Topics in Communication: News Reporting

Course Description
This course focuses on newsgathering and writing skills. It concentrates discovering news, reporting news and writing news in different formats. This course will incorporate all forms of news writing, including press releases, print news stories, web news and TV and radio broadcast news.

Learning Objectives
(Student learning objectives)
1. Gather and analyze information and present it clearly and accurately
2. Conduct interviews in order to obtain newsworthy information to be used in news stories
3. Write news and feature stories suitable for publication in newspapers or other news media

Major Course Requirements
News Writing Assignments (10)............. 60%
Class Assignments/Homework ............. 10%
Final Exam .................................... 10%
Multimedia Project .......................... 10%
Final Portfolio ................................. 10%

Final grade will be based on the following grading scale:
(A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; F=less than 60)

Story requirements:
The stories should be approximately 400 to 750 words long (one to three pages, typed and double-spaced). They must contain a minimum of three (3) human sources.
The Multimedia Package story should be 600-1000 words, and include two additional components for the web. For each story, you must submit a list of your sources and their contact information (phone, e-mail). Failure to submit a source list will reduce your score on that paper by one letter grade.

Story Grading Criteria:
This is a general guideline as to what point totals mean. Please see professor for further clarification:
90-100 points (A): Minor editing needed. Almost ready for publication.
80-89 points (B): Needs editing and minor changes; some story structure issues
70-79 points (C): Satisfactory, but needs changes and additional information.
60-69 points (D): Several changes needed; errors in writing and reporting.
<60 points (F): Factual errors; reporting errors and major writing errors.

Required or Recommended Readings
Textbook:
The Elements of News Writing 3rd edition by James W. Kershner (Pearson).
- AP Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law. ISBN: 9780917360589
Recommended or Supplemental Reading:
The local daily newspaper: Corpus Christi *Caller-Times*; The campus newspaper: *Island Waves*
Additional, supplementary readings may be assigned at the discretion of the professor later in the semester.

List of Supplies (if applicable)
- Digital audio recording device (you may use a smart phone)
- Reporter’s notebook for reporting
- 1 Folder with pockets with name on front (For portfolio)
- 1 Flashdrive

Course Policies

Attendance/tardiness
Attendance is mandatory. Your attendance and participation in the class are counted as 10 percent of your final grade. You are expected to be present for every class unless otherwise instructed. If you have a legitimate reason for not attending (illness, disaster, death), **contact** the professor **beforehand** (by phone or e-mail) and present a note from a physician or other official documentation at the next class. This is your responsibility; the professor will not remind you. At the end of the semester, if the professor does not have supporting evidence of your excused absence it will be marked as unexcused and will affect your grade. If you have a religious holiday, please let the professor know beforehand. **The professor is not responsible for repeating material covered in class.** If you are late or absent, check with another student in the class to find out what you missed. Excessive absences will affect the course grade. **No more than ONE absence** in this class. **(EACH additional)** unexcused absence will result in a 3-point reduction in your **FINAL GRADE**.

Late work and Make-up Exams

**Deadlines:** In mass communication, and especially in journalism, deadlines are crucial. If an individual continually misses deadlines in a real-world job, that person will lose his/her job. Treat this class as if it were a job. Stories are always due on the deadline specified. If a student sees there might be a problem meeting a deadline, let the professor know early so a new plan can be drafted. Otherwise, there will be no exceptions for missing a deadline.

Extra Credit

Extra credit in this course is up to the professor. A student may be allowed to do work for Island Waves student newspaper to earn extra credit for missed work.

Cell Phone/Electronic Device Usage

Students must turn off the sound of all cell phones and electronic devices during class. Refrain from answering email, texting, chatting or carrying on an audible conversation during class time.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism.

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a zero for that assignment that cannot be retaken or resubmitted. In this class, students must **NEVER fabricate** quotations, facts, sources or any other information in their stories, nor may they misrepresent any sources or information. **Plagiarism** and **fabrication** are major offenses in journalism and other professions; if students use
them for an assignment in this class they will receive a **ZERO** on the assignment. All work in this class must be original. Students may not use assignments turned in for other classes previously or that are being worked on for another current class without permission from the instructor. The professor reserves the right to give a **failing grade for committing any of these offenses and to refer any academic dishonesty or misconduct to the University.**

**Academic Advising**
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**Dropping a Class**
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. **(Friday, April 8) is the last day to drop** a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Classroom/professional behavior**
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**Grade Appeals***
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

**Disabilities Accommodations***
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Statement of Academic Continuity**
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

*Required by SACS or HB2504
## Tentative Course schedule:

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<td>Week 3</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
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<td>Review and final</td>
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