

SYLLABUS COMM: 2221

Media Writing & Editing

Course Overview

This course is designed to familiarize students with and, preparing you for a career in, journalism. Students will become familiar with all aspects of journalism; from media writing, to understanding newsroom norms and culture. Students will become learn: AP News Style; using social media for promoting journalism; writing for print, radio, television and online; media law; as well as how to write good news copy. Students will also become familiar with the workings of Ohio State’s Lantern Newspaper, and students are encouraged to write pieces with the aim of publications in the Lantern.

Catalog Course Description

Designed to help students develop the fundamentals of news reporting, writing, and editing across news platforms.

Instructor

Hello everyone, my name is George. I’m really looking forward to teaching this course this semester, and seeing the great stories you will all write. I’m a PhD student here at Ohio State conducting research in digital journalism and news audiences. I’m originally from the UK, where I worked as a radio journalist for 18 months, before working as a Communications and Press Officer in local Government. I moved to Columbus in 2014.

Office Hours
Wed: 10am - 12pm (or by appointment)
Office: Room 3049, Derby Hall,
154 N Oval Mall,

-  pearson.325@osu.edu
-  twitter.com/gdhpearson
-  [linkedin.com/in/gdhpearson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/gdhpearson)

Class

Meets every Tuesday & Thursday
3pm - 5:05pm
Journalism 281

Contents

- Course Overview 1
- Instructor 1
- Office & Newsroom Hours . 1
- Readings & Materials 2
- Attendance & Grading. . . . 2
- Communication Policy . . . 2
- Technology Policy. 3
- IT Problems? 3
- Technology in this Course . 3
- Assignments 4
- Social Media 6
- Professionalism 6
- Becoming a Journalist 7
- Other Class Policies 8
- Lesson-by-Lesson Content . 9

Office Hours & Newsroom Hours

In COMM 221 we will have two hours of regular office hours, and two hours of ‘Newsroom Hours’. The Newsroom Hours are where students can gather to talk about wrting, and get clear detailed feedback on their writing.

The Newsroom Hours are held joint between our class, and other journalism classes. The Newsroom Hours will have myself, Professor Nicole Kraft, and student journalists writing for the Lantern. We will be able to go over your work with you and offer tips on how to improve your writing.

Newsroom hours are Mondays 1-2:30, in Journaism 217

Office hours will be every Wednesday from 10am - 12pm. I am also available to meet at other times via appointment and will be on campus most times Monday - Thursday.

Readings & Course Materials

Each week will contain a number of materials to study before class. These will include pre-recorded lecture videos, external media (video clips, podcasts etc.), as well as readings. Readings will be comprised of book chapters, websites, and news articles.

There are also a number of other resources you will want to use throughout the semester.

- The AP Style Book (available as a book or app subscription)
- “Always get the name of the dog: A guide to interviewing” by Nicole Kraft. (Available on iTunes for \$1.99)
- You should be reading plenty of news, especially local journalism such as the Columbus Dispatch.
- You should be reading The Lantern (either online or in print)

There are also other useful resources that may help you in this course:

- The Writing Center: The Ohio State’s Writing Center is a great resource to help you improve your writing skills, a necessary skill in all careers.
- Strunk & White’s “The Elements of Style”: If you are uncertain of what constitutes good writing this classic book is incredibly helpful, and helps with writing in all fields.

Attendance & Grading Policy

You are expected to attend every, or nearly, every lesson of this class. Missing classes will lead to you losing points for participation, as well as missing in class assignments and AP style quizzes.

However, I do also understand that University is tough, and therefore students from time to time will need to miss lessons. If you are going to miss a class you must email me BEFORE the class, or you will be counted as absent. I will judge all absences on a case-by-case basis, and take into account: the validity of the excuse; your previous number of absences; your standing in the course; and your manner.

For assignments, all late assignments are graded as 0. Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration: the validity of the excuse; the size of the assignment due; the time till the deadline; your standing in the class; and your manner. However, all extensions must be arranged BEFORE the deadline. No retroactive extensions will be granted. You cannot make-up in-class assignments or AP quizzes.

I generally aim to be flexible with students, and if you are struggling to complete an assignment on time I would much rather you spoke to me rather than not completing the assignment (the worst I can do say is no).

All grades granted are final. I do not review grades on appeal. The only circumstance where I will review a grade given objective error (for instance if I gave you a 0 for not completing the assignment when in fact you had). I will however, provided feedback on all work you submit.

Final grades at the end of the semester will be rounded to the nearest whole number, so an 89.5% will become 90% and an A-. However, there will not be any further rounding of grades.

