

Writing for Mass Communication (MMC 2100)
Lab Syllabus – Spring Semester 2014

COURSE DESCRIPTION

MMC 2100 is a pre-professional course designed to promote fundamental instruction and practice in writing as a basis for upper division courses in such areas as advertising, agriculture communications and technical communications. It is also an introductory course designed to provide basic instruction in writing for media (print, broadcast and online), advertising and public relations. Exploration of the modern role of mass media and its impact on our daily lives will be included in the course curriculum.

Textbooks and Required Reading/Material – See the lecture syllabus for the list of textbooks. Please keep up with reading assignments in the lecture syllabus, as they have direct application to writing assignments in lab. Please bring Writing for the Mass Media (James Stovall) and the AP Stylebook to every lab. You will also need a digital camera (iPhone or similar phone will work)

Attendance in Lab

You must attend every lab. If you are absent and that absence has not been approved by your lab instructor in advance, you will receive a zero for all assignments for that lab.

You must contact your lab instructor prior to lab to discuss your situation and how you will make up the assignment. Leaving a phone message or sending an e-mail without actually talking with your lab instructor does not mean that your absence will be excused.

The following are the situations that will be accepted as excused absences:

- Medical excuses are accepted only if you contact your lab instructor before lab and you then provide a letter from a physician documenting the dates of the illness.
- Other situations, such as military service and family emergencies, are considered on a case-by-case basis as long as you contact your lab instructor before lab.
- If you will miss lab because of a religious observance or a university-scheduled exam (for a course like economics), you must notify your lab instructor **at least one week in advance** to make arrangements to make up the lab. Do NOT contact other lab instructors yourself or go to another lab without prior arrangements being made. **Be on time (-10) points will be deducted from your lab assignment if you are late to lab.**

Grading for the Course

Lab grades – You should record your grade for each week's lab, so you can keep track of your running average. Be aware of the importance of your performance for each week's lab. One or two low grades won't keep you from successfully completing the course. But one or two high grades won't balance out a more substantial number of low lab grades. No lab grades will be dropped, and lab scores are not curved.

If you would like to discuss a grading issue for a lab assignment:

- (1) The discussion must be held during office hours and not during lab.
- (2) The discussion must be no longer than two weeks after receiving the graded assignment.
- (3) You should bring to the meeting the appropriate documentation to support your position.

Lecture grades (25 percent of overall grade) – See the lecture syllabus.

Overall course grade: Your grade for the course is the combination of your lecture grade (25 percent) and **your lab grade (75 percent). There is no final exam in lab.**

Assignments

There are TEN (10) written assignments that each count 100 points (your final lab grade will be the average of those 10 assignments):

- 1) Cover letter/resume (Lab 2)
- 2) Police briefs – two averaged together (Lab 3)
- 3) News story (Lab 4)
- 4) Online news story (combined over Labs 5-6)
- 5) TV broadcast script (Lab 8)
- 6) Personality profile (e-mail memo to lab instructor before Lab 7/final draft due in Lab 9)
- 7) PR/news release (Lab 11)
- 8) Blog (Begin Lab 7, complete prior to Lab 12)
- 9) Photo essay (Lab 12)
- 10) Soundslides restaurant ad/print ad copy (Lab 13)

Grading Scale (for writing assignments and the course overall)

Note that we are not using minus grades in this course.

A	90-100	C+	77-79	D	60-66
B+	87-89	C	70-76	E	59 and below
B	80-86	D+	67-69		

Formula for calculating your overall grade in the course

Lab grade multiplied by 3

+ Lecture grade

Total divided by 4 = overall grade

Scores of .5 or higher are rounded to the next whole number. For example, 86.5 becomes 87.

Extra-Credit Opportunities

You will have several extra-credit opportunities during the semester.

- 10 points – Complete “Cleaning Your Copy,” a free online module at <http://newsu.org>. Set up an account and complete the module (except for the Style section). E-mail a course report to your lab instructor prior to Lab 3. (Directions about this assignment will be provided in lecture and lab.)

How Lab Assignments are graded

Your grade on most writing assignments consists of the points earned for content minus the points deducted for errors and mechanics. To ensure consistency among labs, all instructors use the same grading standards.

Step One: Content

The content grade is based on criteria for each specific writing assignment. A rubric (a listing of grading criteria) will be provided for most assignments. The criteria vary depending on the particular lab assignment — news stories, news releases, advertising copy, etc. General criteria for all assignments include writing style, organization, clarity and appropriateness for topic and audience.

Step Two: Mechanics

After determining the content grade, points will be deducted for grammatical errors, spelling errors, factual errors and AP style errors. The points are deducted as follows:

- 2 points = first two grammar/punctuation errors then -5 points for each grammar/punctuation error starting with third grammar/punctuation deduction.
- 5 points = AP style errors.
- 5 points = Failure to prepare copy correctly.

