Media Writing

Course Description
This course is designed to teach the fundamentals of writing for the mass media. It includes instruction in professional methods and techniques for gathering, processing and delivering content.

Learning Objectives
- 1 Locate and evaluate data
- 2 Identify various types of media platforms and practice utilizing them
- 3 Demonstrate proficiency in written communication appropriate for mass audiences

Major Course Requirements

Class Attendance/Participation ............................................. 10%
Quizzes (8) ........................................................................ 10%
Classroom Assignments (6) .................................................. 15%
Outside-of-Class Assignments [Stories] (3) .................. 25%
Portfolio ............................................................................ 5%
Exams (2) .......................................................................... 15%
Profile Story ...................................................................... 10%
Multi-Media Project.............................................................. 10%

Required or Recommended Readings

Textbook:
Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method, by Carole Rich
AP Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law (you should always have this book with you)

Recommended or Supplemental Reading:
The local daily newspaper – The Caller Times
The campus newspaper – Island Waves
Additional supplemental readings may be assigned by the professor throughout the semester

Website:
http://www.cengagebrain.com

List of Supplies
Flash Drive/SD Card
Digital Recorder/Smart Phone
Reporters Notebook

Course Policies
Attendance/tardiness
Attendance is mandatory. 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 TWO absence is allowed in this class. (EACH additional unexcused absence will result in a 1-point reduction from 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.

Make-up Exams: Schedule excused make-up exams with professor.

Extra Credit

Extra credit in this course is rare. The professor will announce if any extra credit opportunities will be available at the time they are due.

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. If a student is caught using their electronic devices during classroom instruction (for anything other than lecture/assignment-related activities), the device may be taken by the professor until the class end.

Course Assignments in Detail

Quizzes

- Four [4] AP Style quizzes – Students may use their Associated Press Style Books or online accounts to answer 10-20 questions that cover small sections of the AP Stylebook reference.
- Four [4] Current Event Quizzes – Students must answer 5 questions that relate to campus, local, national and international news. Questions will be drawn within 24 hours of quiz time from the following news sources: Island Waves, The Caller Times, CNN.com. (Students will NOT be allowed to use their electronic devices, computers or paper copies of any of these publications during the quiz.)

Classroom Assignments

Students will follow instructions and complete lab exercises from the Carole Rich Textbook. Each assignment will correlate with the topic of the chapter discussed that week. [Six
assignments include: Interviewing, Inverted Pyramid, Lead & Nut Graph, Storyboard/Script, Press Release, Speech]

Out of Class [Story] requirements
- Basic stories should be approximately 400 to 650 words long (one to three pages, typed and double-spaced). They must contain a minimum of two human sources.
- For each story, students must submit a list of all sources and their contact information (phone, e-mail). Failure to submit a source list will reduce the score on that paper by one letter grade.

Story Grading Criteria
90 - 100 points (A): Minor editing needed. Almost ready for publication.
80-89 points (B): Needs editing and minor changes; some story structure issues (remember inverted pyramid, lead, nut graph)
70-79 points (C): Satisfactory, but needs changes and additional information/reporting.
60-69 points (D): Several changes needed; errors in writing and reporting.
<60 points (F): Factual errors; reporting errors and major writing errors.

Profile Story
The profile story should be more in-depth than other out-of-class stories, and have a 700 to 1,000 word count. This story should profile a person or organization. This story should not focus on event coverage. It must contain a minimum of three [2] human sources. (Grading Criteria same as other story assignments)

Portfolio
Students should pretend they are applying for a freelance opportunity at XYZ magazine. The student should turn in a cover letter and a link to their professional web page/online portfolio. This web page should include links to all out-of-class stories completed in this class. If a story was published in Island Waves, the link to the story in IslandWavesNews.com should be provided. The web page should also include a downloadable PDF of the student’s resume. (A student can get full credit for this assignment IF all criteria is met)
- Cover Letter applying for freelance position
- On Website:
  - About Me Page
  - 4 Links to Stories [3 stories and 1 profile story]
  - Downloadable PDF of resume

Exams
Midterm Exam to cover Carole Rich Chapters 7, 5, 3, 8, 6, 10, 11
Final Exam to cover Carole Rich Chapters 15, 16, 12, 15, 14, 20, 24

Multimedia Project
Students must turn in one multimedia project that covers the same subject as the profile story. This video should include video footage and/or photos of the person or organization. It must have text and audio of the subject’s interview in order to put together to tell a visual story that could be published along with the written version of the story. The video should include closing credits that describes who produced the video and gives credit to any outside entities that provided music and/or images not taken by the student. The student must also turn in the profile text version of the story [with hyperlinks to related stories/websites/contact info]. To turn in the Multimedia Project, the student must upload the video to YouTube. Then the student should turn two parts of
the assignment in on Blackboard. (On Blackboard, there should be a link to the YouTube video and the Word File of the final story should be uploaded)

**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 attribute every source uses in stories. 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 or log onto [http://cla.tamucc.edu/advising/](http://cla.tamucc.edu/advising/).

**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 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.

**Grade Appeals**
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the
parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

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**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 your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. 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 6** 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.
**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*
# Syllabus Schedule
*(course outline)*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Class Discussion/Chapters</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
<th>Quiz</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introductions/Syllabus/Talking to Strangers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td><strong>Ch 7 Interviewing:</strong> Listening, note taking, audio recording, questioning, etc.</td>
<td>CA1 Interviewing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td><strong>Ch 5 News:</strong> Formula for basic news story, generating story ideas</td>
<td>Story Ideas</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td><strong>Ch 3 Basic News Story:</strong> Quotes, attribution, story budgets, etc.</td>
<td>CA2 Inverted Pyramid</td>
<td>AP Q1</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td><strong>Ch 8 Lead &amp; Nut Graph:</strong> Specific strategies for Lead and NG, 5 Ws&amp;H</td>
<td>Story #1 (OA1)</td>
<td>AP Q2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td><strong>Ch 6 Sources &amp; Online Research:</strong> Human vs. online sources, public records, FOIA</td>
<td>CA3 Lead &amp; Nut Graph</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td><strong>Ch 10&amp;11 Story Forms:</strong> Other types of stories, outlines, transitions, new story forms</td>
<td>Story #2 (OA2)</td>
<td>AP Q4</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td><strong>Ch 18 Obits &amp; Profiles</strong></td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Story Analysis (OA3)</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Movie Week</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td><strong>Ch 15&amp;16 Media Law &amp; Ethics</strong></td>
<td>Profile Story</td>
<td>CE Q1</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td><strong>Ch 12&amp;13 Broadcast &amp; Online Journalism</strong></td>
<td>CA4 Storyboard/Script</td>
<td>CE Q2</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td><strong>Ch 14 Public Relations Writing</strong></td>
<td>CA5 Press Release</td>
<td>CE Q3</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td><strong>Ch 20 Meetings &amp; Speeches</strong></td>
<td>CA6 Speech</td>
<td>CE Q4</td>
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<td>Multimedia Project</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td><strong>Ch 24 Media Jobs &amp; Internships:</strong> how to find a job in media</td>
<td>Portfolio Web Link</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Return Last Assignments</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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*All Assignments and dates are subject to change.*