Communication

For almost all of this class we will communicate using Slack. Slack is an instant messaging and collaboration service that allows you to easily connect with peers.

We will have a channel dedicated just to our class on Slack where you can ask questions about the course, as well as get advice on coursework. You are encouraged to participate and respond to each other’s queries.

Communicating with each other

When communicating with each other on and offline please ensure you are courteous and respectful to others.

While there is generally no need to be overly formal during class discussions, you should still aim to write using good grammar, spelling and punctuation (even in slack). Be sure to maintain a supporting learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably.

Communicating with me

I am online most of the time, and therefore I will often be able to respond to Slack messages quickly. However, there will be delays out of hours, or if I am unavailable. Therefore do not expect to be able to get a response an hour or two before a deadline.

As a rule, message me through Slack. Only email me for serious issues, such as reporting long-term absences, or other factors that will impact your learning. If you email me and I feel the topic is better discussed on Slack, I will likely tell you to message me there.

Technology Policy

While technology has been shown to hinder learning in many circumstances, technology is also a vital part of the newsroom. Therefore, rather than prohibiting technology, you are actively encouraged to bring and use your laptop to use for class work. In fact, you will need a computer to complete most of the assignments in this course.

You are also encouraged to use smartphones in class, as part of your grade is made up of social media use.

However, you are expected to use your computer and smartphone responsibly, and anyone in class caught using technology for non-class purposes can expect to be called out and lose marks for participation.

IT Problems?

If you are experiencing problems with any of University IT (such as problems with email, passwords, Carmen etc.) you should contact the OSU IT Support Desk on [614-688-HELP \(4357\)](tel:614-688-HELP).

Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

Student Responsibility

Students are responsible for ensuring they have the technology necessary to complete the course. If you are experiencing any technical difficulties with University software and websites (e.g. Carmen, Buckeyemail etc.) you should contact the IT Service Desk as soon as possible. If you are having problems with external services, such as Slack, you should contact me as soon as possible.

If you experience any problems with any OSU IT services, you should also check the system status page on the OCIO website (https://osuism.service-now.com/selfservice/system_status) which logs any widespread exiting problems with OSU IT services.

Technical problems will not generally be considered a valid excuse for non-participation or missing a deadline, unless there is an acknowledged problem with the IT systems by the OCIO that would reasonably affect people's ability to complete the work, or if you have raised an ongoing ticket with IT Services (I will expect proof of this ticket, and I may contact IT services to ensure the situation is ongoing).

Technology used in this Course



<https://carmen.osu.edu/>

Carmen will hold the majority of the content for this course, including: guidelines on all assignments, readings, videos, and other useful resources.

I will also be posting important class announcements (such as changes to lessons / assignments) to Carmen. It will also be used to submit the majority of course content.

Students can log into Carmen using their OSU login details.



<https://slack.com/>

Slack is an instant messaging and collaboration system used by some of the most innovative news organizations in the world

We will use slack to replace almost all email (See communication policy on page 2). Slack will allow you to more easily and better communicate with other students in the class.

I strongly encourage students to ask questions and respond to each other's queries using Slack.



<https://medium.com/>

For the final project you will create an article website dedicated to an in-depth look at a topic (for more information see page 5).

To do this, we will use Medium, which is a website that allows you to easily create visually appealing stories.

Using a simple point and click interface you will be able to create clean, engaging and beautiful-looking stories to wow your audiences with.

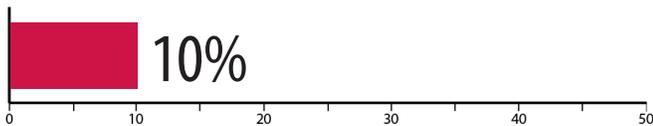
Assignments

Your grade for this class is made up of nine different parts. These are explained below.

Attendance & Participation

(100 points)

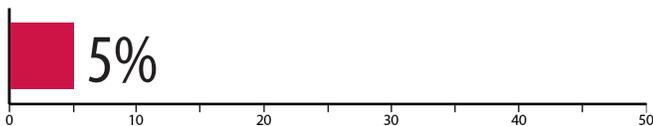
The first rule of any job is to turn up. Therefore you are expected to attend every, or nearly every, lesson this semester (more information on page 2). However, you are also expected to actively take part in the class while you are there, by contributing to class discussion.



