

## COM 215 02 (13163) MEDIA WRITING

Fall 2012, MWF, 9-9:50 a.m., Room 128 (Comm. Bldg.) MW, Room 131 F, 3 hours credit

Dr. Beth Garfrerick

Office Hours: MW 10-11 a.m and noon-1 p.m., TTH 9:30-11 a.m., **Room 208**

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

COM 215 introduces writing applications across multiple media platforms including print, broadcast, social media, news releases and scripts, for traditional and new media. Grammar and language skills are refined, and Associated Press style is introduced.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

The prospective teacher will demonstrate:

Standard #	Standard Statement	Assessment
<b>290-3-3-.10</b> <b>(2)(a)6.(i)</b>	<u>Knowledge of:</u>	
<b>(2)(a)6.(i)(I)</b>	A variety of print and nonprint media.	Unit exams; Final exam.
<b>(2)(a)6.(i)(III)</b>	How media can influence constructions of a text's meaning.	Unit exams; Final exam.
<b>(2)(a)6.(i)(IV)</b>	How students' experiences with various media can enhance their composing processes, communication, and learning.	Unit exams; Final exam; Lab writing assignments.
<b>(2)(a)6.(i)(V)</b>	Journalism, including:	Unit exams; Final exam; Lab writing assignments.
<b>(2)(a)6.(i)(V)I</b>	Basic principles.	Unit exams; Final exam; Lab writing assignments.
<b>(2)(a)6. (i)(V)II</b>	Processes of producing print and nonprint journalistic media.	Unit exams; Final exam; Lab writing assignments.
<b>(2)(a)6.(i)(V)III</b>	Ethical, moral and legal rights and responsibilities of journalists.	Unit exams; Final exam; Lab writing assignments.

This course is designed to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of *diversity* in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and *impact of mass communications* in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply *theories* in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional *ethical principles* and work ethic in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- familiarize you with the workings of the news media in gathering, writing, producing and disseminating news
- teach you the importance of relationships between news gatherers and news sources, and between advertising and public relations professionals and news professionals
- help you become a more informed news consumer through a deeper understanding of what it's like to work in the news environment and how news value judgments are made
- teach you to think critically, creatively and independently;
- teach you to write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- teach you to critically evaluate your own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- teach you to apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which you work.

—prepare you to demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;

--help you understand and apply U.S. principles and laws of *freedom of speech and press* as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;

### **TEXTBOOK, MATERIALS, LINKS AND RESOURCES**

Stovall, James Glen, *Writing for the Mass Media*, Eighth Edition, (2011), Boston: Allyn & Bacon

Goldstein, Norm, Editor, *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*, Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Publishing.  
*Note: The AP Stylebook is updated every few years. Any edition published in the last few years will be fine.*

**Jprof.com**-web site with lecture notes, handouts, tips, sources and exercises to accompany the text. <http://www.jprof.com/>

**What is good writing?** Though not specific to media writing, this site offers tips on writing including how to avoid plagiarism and tips on grammar, revision and editing. Aspiring print journalists should note that some areas, such as style and quoting sources, will not apply in the journalism. <http://www.writingcenter.emory.edu/OldSite/oldabout.html>

**Humorous reminders of common writing mistakes.** Thirty-five ways to look at your copy and laugh – then fix it to ensure a better finished product. Just one, “Always be avoided by the passive voice.”  
<http://www.writingcenter.emory.edu/OldSite/oldabout.html>

**Associated Press Sports Editors.** The main site of the APSE organization provides links to previous award winners dating back to 1998. Visitors, in many cases, may view the actually winning story. Aspiring journalists, not necessarily sports writers, ought to emulate effective and powerful writing. <http://apsportseditors.org/>

**Clichés.** Avoid them like the plague. A list, from aces in the hole to yuppie, of clichés, all of which you should seek to eliminate from your writing. <http://suspense.net/whitefish/cliche.htm>

**Newsroom 101.** For aspiring journalists who enjoy (or need) to test their skills on AP style, grammar or usage, this site has more than 2,000 exercises. Every chapter of the stylebook is addressed, as are some common writing errors committed by beginning reporters. <http://www.newsroom101.com/>

**Committee of Concerned Journalists.** In general, this site provides advice on many issues encountered in journalism. This particular link provides a mental checklist for reporters to consider when writing under time constraint.  
<http://www.concernedjournalists.org/writing-clearly-deadline>

**The good interview.** Advice on interviewing is offered by the Committee of Concerned Journalists.  
<http://www.concernedjournalists.org/ten-tips-better-interview>

