

JOU 202 Basic News Reporting

Syllabus • Spring 2010
Dr. Ken Rosenauer

► Book

The only book required for this course is “the journalist’s bible,” the *Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* (any edition since 2007). Alternatively, you can buy a one-year subscription to the online *AP Stylebook* for \$25 at www.apstylebook.com.

In addition, we have a wealth of reading assignments that will be located either online or on the university’s O-Drive.

► Purpose

Introduction to basic journalistic style and story structure for print media, with an emphasis on writing the lead and body of short to medium length, hard and soft news stories as well as covering campus news beats. Prerequisite: Successful completion of ENG 100 or satisfactory score on the department’s Writing Placement Examination.

► Goals

Upon satisfactory completion of this course you should be able to:

- (1) Recognize the characteristics of news.
- (2) Gather appropriate information to support both hard and soft news stories.
- (3) Construct interesting and effective leads that fit the nature of the story.
- (4) Develop bodies of news stories to provide information that enables readers to grasp the story’s focus.

► Means

To reach these goals, you are expected to:

- (1) Read assigned chapters in the textbook and in occasional handouts.
- (2) Practice interviewing, research, and other evidence-gathering skills.
- (3) Write rough drafts of stories for review and critique by peers and professor.
- (4) Write final drafts of stories that are polished, complete, and effective.
- (5) Complete all assignments on deadline.

► Class Protocol

During the semester our class will be a working newsroom, and each of you will be reporters covering campus beats and writing news stories gathered from those beats. You’ll have something to read and discuss most class periods. Eight reading assignments are textbook chapter length, but most of the rest are five-minute reads. All readings are available either on the university O-Drive or online.

While we will spend appropriate time discussing pertinent aspects of your readings, most class periods will concentrate on workshopping your stories, whether it be brainstorming, peer reviewing, or covering various aspects of AP style or other journalistic conventions.

Final drafts of the stories you submit will be published either in *The Griffon News* or online at Western’s student community portal, Griffon Today (www.griffontoday.com).

My goal is to keep the atmosphere somewhat loose, fun, comfortable, and supportive — all the while learning as much as you can about how to work as a journalist. While we will have firm deadlines for assignments, class times will flex based on group and, occasionally, individual needs.

This is an approach that can work very very well or very very poorly — based on your participation. If you can’t stay focused, on task, and on deadline, you’re not likely going to be very successful here.

► Class Participation

I expect you to be fully prepared to discuss readings when they are assigned. Class participation for both reading discussions and workshop responding will be worth 250 points. At the end of the semester, you will complete a self-assessment in which you present a strong argument for the participation points you deserve.

► Story Assignments

Rough and final drafts of all stories must be typed/word processed and printed. In addition, you must submit via email the Microsoft Word files of your *final drafts*.

You will submit 10 rough drafts (that's one nearly every week) from beats covering campus offices and key personnel assigned to students early in the term. Each rough draft will be worth up to 50 points, based on *effectiveness of focus* and *level of completeness*, for a total of 500 points.

Seven of these rough drafts will be revised and submitted as final drafts, which will be worth 100-200 points each and will be evaluated using criteria-based scoring of the following: 1) content, 2) lead, 3) conventions, 4) quotations 5) timeliness, 6) structure and 7) AP style. Points for final drafts will total 1,000. Not surprisingly, this is where you will earn the majority of your points.

Deadlines for all assignments are listed in the course outline. Failure to submit assigned materials on deadline will result in a grade of zero.

► Grades

All 1,750 points carry the same weight. The letter grade equivalents follow a standard 10 percentage-point spread of the total points offered:

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|---|---------|---|-----------|
| A | 90-100% | D | 60-69% |
| B | 80- 89% | F | Below 60% |
| C | 70- 79% | | |

► Office Hours/Phones/E-mail

Office hours are MWF 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., MW 2-3 p.m., and by appointment. My office is in Eder 222E.

Office Phone: 271-4323, Home Phone: 387-8213. Leave messages if I am not available to answer the phone; that's why I've got the answering machines.

E-mail: My e-mail address is <rosenauer@missouriwestern.edu>. You are welcome to write me about questions or concerns you may have about the course. All handouts distributed in class are also available for download on the university's O-Drive.

► Attendance

In order to improve student learning as well as to achieve compliance with federal financial aid policies, Western has a mandatory attendance policy for all 100- and 200-level courses. You will be given an excused absence when acting as an official representative of the university, provided you give prior written verification from the faculty/staff supervisor of the event.

All other absences will be deemed unexcused. The maximum number of unexcused absences allowed for this class before the midterm report on March 15 is five (5). Thus, when you have six unexcused absences, you will be reported to the Registrar's Office, who will automatically withdraw you from this class. The Financial Aid Office will reduce financial aid as appropriate.

FAIR WARNING: THIS WILL BE THE POLICY I FOLLOW FOR THIS CLASS.

Late assignments are not accepted without a reason I consider valid. Moreover, it is your responsibility to check on material covered during your absence, including assignments for the next class you attend.

You must submit assignments *in person at the beginning of the class period* that the work is due. Assignments submitted by a classmate, dropped off at my office or in my mailbox, or submitted electronically without a valid written excuse included will not be accepted.

► Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is required in all academic endeavors. Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another's work, falsifying documents or academic records, or any other fraudulent activity. Violations of academic honesty may result in a failing grade on the assignment, failure in the course, or expulsion from the University. When a student's grade has been affected, violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or designated representative on the Academic Honesty Violation Report forms.

Please see the 2009-10 Student Handbook and Calendar for specific activities identified as violations of this policy and the student due process procedure. This handbook is also available online at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/Handbook/index.pdf>.

► Handicapped Policy

If you are handicapped, whether it is evident or not, I encourage you to meet with me outside of class to discuss whatever special needs you may have.