Loyola University Chicago

Spring 2014

Writing for the Web — COMM 206-20W

Tuesday, 7 to 9:30 p.m.

SOC 002 at 51 E. Pearson St.

Instructor: Kalyn Belsha

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**Office Hours: Tuesday, 5:45 to 6:45 p.m. in Lewis Towers 900,
or by appointment**

Course description:

This course will introduce you to skills and techniques for reporting and writing online stories, including blogging, social media, content management systems and audio-video recording and editing. We also will look at how to edit your online work, choose photos to accompany your work and create data visualizations. We'll touch on working for online publications and curating your online brand as a journalist. You will submit six online writing assignments, write two articles, produce an audio story for the web and produce a video story for the web.

Course materials:

The only book you need for this course is a recent copy of an **Associated Press Stylebook**. You can purchase a copy from the school bookstore, borrow a copy from a friend (as long as you have access to the book for assignments and in class) or download an app for $25 on your smartphone. I don't care which edition you use, as long as it's recent (2008 or newer).

The assigned readings for this class are all online. Occasionally, there will be additional assigned readings related to current events or guest speakers, which I will send to you via email at least one week in advance. **You will have a reading quiz most classes that asks**

you to explain, interpret or analyze main points from the assigned readings. Your overall reading quiz score counts as 10 percent of your class grade.

For this course, you'll be expected to **subscribe to Poynter's MediaWire daily digest**. We will be drawing from this for our class discussions. It's a good source for what's going on in the journalism world and often includes tips about helpful tools for online journalists.

Each week, one student will lead a **10- to 15-minute discussion** at the start of class about an article that interested you from Poynter that was **published in the last seven days**. You are expected to present a summary of the article and bring **at least five questions** that you will ask your classmates to encourage discussion. Articles about controversies and ethical questions for online journalists often make for good discussions. This presentation will factor into your class participation grade.

You are expected to keep up with the news on a daily basis. Reading news sites without a print component is strongly encouraged. I suggest subscribing to Muck Rack's daily digest, which gives a quick overview of top news stories journalists are talking about on Twitter, or following your favorite news organizations on Twitter and Facebook so your news consumption is integrated into your daily life.

Some of your assignments will require that you take a photo to accompany your text. You may use your own digital camera, borrow one from Loyola or use your cell phone camera.

For your audio story, you'll need an audio recorder. If you do not already have one, you may borrow one from Loyola, or use available recording tools on your cell phone. For the final video project, you may use the video camera on your cell phone or borrow a digital video camera from room 004 in the SOC or the digital media lab.

Course policies:

Absences and tardiness: If you need to miss a class due to illness, an emergency or because you will be attending a function as a representative of Loyola, please notify me before class. **You will need to provide documentation that explains your absence**. If your excuse is valid, you may make up whatever you missed. If you don't explain your absence and provide documentation, your absence will not be excused and you cannot make up the work. Unexcused lateness or absences will result in a lower class participation grade, in addition to zeros on missed in-class assignments.

Deadlines: In this class, you will be treated like a working journalist. Deadlines are extremely important. **An assignment is considered late if you do not turn it in at the beginning of class, or send it to me by the assigned time**. From the minute an article or assignment is late until 24 hours from that time, **you lose an automatic 10 points from your score**. After 24 hours, an additional 10 points will be deducted, and so on until the assignment is handed in, or the score becomes a 0.

Class decorum: This is an online journalism course and you'll be using your laptop to do research, complete in-class assignments and most likely take notes. Don't waste my time or your classmates' by texting, emailing, G-chatting, checking Facebook or consulting other distracting websites during class time. Doing so will result in a lower class participation grade.

Academic integrity: Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Committing plagiarism results in an automatic "F" for that assignment, though depending on the severity of the case it can also result in an "F" for the course. All instances of academic dishonesty are reported to the journalism section head and the dean of the School of Communication.

You cannot submit work that was written or produced for another class. If you plan to write or produce content about a topic you've previously covered, please consult with me so we can avoid potential overlapping.

Disabilities: Any student with a learning disability who needs special accommodation should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities to me confidentially. I will accommodate your needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of the course. It is your responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet assignment due dates.

Style: **We'll be following AP style in this course**. Attention to detail is an incredibly important skill for journalists. Errors in style, grammar and spelling will result in a lower score. You will also be penalized for fact errors, including misspelled names and locations.