**Typingtest.com.** One way to improve writing on deadline is to improve typing. This site provides a free opportunity to test typing skills. <http://www.typingtest.com/>

**Interviewing.** One of the skills a reporter must develop is the art of interviewing. The text pays a good deal of attention to helping students develop this skill. For more information about interviewing, start with this article, The Art of Asking Questions from the Poynter Institute. [http://poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=60848](http://poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=60848)

**How to write a news lead.** The first, and often last, opportunity to catch and hold a reader is with the lead. This site provides an overview of the two main types of news leads (direct and delayed) and when journalists should use each.  
[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/203138/how\\_to\\_write\\_a\\_news\\_lead.html](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/203138/how_to_write_a_news_lead.html)

**10 ways to write a great lead for a blog post.** The ability to write compelling leads translates to success no matter if you are working for a print, online or broadcast organization. This site takes into consideration the needs and wants of the online community, and offers concise tips for crafting leads that hook readers in cyberspace.

<http://northeast.com/10-ways-to-write-a-great-lead-for-a-blog-post/>

**Poynter online, writing from the top down.** The inverted pyramid, despite its criticism, remains a fixture in the news industry. Chip Scanlan gives a short history on this form of writing and why, especially in the digital age, the inverted pyramid still is being taught and used. <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=52&aid=38693>

**SNN newsroom, the inverted pyramid.** Another step-by-step guide of writing in an inverted pyramid style. [http://www.snn-rdr.ca/snn/nr\\_reporterstoolbox/invertedpyramid.html](http://www.snn-rdr.ca/snn/nr_reporterstoolbox/invertedpyramid.html)

**Copy editing corner.** This is a public message board to discuss the process of copy editing. Whether you consider yourself a reporter or a copy editor, a visit to this site might help you clear up issues commonly found in reporting copy.

<http://copyeditingcorner.blogspot.com/>

**Mobile and Internet researcher** – guide to feature writing. There are various types of reporting required depending on the story that needs to be told. This site provides techniques for improving feature reporting, which will also strengthen media writing in general. <http://oonyeoh.squarespace.com/guide-to-feature-writing/>

**Online and PR writing guide.** This site addresses successful writing from a public relations perspective.

<http://www.prnewswire.com/knowledge-center/>

**How to blog: A beginner's blog publishing guide.** Just as the name indicates, this site is a quick how to for those wishing to start blogging.

[http://www.masternewmedia.org/independent\\_publishing/blogging-how-to-blog/guide-to-publishing-first-blog-20071104.htm](http://www.masternewmedia.org/independent_publishing/blogging-how-to-blog/guide-to-publishing-first-blog-20071104.htm)

**Simply said ... how to blog.** Finding time to write might be a concern for students, especially those working jobs and attending school full time. One man, self identified as dumb and little, details how he fits blogging into his schedule.

<http://www.dumblittleman.com/2007/08/how-i-blog.html>

**Prologger.net.** If and when you get serious about blogging, this site offers tips on how to improve traffic and increase revenue in cyberspace. <http://www.prologger.net/>

**Web journalism guide.** Text remains the concrete main component of successful news sites. This site provides tips on how to make writing on the web do more than just deliver information. <http://www.knowledgeboard.com/item/379>

**Flash journalism, professional examples.** The online world is the future of journalism, and this site links to several examples of how news organizations are using the web to tell stories in a layered, meaningful and creative way.

[http://www.flashjournalism.com/examples/pro\\_examples.htm](http://www.flashjournalism.com/examples/pro_examples.htm)

**Journalists and bloggers.** Some bloggers are journalists. Some journalists are bloggers. By and large, however the groups don't overlap that much. Yet each group is doing much the same thing – disseminating information, ideas, opinions, etc. Steve Outing, a columnist for Editor and Publisher and former editor of E-Media Tidbits for Poynter.org, has written a pair of articles on the Poynter web site on what each group can learn from each other. They are titled just that:

- What Journalists Can Learn from Bloggers

<http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/28337/what-journalists-can-learn-from-bloggers/>

- What Bloggers Can Learn from Journalists

[http://www.poynter.org/content/content\\_view.asp?id=75665](http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=75665)

**Overheard in the newsroom.** The best quotes overheard in the newsroom. [overheardinthenewsroom.com/](http://overheardinthenewsroom.com/)

**Newswriting for the radio.** Don't forget about the radio. Broadcast writing is just as important, if not more so, to radio broadcasters. This site offers advice and tips on all types of radio stories including in-depth and vivid styles.

