

WAC PLAN: MASS COMMUNICATIONS MAJOR

Part I: Expectations for Writing

Mass communications writing requires clarity, accuracy, and authority. Writing needs to be understandable, direct, and straightforward. Although we tell stories, we begin where other writers end, surrendering literary tools of suspense and foreshadowing in order to tell the reader what's important as quickly as possible. The quality of an article/story (print or broadcast style) frequently reflects not only writing ability but also reporting. Solid information helps a journalist write with authority. Sentences and paragraphs are relatively short, emphasizing nouns and verbs—usually active verbs. Specific tools relating to journalism include the 5Ws (who, what, where, when and why –and how) and the inverted pyramid, as well as techniques borrowed from literature, including anecdote. “New journalism,” associated with the ‘60s and ‘70s but still practiced, incorporates far more literary technique. Photos, charts, maps and other graphics have long been part of mass media writing, but they are increasingly integrated. Well-written journalism stories follow the “Four C’s”; they are clear, concise, correct, and conversational.

Public relations practices similar approaches to writing, but the message is obviously less objective. Well-written PR information (press releases, etc.) are grammatically correct, provide necessary information, and complete the point of the released material very clearly.

The research papers our students write in the theory, law, and ethics classes are much more in depth. The goal is to research a particular area of the course subject matter and gain in-depth knowledge of that particular topic. Students learn about research and gain library skills through the search for sources. These sources are properly cited, accurate, and appropriate. Well-written research papers focus clearly and consistently on a specific idea and develop that idea thoroughly, accurately, and in detail. They are easy to follow and contains few/no errors in grammar or mechanics.

Part II: Writing Courses

COM 2570 Writing for Mass Communications Media I (many short writing assignments), 30% of course grade (Dr. Swift).

COM 2580 Writing for Mass Communications Media II (many short writing assignments), 40% of course grade (Dr. Swift).

COM 2800 Communication Theory. 5-10 pp. 20% of course grade (Dr. Swift).

COM 3110 Media Law. 5-10 pp (two papers). 30% of course grade (Dr. Swift).

COM 3120 Ethics in Mass Media. 5-10 pp. 20% of course grade (Dr. Swift).

III. Rubrics

Writing for Mass Communications Courses-

-Accuracy-Is your story accurate? Are your facts in order? I could rightfully fail a student for a single incorrect piece of information. That will not happen in the early stages of the learning process, but accuracy is a must and all student writers will be held accountable. **40%**

-Style-Are you writing in the proper style? Do you know what is important for the particular style with which we might be working? A feature story is different from hard news. Broadcast is different from any form of print. Is your work demonstrating the correct style? **15%**

-Objectivity-Does your story show more than one side of an issue? Objectivity can be very difficult, but your stories should not be slanted. Are you giving proper mention to the particular opposition to an issue? Are the sides equally split, or is there outlying dissension? It is up to the writer to make it clear. **15%**

-Length-Is your story the proper length? Did you make your points in the allotted time or run short/long? Not meeting the required length or time can be disastrous for a paper or broadcast. Have you shown that you can be accurate and tell the story in the time/space given? **15%**

-Speed-Writing for the media is difficult. One of the challenges is getting the job done on deadline. Did you make it? Writing stories that are accurate, objective, and meet all length requirements on a tight deadline is the challenge of every media writer. Some assignments will be timed for this reason. **15%**

Law, Ethics, Theory Rubrics-

-The topic-Does the topic show relevance to the course? Does it add to the discussion and bring new research and understanding to the learning experience of the student? Is it well thought out and relevant to a particular area of media law that can add to the discussion and research? **15%**

-Writing- How well-written was the paper itself? Was the writing clear? Were the points well organized? Was the thesis statement clear? Is the research comprehensive? Does the work have proper grammar, style, punctuation, and spelling? Students may visit the Writing Center on campus for assistance. **30%**

-Depth-Does the paper offer more than a cursory look at the topic/subject? Does it go beyond the surface or rely on simple, basic facts? Is there information in the assignment that required comprehensive, in-depth research or interviews? **20%**

-Sources-Are the sources well documented and referenced? Are they relevant? Current? Keep in mind that improperly sourced material often borders on

plagiarism. We will discuss a clear definition of plagiarism. Lack of sources will have a negative impact on the grade of the project. **15%**

-Critical Thinking-Does the work show depth of thought and insight?

Does the writer show *objective* analysis and evaluation in order to justify the topic and any conclusions that are drawn? **20%**