Your blog: You'll be maintaining a blog throughout the duration of this course on a topic of your choice. Most posts will be related to the topic you choose at the beginning of the semester. You will find prompts on the syllabus to guide you. Blog posts must follow AP style and all standard rules of grammar.

To turn in your blog post, you will post your assignment online and then **print and turn in to me a word document that includes your name, a link to your blog post, your**

headline and the text of your blog post. Don't worry about copying and pasting videos or photos, I will see those when I look at the blog post itself. All blogs must have at least one photo or one video embedded to receive the highest score.

Blog posts are graded out of 10 possible points. I will average all of your post scores at the end of the semester to determine your overall blog grade, which counts as 15 percent of your final grade. Blog posts are due by the start of class and follow the same lateness policy as outlined above (1 point for each 24 hours).

Class participation: Contributing to class discussions, presenting your work and Poynter article, reading quizzes and asking questions of guest speakers all factor into your class participation grade.

The grading scale for class participation is as follows:

100: Student often contributes to class discussion, provides meaningful insight and demonstrates in-depth knowledge from readings.

86: Student often contributes to class discussion, provides some insight and demonstrates some knowledge from readings.

76: Student occasionally participates in class discussion, demonstrates little knowledge from readings.

69: Student only participates when called on, no insight from readings.

0: No class participation or insight from readings.

Final Grades:

<u>Breakdown</u>

15 percent	Six blog posts
10 percent	Class participation, attendance, Poynter presentation
10 percent	Reading quizzes
15 percent	Article one
10 percent	Audio story
25 percent	Article two
15 percent	Video story

<u>Scale</u>

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	0-59

<u>Rough Drafts and Rewrites</u>

You will write a rough draft and final draft of both your articles. Rough draft scores are factored into your final article score. **The rough draft counts for one-third of your grade, the final draft counts as two-thirds.**

This is a writing-intensive course; you may do a rewrite on any writing assignment (except a rough draft) if you're unhappy with your grade. **If you choose to do a rewrite, please let me know**. You will have until the last day of class to hand in any rewrites. A rewrite must include significant new information, such as a new or expanded interview, additional research or substantial rewriting of the lede/nut graph/body/kicker.

You are responsible for including any new events or updates that occur before you hand in the rewrite to keep the piece up-to-date and timely.

I will average your rewrite score with your original score to determine the final score.

Class Schedule:

Week One: Jan. 14

<u>In class:</u> Introductions, review syllabus. Skills survey. Discuss expectations for your blog and online writing. Discuss different forms of online storytelling. Review news story structure and lede writing.

<u>Homework for next week:</u>

- Decide on a topic for your blog and email it to me by Monday, Jan. 20 at 7 p.m. See Sakai for examples of what past students have done.
- Complete lede writing exercise, print and bring to class on Jan. 21.

Reading:
- Ledes: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/735/05/
- Ledes: http://cubreporters.org/leads.html (read text only, watching video is optional)
- The five Ws of writing for the web: http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/2011/11/14/the-5-ws-and-how-of-writing-for-the-web/
- Basic ethics for bloggers: http://ijnet.org/blog/basic-ethics-bloggers
- Writing an article versus writing a blog post: http://savethemedia.com/2009/03/20/10-journalism-rules-you-can-break-on-blogs/

Week Two: Jan. 21

In class: Review lede exercise. Writing for online vs. writing for print. Set up your blogs using WordPress. Uploading photos and embedding videos. How to write a list post.

Homework for next week:
- Blog post #1 (500 words). Prompt = List post. Due by start of class, Jan. 28
- Come up with an idea for your first article and email me a two- to three-sentence description by Monday, Jan. 27 at 7 p.m. See Sakai for examples of what past students have done.

Reading:
- Hyperlinking: http://www.ojr.org/080215niles/
- Twitter headlines: http://www.copyblogger.com/twitter-headlines/
- SEO and headlines: http://mashable.com/2012/05/08/google-seo-headlines/
- Editing your own copy: http://thewritelife.com/edit-your-copy/
- Editing quotes: http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=1340

Week Three: Jan. 28

In class: Review of AP Style, editing tips and interview best practices. Hyperlinking best practices. Headline writing for the web. Review Article #1 requirements.