<http://www.newscript.com/index.html>

**Boom goes the dynamite.** This is a must see for aspiring broadcast students. No matter how hard you try, you are bound to make mistakes along the way. Hopefully, you won't ever have a broadcast go as badly as this one did for a college sportscaster.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W45DRy7M1no>

**Cybercollege.** A good Cybercollege site on production values. <http://www.cybercollege.com/>

**Newslab.** This site argues for improved quality in television newscasts. <http://www.newslab.org/>

**VOA News.** One of the best broadcast news sites is that of the Voice of America. VOA is operated by the U.S. government and broadcasts news around the world in more than 50 languages. VOA has a tradition of presenting the news in an unbiased way -- even when the news is not favorable or is embarrassing to the government. An additional benefit of the VOA news web site is that you can hear the broadcasts in various languages as well as read the news in those languages. If you are trying to learn a language, the VOA news site might be of great

help to you. <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/>

**RTNDA.** One of the best ways to keep up with the state of broadcast news is at the Radio and Television News Directors Association web site. The foundation for the organization produces an extensive report each year on broadcast news and the public's reaction to it. Those reports are usually in PDF forms, and they may take a while to download, but they contain some excellent information. <http://www.rtna.org/>

**Tips for writing effective copy.** A quick read regarding writing effective advertising copy. Links are provided to other sites about marketing and advertising.

<http://www.allbusiness.com/marketing/advertising-copywriting/382-1.html>

**Advertising writing – tell your business story.** The site offers seven rules for writing advertising copy. Strong consideration is given to writing that is focused toward technically savvy audiences.

<http://www.tagonline.org/articles.php?id=192>

**American Advertising Federation.** One of the major professional organizations for the field of advertising is the American Advertising Federation. Students who are interested in this field should visit this organization's web site. <http://www.aaf.org/>

**How to write a press release.** Discover how to deliver news to the media. The site covers details such as formatting, common errors and guidelines to make news releases worthwhile for the media.

<http://service.prweb.com/learning/article/quality-online-press-releases/>

**Public relations headlines and PR news.** An up-to-date site with commentary and suggestions related to issues ongoing in public relation circles. <http://www.ereleases.com/pr/prfuel.html>

**b2b public relations.** This site is a resource for business-to-business public relations primarily, but anyone in the field would likely benefit from the content. Students should note "The top 10 tips for improving your public relations skills."

<http://www.b2bpublicrelations.org/index.html>

**Public Relations Society of America.** One of the major professional organizations in the field of public relations is the Public Relations Society of America web site. The site has a vast number of resources for the public relations student and

professional. A companion site is the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA). This site has a job bank and other resources for those interested in entering the field. <http://www.prssa.org/>

**Journalism resources** – Media law. Links are provided to important cases, history and current events regarding the media and the law. <http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/journalism/mediaLaw/index.html>

**First Amendment handbook.** Journalists all ought to know and fight to protect the rights provided to them by the First Amendment. This well organized site offers journalists a reference guide for laws that are important to the journalism professional. Best of all, the advice is free. <http://www.rcfp.org/handbook/index.html>

**Student Press Law Center.** Student journalists may encounter unique legal issues in the process of reporting. An advocate of student journalism, the Student Press Law Center is a valuable resource for educators and students alike. <http://www.splc.org/>

**Libel information.** What is the difference between libel and slander? Ever wonder what the most a plaintiff ever was awarded for a successful libel suit? (It's \$222.7 million, by the way). If so, this site is for you. [http://www.medialaw.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Public\\_Resources/Libel\\_FAQs/Libel\\_FAQs.htm](http://www.medialaw.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Public_Resources/Libel_FAQs/Libel_FAQs.htm)

The **National Freedom of Information Center** is an organization set up to fight secrecy in government. Check out NFOIC's web site, and see if there is a Freedom of Information center in your state. <http://www.nfoic.org/>

## GRADING

**Students must pass the Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation and Diction test before receiving a grade in COM 215. The GSPD Exam has three sections. You will be given 3 opportunities to pass each section (70% or above) if needed. The first administration of each exam section will be given in lab. Additional opportunities will be provided during afternoon/evening hours as announced during the semester. Students not successfully passing all three sections of the GSPD Exam will receive a grade of Incomplete and will not be given course credit until successfully completing the GSPD Exam. Opportunities to successfully complete the three-part exam and earn a grade for the course will be provided in the following academic term. The student must contact the instructor to arrange re-taking the exam. NOTE: All GSPD sections and writing assignments must be taken/written during the class lab to receive credit.**