Twitter & Social Media

(50 points)

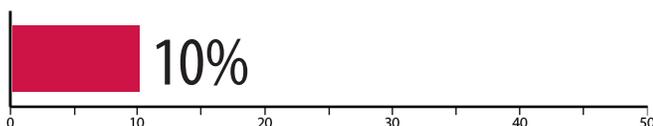
Journalists are increasingly expected to use social media to promote their stories and discuss issues with fellow journalists and news audiences. This part of your grade will get you starting to use Twitter like a journalist. (More information on page 6).



In Class Assignments

(100 points - 10 points each)

You will have a variety of hands-on experiences in which to write in class. Your participation in and completion of these activities is key to your skill development, and will each be worth 10 points. They include simulated news events, coverage, write-ups on guest speakers, video and audio storytelling assignments, etc.



AP Style & News Quizzes

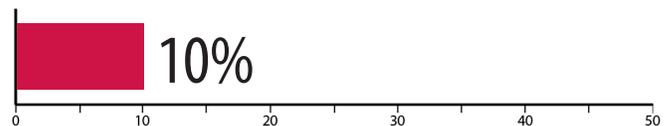
(10 points)

AP (Associated Press) Style are the rules by which

Assignments Overview



almost all journalism is written. Every week we will work on improving our AP style through a series of challenges. Working in teams you will seek to determine the answer to questions provided in class.

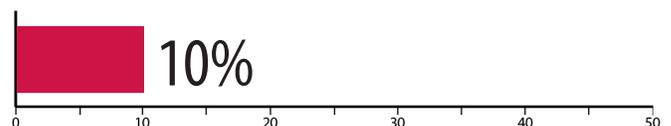


News Story

(100 points)

For this assignment we will find a story idea around campus and develop that idea into a news story using research, interviews, and journalistic writing. We should aim to submit this piece to the Lantern. We will keep the story simple - something that is newsworthy to Ohio State readers. (Examples would be: action by the president's office, new fee, new business, new appointment, sporting event, etc.).

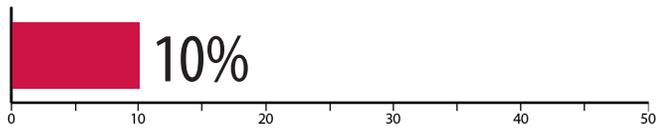
More information on the assignment will be provided on Carmen.



News Localization

(100 points)

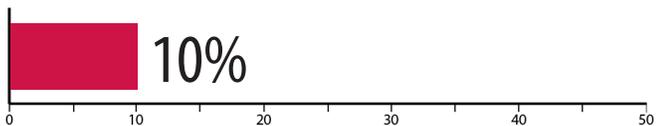
This assignment is about taking wider news and focusing it to have greater meaning for our readers. In this assignment you will find a national or international story, and figure how to focus it for the Ohio State community. You will write the story for submission to the Lantern.



Feature Story

(100 points)

Feature articles are less about immediately evolving events and have a longer 'lifespan' than news articles, providing descriptive writing with a focus on people and places. You will write one feature article on a topic related to the Ohio State community. More information is available on Carmen.

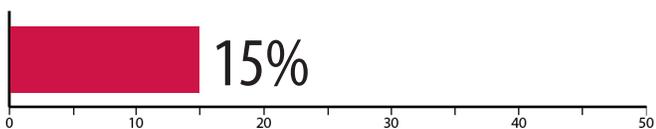


Midterm

(150 points)

The midterm takes place during week 9, and will take place over two lessons. This will involve:

- Day 1: AP and current events quiz (50 points)
- Day 2: Deadline writing, editing and rewriting of a story (100 points)



Final Project

(200 points)

As a final project to showcase your journalistic skills—research, writing, photography, video and editing—you will be part of a team that researches a journalism-related topic and creates a comprehensive project that is displayed on a website (I strongly suggest using Medium, but you can use others with my permission

if you wish). Teams will generally be three people, although may be 2 or 4 depending on class numbers.

Your team's project must be an enterprised and comprehensive package about a topic of interest to the Ohio State or Columbus community. It must, however, be large scale and significant to a large number of people on a topic that reflects the greater community; for example: what Ohio State is doing to combat sexual assaults on campus; a look at the international student experience on campus, including how much they pay, how they assimilate, services to support, challenges they face, etc.; the role of lecturers at Ohio State and how their lives differ from tenure-track faculty.

Every project will include these pieces:

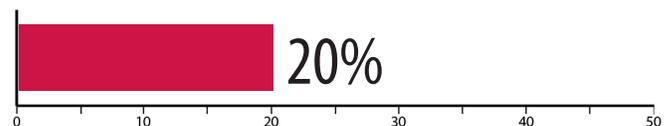
1. An article from each team member in varying styles of news and features that present varying sides of the topic.
2. At least three pieces of media for every article, including but not limited to photos, videos and data support with visualization.
3. An overview article that introduces the topic.

