

**I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

- A. Department Information  
Division: Humanities and Social Science  
Department: English  
Course ID: ENGL 120  
Course Title: Fundamentals of News Writing  
Units: 3  
Lecture: 3 Hours  
Prerequisite: ENGL 101
- B. Catalog and Schedule Description:  
A course in journalistic writing: reporting, feature writing, interpretation, editorial and column writing and critical review of the arts. Emphasis is on the most basic form, the news story.

**II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: One**

**III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS:**

Upon completion of the course the student should be able to:

- A. Write clear, concise articles that exhibit the basic principles of journalism
- B. Distinguish between reporting and commenting on news
- C. Distinguish between strictly factual reporting and analytical journalism
- D. Distinguish between "hard news" and "feature" writing
- E. Distinguish between defamatory statements and protected speech
- F. Evaluate news stories and articles for content and style

**IV. COURSE CONTENT:**

- A. Basic principles of journalism
  1. Accuracy
  2. Clarity
  3. Conciseness
  4. Attribution
  5. Objectivity
- B. Writing the news story
  1. The "lead" paragraph
  2. Supporting paragraphs of descending order
- C. Writing the feature story
  1. Deciding on focus or "angle"
  2. Choosing appropriate scheme of development
- D. Writing analysis
  1. Nature of analytical conclusions
  2. Importance of supporting evidence
- E. Writing opinion pieces
  1. Nature of argumentative conclusions (opinion)
  2. Importance of supporting evidence

**V. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:**

- A. Lecture/Discussion: Reading assignments will be supplemented by the instructor's comments on the basic points. Students will be asked to discuss the basic principles of journalism and apply them to various examples.
- B. Workshop: Students will submit their articles for peer review in small groups (3-4 students) or in more traditional classroom sessions with the instructor playing a greater role in directing the discussion.

**VI. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:**

- A. Students will review a videotape of a speech or interview on C-SPAN and write a news story about it, applying the basic principles of journalism.
- B. Students will write a review of a film, TV program or play to submit for peer review where it will be evaluated for its use of supporting evidence to draw conclusions.

**VII. EVALUATION(S):**

- A. Methods of evaluation:
  1. Portfolio of work: Students will be graded primarily on the quantity and quality of their news stories and articles over the semester.
  2. Essay exams: At mid-term and final exam time, students will be tested on their understanding of basic concepts and their ability to apply them. For example, they might be asked to explain whether a harsh editorial about a politician is libelous or not.
  3. Quizzes: The instructor has the option of using quizzes to encourage a careful reading of assigned texts and to stimulate discussion about them.
  4. Mid-term and final exams
- B. Frequency of evaluation:
  1. Students will write stories and articles on a regular throughout the semester. Their portfolio will contain 8 – 12 pieces at semester's end.
  2. Quizzes will be given on a weekly basis or as needed. Sample test question: Write a straight news story based on the attached interview with Ted Koppel.

**VIII. TYPICAL TEXT(S):**

Basic Media Writing - Mel Mencher. A.P. Style Guide and Libel Manual. Brown and Benchmark, 1996.

**IX. OTHER SUPPLIES REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: None**