Grades will be calculated on the following formula: lab quizzes, 20 percent; writing assignments in lab, 50 percent; midterm exam, 10 percent; final exam 20 percent. Writing is the most important element of this course, and therefore more grade emphasis will be given to that area. A professional subjective evaluation will be made on written assignments according to these standards:

- A: Outstanding performance. Copy usually is publishable with little or no editing.
- B: Superior performance. Copy is usually publishable with minor editing and revisions
- C: Adequate performance. Portions of copy probably would need to be rewritten and closely edit the story could be published.
- D: Marginal performance. Copy contains major factual, structural, writing and usage flaws. It is doubtful whether it could be published.
- E: Unacceptable performance. Copy fails to meet even minimum standards for the assignment.

## GRADING SCALE

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

## ATTENDANCE

This class is your introduction into the professional world of journalism. Treat it as such. You are expected to attend all classes and to be punctual. In the professional world, if you miss a day for no good reason, you'll miss your pay. Similar rules apply in this class. This is a lab class, so grades will be earned in most class sessions. If you miss a lab writing assignment you will receive a grade of zero. However, writing assignments can be made up within one week. Check with your instructor to schedule a makeup assignment, which must be written in class. Online quizzes must be taken by 11:55 p.m. the day after they are assigned to receive a grade. Otherwise, a "0" grade will be given for any quizzes not taken by the deadline. **Students will receive an automatic "F" for missing more than the equivalent of three weeks of scheduled classes.** An "F" will be given after the seventh absence, excused or unexcused.

### **CLASSROOM POLICIES**

Use of the lab computers is a privilege, not a right. Do not change settings or configurations on the computers. **Absolutely no food or drink is allowed in the lab at any time. Turn off cell phones.** Pay attention to the lecture. Participate in class discussions. Observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. Cheating is a serious offense and will be dealt with immediately and severely. Plagiarism, representing the words, ideas, or data of another as one's own, will not be tolerated and could result in disciplinary action according to University policy.

### **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the University offers reasonable accommodations to students with eligible documented learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. Under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities as compared to an average person in the population. It is the responsibility of the student to contact Developmental Services prior to the beginning of the semester to initiate the accommodation process and to notify instructors within the first three class meetings to develop an accommodation plan. Appropriate, reasonable accommodations will be made to allow each student to meet course requirements, but no fundamental or substantial alteration of academic standards will be made. Students needing assistance should contact Developmental Services.

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

Monday, Sept. 3	Labor Day Holiday
Sept. 25-27	CAAP Exam
Friday, Oct. 19	Fall Break, no class
Oct. 22	Last Day of "W" period
Oct. 23	Begin "WP/WF" period
Nov. 21-25	Thanksgiving holidays
Nov. 26	Last day to drop a class or completely withdraw
Thursday, Dec. 6	Study Day
Fri., Dec. 7	Com 215 Final Exam, 8-9:45 a.m.

### **Com 215 CONTENT**

Any announcements or assignments made in class take precedence over this schedule.

#### **Week 1 (Aug. 22-24) Introduction to the course**

Topics: Basic principles of good writing, Expectations of the COM 215 student

#### **Week 2 (Aug. 27-31) Basic tools of writing**

Topics: Grammar, punctuation, word precision, Importance of rules of writing, Associated Press stylebook, Grammar terms

**Lab quizzes: AP style, grammar**

**Assignment: Survey of Civic Knowledge**

**Week 3 (Sept. 4-7) Writing in the media environment**

Topics: Conventions and practices, Writing for an audience, Development; transitions

**Lab quizzes: AP style, grammar**

**Week 4 (Sept. 10-14) Reporting with Text**

Topics: Writing with unity, Inverted pyramid

**Writing assignment: lead paragraph**

**Lab quizzes: AP style, grammar Writing assignment: lead paragraph**

**Week 5 (Sept. 17-21) Reporting with Text, Images**

Topics: Writing conventions

**Writing assignment: News writing 1**

**Lab quizzes: AP style, grammar quizzes**

**Week 6 (Sept. 24-28) GSPD Exam****Week 7 (Oct. 1-5) GSPD Exam and Writing for Print Journalism**

Topics: Writing styles and techniques, Content and format

**Lab quizzes: GSPD Exam, AP style, grammar quizzes**

**Week 8 (Oct. 8-12) Writing for Print Journalism**

Topics: Purposes and techniques of editing, Editing: wordiness, repetition, redundancy, clichés, technical errors