As well as writing the articles you will also submit a small project report detailing the steps you took to complete the articles (such as sources used, how you sources photographs etc.). This report will be used to make sure you have followed best practice in interviewing sources and utilizing media materials.

You will be graded on:

- Articles' quality (90 points)
- Multimedia use (60 points)
- Layout & design (25 points)
- Editing (15 points)
- Project report (10 points)

Further information on how to complete the project will be available on Carmen.



Extra Credit

Up to 30 points of extra credit (3%) can be gained in this class. This can be earned by: completing certain studies (between 5 and 10 points each); attending designated talks (5 points each); attending field trips and scenario sessions (5 points each); having a story (not from a class assignment) accepted for the Lantern (20 points each).

Join in the discussion using #OSUNewsClass

Using social media is becoming an increasingly important part of journalism, and journalists are expected to have a good social media presence. To help you on the way to building a professional social media presence, making posts to social media will be part of this course.

We will do this using Twitter, as it will allow the best possible interaction with classmates, as well as fellow Lantern and professional journalists. Twitter is also a more flexible platform than other social media, accommodating words, video, pictures etc.

If you wish you can use accounts that you already use, however you may create accounts solely for this class if you wish. If using one just for this class, it must be an active account however.

You are expected to post four to five times a week (although obviously post more if you enjoy the conversations). This can be about the class (a good quote, a question you have, and interesting discussion point) or can be relevant content you find elsewhere (good examples of journalism from elsewhere, good web articles etc.). Where relevant use the hashtag #osunewsclass so we can find each other's posts more easily.



Professionalism

I am a big believer that college is intended to prepare you for the real world, and that for many—especially in journalism—your undergraduate career is like a first job. You can and will make a lot of mistakes here, but the goal is to learn from them and not to make them again.

To that end, I will treat you professionally, and need you to do the same. As of such I will expect you to behave in a professional manner throughout the class. Beneath are some of the ways you can prepare for being a professional journalist.

1. You will be graded primarily on your writing and editing, and how you work as a writer and editor with your fellow news “staffers.”
2. Fact and style errors, and misspellings are also VERY important in the pursuit of journalistic skill so they are weighted heavily in this class.
3. Coming on time and ready to work on the material for the day: Our class only works if we all do the foundational work ahead and then we can build. If you do not do that work and we have to “catch you up,” you are impacting everyone else in class.
4. You are missed when you are absent: When you don’t come to class, I notice, and you are missed personally and for your contributions. Missing class when we are doing group work or an in-class activity will result in a 0 for the assignment (unless there are serious extenuating circumstances that you notify me about at least two hours BEFORE class).
5. Staying in class: I know you have things to do. We all do. But we have committed to being in class together for two hours twice a week.
6. Treating classmates/coworkers with respect: Everyone’s ideas have merit, and allowing a civil discussion, even when we disagree, is a key to future success.
7. Dressing for success: I know this is college, but you never know who might come to class who could help you with an internship or guide your academic or professional career. Pajamas are for sleeping. Swimsuits are for beaches. Please know I don’t want to discuss appropriate class dress with you, but I will, if needed.
8. To ensure we are preparing for the “real world,” your emails to sources should be written using standards of courtesy (address, proper tone, and signature).
9. I do not edit articles over email, so if you wish to work on your article one-on-one (which I encourage!), please make an appointment or drop by my office hours.
10. We do not interview or quote friends, relatives, roommates, classmates, etc. In our industry it’s considered a conflict of interest.
11. Only if a Lantern editor accepts the article ideas do we say we are writing for the paper, but we will always write with the goal of being published in The Lantern.
12. We always tell sources we are interviewing them for an article that will be published. This is not theory—it’s real life!

Becoming a World Class Journalist

For many of you this may be the first opportunity where you really get to try at being a journalist. Journalism is a tough job, and can be daunting. However, there are plenty of steps you can take to make sure you get a head start.

Sources

You need at least at least two human sources for every article but, more importantly, you must have sources that have expertise to speak on your article topic, and be able to provide relevant information.

As convenient as they may be, we do not use friends, roommates, relatives, etc., as sources for your stories, photographs, graphics etc. This is a conflict of interest. That said, we recognize you have the potential to sometimes be classmates with relevant people. If you are unsure if you can approach someone as a source, ask me.

That conflict policy also spreads out to any activities, organizations, projects, companies, etc. in which you are involved in, but you can share story ideas with fellow reporters.