Homework for next week:
- **Email me a word document of Article #1 rough draft by Monday, Feb. 3 at 7 p.m. (800 words).** No photo or source list needed, but include hyperlinks where appropriate.
- Complete AP Style quiz, print out and bring to class on Feb. 4

• Press release rewrite exercise, print out and bring to class on Feb. 4

<u>Reading:</u>
• Hub Bub info sheet (see Sakai)
• Advanced Google searching: <u>http://ijnet.org/blog/top-tips-googles-power-searching-course-part-i</u>
• Advanced Google searching: <u>http://mashable.com/2011/11/24/google-search-infographic/</u>
• Photo permissions: <u>http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2013/01/who-really-owns-your-photos-in-social-media-updated-2013-edition025/</u>

Week Four: Feb. 4

<u>In class:</u> Review AP Style quiz and press release exercise. Photo and video permissions. Review common mistakes from Article #1 rough drafts. Advanced web research for online journalists.

<u>Homework for next week:</u>
• **Email me a word doc of Article 1 by start of class Feb 11 (800 words). Must have source list, photo, hyperlinks.**
• <u>Create a Storify account</u>, if you don't already have one

<u>Reading:</u>
• Social media lessons from 2013 <u>http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/01/if-a-tweet-worked-once-send-it-again-and-other-lessons-from-the-new-york-times-social-media-desk/</u>
• Twitter for journalists: <u>http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/digital-strategies/146345/10-ways-journalists-can-use-twitter-before-during-and-after-reporting-a-story/</u>
• Citizen reporting: <u>http://www.pbs.org/idealab/2013/06/7-ways-newsrooms-can-boost-citizen-reporting157</u>
• Using Storify: <u>http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/116025/the-best-of-storify/</u>
• Using Storify: <u>http://zombiejournalism.com/2010/10/10-ways-journalists-can-use-storify/</u>

<u>For reference (SKIM):</u>
• Twitter lingo: <u>http://mashable.com/2013/07/19/twitter-lingo-guide/</u>

Week Five: Feb. 11

In class: Social media for online journalists and using citizen journalism. How to use Storify. Expectations for audio story.

Homework for next week:
• Blog post #2. Prompt = Storify. Must include at least 400 of your own words in text. Due by start of class Feb. 18.
• Email me two- to three-sentence description of your idea for a web audio story by Sunday, Feb. 16 at 5 p.m.

Reading:
• Audio for print journalists: http://www.niemanlab.org/2009/03/audio-tips-for-print-reporters-from-nyt-sound-sage-amy-oleary/ (watch video or read transcript)
• Selected audio on the web listening assignment (I will email to you on Feb. 11)

Week Six: Feb. 18

In class: Best practices for Q&As. Recording and producing an audio story for the web (with guest speaker).

Homework for next week:
• Blog post #3 (700 words). Prompt = Q&A. +3 bonus points if you include audio from your Q&A in post. Due by start of class Feb. 25.

Reading:
• View Chapters I, II and III (about 21 minutes) http://datajournalism.stanford.edu/

Week Seven: Feb. 25

In class: Audio follow-up. Data visualization basics and Google maps.

Homework for next week:
• **Audio story is due March 11. Post audio to SoundCloud and email me word document that has a link to story, source list and accompanying web text (script/ dialogue/story). Be prepared to present your piece in class and tell the class 1) how you got your idea 2) challenges you encountered and 3) your favorite part of the project.**
• Blog post #4 Prompt = Google map and 300-word post. Due by start of class, March 11.

Week Eight: no class March 4 — Spring break

Week Nine: March 11

In class: Presentation of audio stories. Expectations for Article #2.

Reading:
• Storyboarding (stop at "Example"): http://multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu/tutorials/starttofinish/storyboarding/
• Feature writing: http://collegemediamatters.com/2013/01/08/10-feature-writing-tips-from-tampa-bay-times-staffer-author-jeff-klinkenberg/
• Reading for guest speaker (I will email to you on March 11)

Week Ten: March 18

In class: Feature writing for the web and multimedia planning (with guest speaker). Writing a how-to post.

Homework for next week:
• Email me a two- to three-sentence description of your idea for Article #2 (feature) by start of class, March 25
• Blog post #5 (500 words). Prompt = How-to. Due by start of class March 25.