- 15 points = Spelling error. Deducted both for misspelled words and typos. If the same word is misspelled more than once in a story, 15 points will be subtracted only once.
- 10 points = Failure to make a deadline, which means turning in anything late. Additional points will be deducted for assignments turned in more than one day late.
- 10 points = Not attending lecture on days specified in syllabus.
- 50 points = Factual error. This includes *inaccurate information and errors or typos in proper nouns, numbers, addresses, dates and quotes*. In Lab 2, a fact error = -15. In Lab 3, a fact error = -25. Beginning in Lab 4, a fact error = -50.

Zero = You will receive a zero for using your friends, family members, employers or work colleagues as sources for stories that require your own reporting, as those would be seen as a potential conflict of interest. You may interview those individuals for background information or to help you identify other sources, but you may not include them in your story. You will receive a zero for making up information or quotes (fabrication) or plagiarism. You will receive a zero for using a photograph that you did not take for assignments that require you to take your own photographs.

Academic Honesty

We're very concerned about academic honesty in this course. These are issues that would be academic honest violations:

- **Using another person's work – a classmate's story or materials from an article, news release, etc. without appropriate attribution or citation.**
- **Making up or changing quotes or information. That is termed "fabricating".**
- **Using someone else's photos – which could be a classmate's or photos you download from the Web -- as your own.**
- **Receiving aid or giving aid to others on quizzes and exams.**

Not only would you receive a zero for an assignment that has an academic violation but we would report the violation to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution -- <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/>. See the lecture syllabus for a discussion of academic honesty issues in the course. A helpful explanation of academic honesty and plagiarism is hosted on the College's Web site -- <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/academic/jou/honesty/>

If you have any question regarding an academic honesty issue (such as appropriately incorporating a source into a story), please talk with Mr. Marino or your lab instructor.

Office Hours

Lab instructors will be available weekly during their office hours and can be available at other hours if you make arrangements in advance. Use office hours to discuss how you can improve your writing, how your work was graded, or how you can prepare for your career goals. Please take advantage of office hours for one-on-one coaching.

Guidelines on discussing your grades with your lab instructor

Individual grades will not be discussed during lab. If you have a question about how an assignment was evaluated, see your lab instructor during office hours.

If you have a question about a specific grading issue in a lab assignment, you must talk with your lab instructor within two weeks of the lab when you received the graded assignment.

Lab Assignments

Week	What to bring to lab	What we will do in lab
Lab 1 – Week of Jan. 6-9		Write an essay based on a writing prompt on deadline. Essay will be graded, but this grade will NOT be counted.
Lab 2 – Week of Jan. 13-16	Updated resume and contact information for an internship you might apply. ***Extra credit -- +5 points added to Lab #1 score if attend CRC Showcase Jan. 21-22 at O'Connell Center.	Complete cover letter/resume #1 in lab. On deadline.
Lab 3 – Week of Jan. 20-23 ***LAB does not meet Monday Jan. 20 – MLK Holiday.***	Email “Cleaning Your Copy” report to lab instructor prior to Lab 3. Practice police brief. (from Sakai)	Police brief #2A-#2B from information provided. Short brief without quotes. On deadline.
Lab 4 – Week of Jan. 27-30		News story #3 on deadline from information provided. Add quotes. On deadline.
Lab 5 - Week of Feb. 3-6 ***LABS DO NOT MEET IN PERSON – all online through Sakai***		Write breaking online news story #4A from information provided on Sakai
Lab 6 – Week of Feb. 10-13 ***LABS DO NOT MEET IN PERSON – all online through Sakai***		Based on information you are provided on Sakai, write a longer online news story #4B.
Lab 7 – Week of Feb. 17-20	Personality profile memo emailed to lab instructor prior to Lab 7. Blog memo topic emailed to lab instructor prior to Lab 7.	Assign personality profiles in lab. Begin interview with classmate. Create blog and make first introductory post.
Lab 8 – Week of Feb. 24-27 ***UF SPRING BREAK: March 1-8 – NO LABS***		Compile broadcast script #5. On deadline.
Lab 9 – Week of March 10-13	Completed personality profile #6.	“Peer review” of personality profile. Make second and third blog posts based on directions from lab instructor.
Lab 10 – Week of March 17-20: *****NO LABS*****		
Lab 11 – Week of March 24-27	Compile fourth and fifth blog posts prior to coming to Lab 11.	Write media release #7. On deadline. Final blog critique with lab instructor.
Lab 12 – Week of March 31-April 3	Sound slides restaurant memo emailed to lab instructor by Lab 12. Photos/captions (electronic format) for “springtime in Florida” photo essay. ALL edits made to blog #9 prior to coming to Lab 12.	Complete “springtime in Florida” photo essay #8 in lab.

Lab 13 – Week of April 7-10	Photos/captions and final MP3 selection (all in electronic format) for Sound slides restaurant ad project.	Complete Sound slides restaurant ad project #10 in lab.
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No final exam for the lab portion of the course.