Each story should have at least two, and usually three, sources. Interviews with sources must be conducted face-to-face (or on the phone if face-to-face isn't possible). You cannot conduct interviews via email/IM/text etc.

Avoid technology disasters

This course, like journalism as a whole, relies heavily on access to computers, specific software, and the Internet.

At some point during the semester you will likely have a problem with technology. Your laptop will crash; your iPad battery will die; a recording you make will disappear; you will accidentally delete a file; the wireless will go down at a crucial time.

These, however, are inevitabilities of life, not emergencies. Technology problems are not excuses for unfinished or late work. Bad things may happen, but you can protect yourself by doing the following:

- Plan ahead: A deadline is the last minute to turn in material. You can start--and finish--early, particularly if challenging resources are required, or you know it will be time consuming to finish this project.
- Save work early and often: Think how much work you do in 10 minutes. I auto save ever 2 minutes.
- Make regular backups of files in a different location: Between Box, Google Drive, Dropbox and iCloud,

you have ample places to store and back up your materials. Use them. (Also, Box has unlimited free storage for OSU students, and is a great resource - it has saved me from technology disasters in the past). You can access it box.osu.edu.

- Save your notes separate from assignments: Even if your story gets lost, you can always recreate it with access to your notes. Keep them organized, accessible and backed up.
- Save drafts: When editing, set aside originals and work with a copy.
- Practice safe computing: On your personal computer, install and use software to control viruses and malware

Use your peers

While work must be your own, your peers are always available for advice. Much of the work in this class will involve reviewing and editing each other's work to help each other become better writers.

Out of class, you also have Slack where you can ask a quick question from the class if you are stuck on an issue.

I fully encourage you to discuss class content, and story ideas with each other in and out of class.

Rules for every story

Every story you write in this class will be written with the aim of being submitted to the Lantern newspaper.

You cannot write about organizations, projects, groups etc. that you are involved in. You can however share those ideas with other students.

You are the master of your story idea. That means the majority of things you write about in this class will be ideas that you have.

You should be prepared to write and re-write every story. Each of the main pieces you write (the news story, localization article, and feature article) will be submitted twice, given you the opportunity to improve on your first draft. I will take the average of these two grades as your grade for the assignment, so there is motivation to edit and edit well.

Diversity

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu.

Academic Integrity Policy

Your written assignments, should be your own original work. You are encouraged to ask a trusted person to proofread your assignments before you turn them in--but no one else should revise or rewrite your work.

In general, you are prohibited in university courses from turning in work from a past class to your current class, even if you modify it. If you want to build on past research or revisit a topic you've explored in previous courses, please discuss the situation with me. The only exception to this rule, is writing for the Lantern. You are actively encouraged to submit work for this class for submission to the Lantern.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors

shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

Accessibility Accommodations

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu ; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu ; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Lesson-by-lesson content

Below is a guide to the content we will cover in each lesson this semester. This is however meant as a guide, and some details may change as circumstances change.

Week	Date	Module	Class Title	Assignments Due
1	22-Aug	Introduction	Welcome to #osunewsclass	
	24-Aug		Getting setup for the semester	
2	29-Aug	Basics of News Writing	AP style	
	31-Aug		Inverted pyramid writing	
3	6-Sep		Editing and headlines	
	8-Sep	Sources & Interviews	The source relationship	
4	12-Sep		Interviewing	
	14-Sep	Story Construction	Localizing news	
5	19-Sep		Reporting on campus	News article
	21-Sep		Using images	
6	26-Sep	Challenges of writing for certain genres	Feature writing	News article rewrite
	28-Sep		Writing on complex topics	
7	3-Oct		Writing on complex topics 2	
	5-Oct		Live reporting & breaking news	
8	10-Oct		Live reporting & breaking news 2	
	12-Oct	NO CLASS: AUTUMN BREAK		
9	17-Oct	Research	Backgrounding	Localization article
	19-Oct		Investigative reporting	
10	24-Oct		Public records and meetings	Localization article rewrite
	26-Oct	Midterm	Midterm review	
11	31-Oct		Midterm quiz	Midterm quiz
	2-Nov		Midterm article writing	Midterm article
12	7-Nov	Final Project	Final project begins	
	9-Nov		Final project team work	
13	14-Nov	Other Mediums	Broadcast reporting	Feature article
	16-Nov		Radio reporting	
14	21-Nov	News in Society	Media law and ethics	Feature article
	23-Nov		NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING	
15	28-Nov		Fake news	
	30-Nov		News in the age of Trump	
16	5-Dec	Final Project	Final project work	
	11-Dec	Final project due @ 5pm		