

Course Syllabus

JOU 3101 -- News Reporting

Fall 2025

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Master Lecturer

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OFFICE HOURS: I am available after lecture on Tuesday and Thursday and from 11-noon Monday and Friday. You can also email me and set up an appointment. If you are in the neighborhood, stop in. Unless I am busy, I welcome students.

OBJECTIVES: To provide instruction in news gathering and writing with an eye toward readability and to instill habits of accuracy and responsibility in handling the news. In other words, we will work on your reporting and writing skills.

READING: Required: *How I Got That Story*, Foley, 2004. ("Readings" in Files folder on this site.

AP Stylebook, (Your news-writing bible), current edition. You also can use the online version. Note: a one-page summary of AP style is in the "Files" section.

A daily **news report**. An online version will do.

Recommended: *Inside Reporting*, Harrower, Any Edition,

When Words Collide, Kessler-McDonald.

A good **dictionary**—AP recommends: Merriam-Webster (Yes, a book.)

AP STYLE IN BRIEF: You will find in the Files section a page of highlights of AP style. You might find it useful.

LECTURE: It's scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday from 11:45 a.m.-12:35 p.m. Who knows? You may hear something that will help your reporting and writing. Test dates are listed in the course calendar (below). Makeup tests will be given if circumstances warrant.

GRADING: Your course grade is **25% lecture and 75% lab**. Three exams and 12 quizzes will make up the lecture grade. An A indicates *superior* performance; B, highly competent, above-average work; C, average; D, below average; E, unsatisfactory. Final grades are calculated by each lab section, following the scale of 90-100, A; 80-89, B; etc. Grade inflation is not part of this course. (I don't give minus grades.)

SCHEDULE CHANGES: I will try to stick with the course outline, but changes are possible and will be announced.

You are encouraged to read ahead. The more you can absorb early in the course, the better your work will be. Since you are expected to start reporting and writing stories right away, this

can be especially helpful. Sections on news gathering, interviewing, leads, story organization, grammar/punctuation and features will be particularly helpful.

CAUTION: JOU 3101 is a *professional* course. The rules probably are different than those of other courses. You must not only do the work, but you must demonstrate that you *can* do the work acceptably within a limited time. Grades on stories can be lowered as the result of students misrepresenting themselves or otherwise being unprofessional while working on story assignments. **Do NOT tell sources you are working for the Alligator or any other publication—unless you are.**

Lab grades are based upon the quality of your reporting, writing and editing. You are evaluated for your work. This means you have to use your time efficiently. Your efforts are rewarded for results, just as they are on the job.

Sources: One of the best ways to ensure your stories are fair, accurate and complete is to gather information from a variety of sources. In selecting potential sources for your stories, keep in mind that we live in a diverse, multicultural world. You should make every effort to have your stories reflect that. Talk to a variety of people from different backgrounds, educational levels, etc. to get the complete story.

Students enrolled in this course should not be used as sources in your stories unless they are involved directly in the story. Relatives, friends, roommates, sorority sisters, fraternity brothers, etc. pose a conflict-of-interest threat when used as sources.

Do your own reporting and writing. Plagiarism—including using material from news releases and information gathered from the internet without attribution—will result in serious and harsh consequences. (This ban includes use of AI material.) Lab instructors will provide procedures for documenting and attributing background for stories. (BTW, copying stuff word-for-word—even *with* attribution— also can be a problem.) You can find the college’s official ethical standards on the CJC website. If you have even the smallest doubt or are confused about this or anything else in the course, **PLEASE ASK**.

Special note: Reporters tell the stories of a community and all individuals who make up a given community. We serve, help and inform everyone. To best carry out these ideals, we must exhibit respect, inclusiveness and an understanding for all people. These expectations during field work will also be carried into this classroom. Our differences will serve as a strength that we embrace as we discuss relevant story ideas, developing contacts within a community or even storytelling techniques. Exposure to different perspectives, values, ideals and experiences will make us all better, more compassionate and understanding journalists. We all learn best and maximize our outcomes when we feel comfortable. Please let me know what I can do to make sure you feel respected and welcomed in this space.

REPORTING Calendar

Fall 2025

Weeks

1- 4 Reporting Overview

Course introduction

AP Style

News writing

Reporting overview

Ledes

Inverted Pyramid

Story ideas

Reading:

Foley: French and Poore stories and interviews

(Optional) Harrower: Chapters 2 and 3

AP Stylebook: Learn to love it.

TEST 1—Sept. 19 (all material to date)

Weeks 5-10 Gathering facts & Telling a story

Ledes

Story structure

Organizing

News gathering

Interviewing

AP Style

Reading:

Foley: Talcott and Smith stories and interviews

(Optional) Harrower: Chapters 4 and 5

AP Stylebook: It's time you knew this stuff.

Syllabus: All except Healy and Benham stories

TEST 2—Oct. 23 (all material from week 6 on)

Weeks 11-end More reporting, better writing & legal stuff

Speeches, meetings, news conferences

The Writing Process

Feature Writing

Rewriting

Obituaries

Libel & Ethics

Readings:

Foley: Healy and Benham stories and interviews

(Optional) Harrower: Chapters 6-8

AP Stylebook: Learn it now, or try again next semester.

Syllabus: All

TEST 3—Dec. 2 (All material from Week 11 on)

(It's over. Go home.)

Good luck, and be careful out there.

Warning: Boring UF stuff follows.