

COMM 221: BASIC JOURNALISM (NEWSWRITING AND REPORTING)

Syllabus, Fall 2015 (8/26/15)

Instructor: Dr. Steve Hill (shill@uwsp.edu), CAC 323, 346-3887

Office Hours: Mon 11 a.m.-noon, Tu 1-2 p.m., and by appointment

Required Texts:

- Various readings on e-reserve, available through D2L course page
- *Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law* (available for purchase from the university bookstore)

Our **purpose** is to help students learn fundamental skills needed for reporting news. Whether you're a communication major or not, we'll work on skills that are useful across disciplines – especially writing skills. Good reporting relies on good writing, and all course content is geared toward those skills. Mastering assignments will leave you better equipped to analyze and communicate clearly about events in our world, regardless of your ultimate profession.

COMM 221 a writing-emphasis course for purposes of UWSP's general degree requirements, so you'll be required to write quite a bit to receive credit in this course. It also is a hybrid course, meaning class meetings will be limited and much of your learning will occur online or with online material. There will be some online discussion and peer editing. Please see the class rules on our D2L course space for more details on attendance, which is mandatory.

Our **goals** are that students will be able to:

- Write news stories in the proper inverted pyramid format.
- Understand and effectively utilize other story formats and styles.
- Demonstrate appreciation of writing deadlines and an ability to meet them.
- Effectively use the Associated Press stylebook so writing conforms to journalistic style.
- Improve their understanding and use of basic English grammar.
- Demonstrate competence in core journalism skills such as listening and observing, fact-checking, organizing and structuring information, rewriting, editing, and interviewing.

We'll measure progress toward these goals by assessing how you demonstrate your skills and knowledge on written assignments and tasks related to them (including revising and peer editing), as well as online quizzes (both in and out of class). See "Assignments and grading policies" in the D2L content area for more details.

My teaching philosophy is based on four concepts: community, personal responsibility, effective communication and relevance. A short explanation of this philosophy is posted on D2L. I hope you'll read it and understand how respecting this philosophy in class will contribute to a positive learning experience for yourself and your colleagues.

I try to keep **class rules** to a minimum, but those that I have are posted on the content area of our D2L site.

Grading Policy

Your grade will be based on the number of points that you earn. There will be at least 1,095 points available during the semester, in addition to a small number of bonus points. Point totals required for grade levels are these (note that 930 points is 85 percent of 1,095 and 600 is 55 percent of 1,095):

A: 930 or more	A-: 900-929.99	
B+: 870-899.99	B: 830-869.99	B-: 800-829.99
C+: 770-799.99	C: 730-769.99	C-: 700-729.99
D+: 670-699.99	D: 600-669.99	
F: Fewer than 600 points		

In the past, this class has used a policy of dropping several of the lowest quiz grades. The current policy is to count all grades but decrease the percentage of total points needed to earn any particular grade level. This allows students some flexibility to miss an occasional task, but the obvious result is that the less work you miss, the better your chances for a higher grade are.

Deadlines are critical to journalists. **If any of your first-draft written assignments are late, you'll lose 25 percent** of the assignment's potential value for each 24-hour period that it's late. The clock starts ticking at the time that it's due. All work is turned in electronically unless otherwise noted. If a 50-point assignment is due on Tuesday at 11 p.m., it loses 12.5 points at 11:01 p.m. Tuesday and another 12.5 at 11:01 Wednesday. For more information on deadlines, see the document entitled "Late work" on the D2L content page. *Quizzes and writing revisions may not be submitted late.*

PLEASE NOTE: ANY ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT, INCLUDING MISREPRESENTING ANY WORK IN ANY WAY, WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF "F" FOR THE COURSE.

Statements of University Policy. You are responsible for understanding university policies, especially regarding academic misconduct. That policy can be found at <http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rights/rightsChap14.pdf>.

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible.

UWSP 14.01 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES.

The board of regents, administrators, faculty, academic staff and students of the University of Wisconsin system believe that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental to the mission of higher education and of the University of Wisconsin system. The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions.

UWSP 14.03 ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINARY ACTION.

- (1) Academic misconduct is an act in which a student:
 - (a) Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
 - (b) Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- (c) Forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- (d) Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- (e) Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; or
- (f) Assists other students in any of these acts.
- (g) Violates electronic communication policies or standards as agreed upon when logging on initially (See uwsp.edu/it/policy).