering and develop a 500-word story – more or less. Longer is fine. You are, essentially, combining steps two and three into a new story. (Don’t cut and paste from the early articles. Write from scratch.) Write using one of the “TOP” approaches we have taught you. **Make sure you have a clear**
cosmic relevance paragraph. This will be graded as one of your outside writing assignments.

Step 5: Document story – Do the background on your topic.

Research your theme using as many document sources as you can find. A minimum of five independent sources are required; more is better. Then, write a story or roughly 600 words based on this research. Write it in news style to the best of your ability, so keep it to timely information. Do not use any of the personal facts about the person in your profile. In fact, do not mention the person at all. It is separate from your profile and will be combined in step six. Of course, it can be useful to do library research for step 3, as well. Put another way, this is a report, written as a clear news story, about the subject you’ve chosen. If your subject were a man battling lung cancer, your article would be about lung cancer. Include a bibliography of your sources. This will count as one of your weekly writing assignments and will be graded as such.

Step 6: Final Story
Rough Draft
Include everything for a story about the topic that you’ve done, structuring much like the Wall Street Journal does – with a top. You will be expected to turn these in on time. We will critique them in class. The rough draft will be an out-of-class writing assignment, but only is graded if you do it. The final will be graded separately. With the final, you will turn, a separate bibliography of sources used or not. (It is especially important to turn in a bibliography for the sources you might not have used) and a typed page listing all of the times you met with the source and the situations you met with him or her, . . . I’ll be looking for at least 10 meetings for and in a variety of situations and a variety of good sources. Turn it all in inside a large, 10x14 or larger, envelope including a disk... This should be long enough to cover the topic. No minimum or maximum length. I’d think the 2,000-word range is probably about what you’ll be shooting for.

As we talk about having a documents state of mind, we will talk about various unique sources for your stories. The best sources are called primary documents: statistics, original reports in scientific journals, American statistics index or even personal diaries.

You will be graded on the use of the Top style (or appropriate style), the quality of the ending and the beginning; mechanics, descriptive language, lack of wordiness, sufficient length, quality cosmic relevance, news values used and the overall effect of the story.

Four parting thoughts:
Be creative. Don’t limit yourself to the easy story ideas.
Be timely. Don’t procrastinate.
Be organized. The best reporters I know are organization freaks, a rare trait for the average reporter. Be the best.
Have fun. If you work hard on this, you will know the joy of writing something well.