**Writing assignment: News writing 2**

**Week 9 (Oct. 15-18) Reporting with Audio and Video**

Topics: Characteristics of broadcast news, Criticisms of broadcast writing, Dramatic unity

**Writing assignment: Audio or video news story**

**Week 10 (Oct. 22-26) Writing for Broadcast Journalism**

Topics: Dramatic unity, Use of the present tense

**Writing assignment: News broadcast (group assignment)**

**Week 11 (Oct. 29-Nov. 2) Writing for Web Journalism**

Topics: Blogging, Use of Mobile Apps. Backpack Journalism

**Writing Assignment: News writing 3**

**Week 12 (Nov. 5-9) Writing Advertising Copy**

Topics: Purpose of advertising writing, Advertising appeals, Product, audience, Purpose, Medium, Advertising objectives

**Writing assignment: advertisement copy**

**Week 13 (Nov. 12-16) Writing for Public Relations**

Topics: Internal, external publics, News releases, Speeches and statements, Writing letters and e-mail, Writing memoranda

**Writing assignment: news release**

**Week 14 (Nov. 19-20) The Writer and the Law**

Topics: Legal issues, First Amendment

**Week 15 (Nov. 26-30) Getting a Job in the Mass Media****Week 16 (Dec. 3-5) Wrap-up and Review**

Review for the final

Makeups for Writing Assignment and GSPD Exam

### **Academic Honesty Policy--Department of Communications**

**Academic Honesty.** All members of the university community are expected to be honorable and observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. Students are expected to behave in an ethical manner. Individuals who disregard the core values of truth and honesty bring disrespect to themselves and the University. A university community that allows academic dishonesty will suffer harm to the reputation of students, faculty and graduates.

It is in the best interest of the entire university community to sanction any individual who chooses not to accept the principles of academic honesty by committing acts such as cheating, plagiarism or misrepresentation. Offenses are reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost for referral to the University Student Discipline System for disposition.

*(University of North Alabama 20010/ 2011 Catalog.)*

Any act of dishonesty in academic work constitutes academic misconduct. That includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the following: (1) Cheating—using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise; (2) Plagiarism—representing the words, ideas, or data of another as one’s own in any academic exercise; (3) Fabrication—unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise; (4) Aiding and Abetting Academic Dishonesty—intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another student commit an act of academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism is the representation of the work of another person as one's own. In a digital world, the copying of text, graphics, audio and video, can be easily accomplished; the sharing or borrowing of ideas and information may seem perfectly legitimate but taking or borrowing those ideas and failing to provide reference information about the original source for the idea or information, is plagiarism.

Material used in student papers, speeches, and electronic media productions is expected to be the student's own work unless properly identified as the work of others. In written work identification consists of quotation marks, footnotes or endnotes, indentation or spacing change, usually in combination. A speaker may indicate "according to ..." or other words to attribute quoted material. Electronic productions such as films, tapes, etc., should use a means appropriate to the work. Electronic productions are never exempt from the responsibility of identifying and citing appropriate sources.

In some cases attribution may not be necessary, for example, if a phrase or section is so commonly known that there could be no possibility of believing the student was claiming the work to be his/her own.

When a student attempts to present a speech prepared by someone else as her/his own work, this could be plagiarism but it is more likely cheating. The instructors in the Department of Communications will never approve of the use of materials previously submitted by another student. If you attempt to reuse or recycle a speech or paper (and any accompanying materials such as PowerPoint presentations, handouts, etc.) written by someone else, this is cheating. If you

give a paper or electronic document to another student, and that student uses or attempts to reuse that work in another course, you are guilty of aiding and abetting academic dishonesty.

If an instructor believes a student has committed cheating, plagiarism, fabrication or aiding and abetting academic dishonesty, he/she will refer the offender to the department head for investigation. The department head and instructor will meet to discuss the matter. If they concur that cheating, plagiarism, fabrication or aiding and abetting academic dishonesty has occurred, the student will receive a grade of F or WF in the course in which the offense occurred. During this process the student will be permitted to bring evidence that the plagiarism has not occurred. The Department of Communications will pursue issues of academic honesty for currently enrolled and former students.

Additional sanctions by the University are possible, including expulsion from the university.

My signature indicates that I have read and understand the Academic Honesty Policy from the Department of Communications. I agree to adhere to these guidelines, to the best of my ability, and I am aware of the consequences of policy violations.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A copy of this policy is provided with your syllabus for your records