

Journalism 202
Writing for the Mass Communications
Spring semester 2012

Instructor: Bertram Rantin
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Course objectives: You will be introduced to the principles of Mass Communication writing. The class will focus on preparing and developing news and feature stories for print, broadcast and on-line media. This will involve such components as lead writing, second paragraphs, story development, the inverted pyramid, back grounding, follow-up stories, the proper use of quotes and titles, and AP style. You will be presented the basic journalist guidelines for organizing and writing stories and will be expected to demonstrate a mastery of these fundamentals.

You will be working under deadline to produce stories that are suitable for publication.

You will develop the ability to think critically about the truth and accuracy of news reports, a sense of ethical responsibility and fairness, and an understanding of the value of diversity in journalism.

Text: In-class handouts.

You should have a regular diet of print, on-line and broadcast news, particularly involving stories of major local and national interest. You may be quizzed from time to time on major current events. Additionally, a regular diet of print journalism will significantly enhance your writing skills and improve your chance of success in this course and this profession.

By this time, you should have a solid foundation in the basics of the English language. This is **ESSENTIAL** to your success in the field of journalism. If any major weaknesses are discovered in this area, it will be necessary to address and correct them as this will **HEAVILY** impact your progress and your final grade.

Attendance: We will meet 27 times. Regular class attendance is crucial as each class will build on the skills presented in the previous classes. Missing more than three classes will significantly detract from your final grade, as each additional absence (above three) will lower your final grade by one letter grade. Make-up work will be accepted for up to two unexcused absences. However, it is **YOUR** responsibility to find out what was covered during any missed class period and submit any missed work **WITHIN A WEEK** of the original assignment in order to receive credit for that day's work. Only documented medical excuses will be considered regarding any additional missed assignments or absences.

Grading procedure: Each in-class assignment will be graded (after an introductory writing period), and there will be periodic homework assignments as needed. Late homework assignments will not be accepted. In-class assignments will account for 50 percent of your final grade. Homework, make-up assignments and quizzes will account for 25 percent, and a final written exam will account for up to 25 percent. The lowest in-class grade will be dropped (everyone has a bad day).

When appropriate, assignments will be submitted via e-mail, so you must have a reliable e-mail account.

Your instructor: Bertram Rantin is an adjunct professor of journalism who works full-time as a column writer for The State Newspaper. His areas of concentration in teaching are media writing and reporting. He is a graduate of the USC School of Journalism.

Journalism 202 Schedule

Week 1 –

Introduction to News (Print/Online) Writing
Assignments

Week 2 –

Diagnostic Writing Exercise
Grammar for Journalists
Assignments

Week 3 –

The elements of news
Leads
Straight news lead (5 W's)
Summary lead (5 W's)
Introduction to AP Style
Assignments

Week 4 –

The inverted pyramid
Briefs
Assignments

Week 5 –

More on leads
Backgrounding and sourcing
Assignments

Week 6 –

Effective use of quotations, numbers and statistics
Paraphrasing
Assignments

Week 7 –
Deadline writing
Assignments

Week 8 –
Assignments will be based on selected I-Comm Week activities, which students will be required to attend. Our regularly scheduled class meetings may be cancelled.

Week 9 –
Story development and the longer story
Assignments

Week 10
Law of public communication
Journalism ethics
Assignment

Week 11
Career planning
Assignment

Week 12 –
Broadcast basics

Week 13
Broadcast writing
Assignment

Week 14
Writing the complete story
Assignment

Week 15
Semester review
Assignment

Week 16 –
Semester review
Assignment