Reading:
• Video storytelling: http://www.newsu.org/courses/video-storytelling-web/telling-video-stories. Read "Telling video stories" and the content from the seven links below it (don't have to complete any activity). You can log in with the username kbelsha@gmail.com and password wftw2013.
• Video shooting: http://ijnet.org/stories/nine-tips-journalists-shooting-good-video-interview

Week Eleven: March 25

In class: Feature writing part two. Video shooting.

Homework for next week:
• **Rough drafts are due to me by email by Monday, March 31 at 7 p.m. (1,000 words).** No source list or photo needed. Bring a printed copy to class on April 1 for your writer's workshop.

Reading:

- Byliner: http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102711/Its-a-Long-Article-Its-a-Short-Book-No-Its-a-Byliner-E-Book.aspx
- Atavist: http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102710/Journalism-Done-The-Atavist-Way.aspx
- Going long in the digital age: http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=5165

Week Twelve: April 1

In class: Long-form journalism on the web. Writers workshop using your rough drafts.

Homework for next week:
- Email me your idea for video project by Monday, April 7 at 7 p.m.
- Reminder: **Article #2 final draft is due by start of class April 15. Must have source list, hyperlinks and photo. (1,000 words)**

Week Thirteen: April 8

In class: Video editing. Expectations and best practices for a video blog.

Homework for next week:
- Blog post #6. Prompt = Explanatory video with 300 words of text and 1:30 to 2 minutes of video. Due by start of class April 15.
- **Article #2 final draft is due to me by email by start of class April 15. Must have source list, hyperlinks and photo. (1,000 words)**

Reading:
- Blending PR and journalism (2): http://americanstar.tumblr.com/post/20525671242/on-wednesday-april-4-2012-the-news-journal-media THEN http://www.huffingtonpost.com/khristopher-brooks/reporter-fired_b_1421275.html
- Deadlines, plagiarism and content aggregation: http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-04-20/opinions/35454516_1_aggregation-web-links-international-stories
- Ethics of phone apps: http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/11/through-my-eye-not-hipstamatics/
- Future of ethics ("Shape of a future ethics" section only) http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2013/08/why-we-need-radical-change-for-media-ethics-not-a-return-to-basics/

Week Fourteen: April 15

In class: Changing ethics in online journalism. Curating a journalist's online brand.

<u>Homework for next week:</u>
• **Video project is due by start of class, April 22. Be prepared to present your video and tell the class 1) how you got your idea, 2) challenges you encountered and 3) your favorite part of the project. Email me word doc that has a link to your video, copy of your source list and script.**

Week Fifteen: April 22

<u>In class:</u> Final presentation and viewing of videos.

Requirements and rubrics:

Article #1 News story rubric (100 points)

10   timely news story based in metro-Chicago area
10   lede writing
10   nut graph construction
20   organization of article
30   original research, sourcing, attribution, hyperlinks, two sources interviewed (min)
15   AP style, grammar, spelling, punctuation
5   photo (original or approved for use on Hub Bub)

Audio for the web assignment requirements (100 points)

1. Must take place in or have ties to the metro-Chicago area (i.e. your source is from the Chicago area, lives in the Chicago area, is working on a project in the Chicago area or is talking about a topic of interest to Chicago residents).
2. Story works as an audio piece on the web
3. Must interview at least two human sources. Must have at least one other human voice besides your own in the audio story
4. It can be feature, news, interview format or other creative format (discuss with me)
5. Must be about 2:30 to 3 minutes in length (+/- 10 seconds)
6. You must present the audio story in class and be prepared to speak to your classmates about how you came up with the idea and how you reported the story
7. Must have at least one original photo, source-provided photo or photo approved for use on Hub Bub
8. Must have a source list (contact number or email for interviewed sources and links to websites/reports/other online sources consulted)
9. Must turn in written version of script/dialogue/web story

10. Upload to SoundCloud

Article #2 Feature Rubric (100 points)

10	interview minimum of two human sources
10	quality and amount of quotes vs. paraphrasing
10	story sequence
20	narrative writing
30	original research and fact-gathering, has source list
15	AP style, grammar, spelling
5	photo (original, source-provided or approved for use on Hub Bub)

Web Video Rubric (100 points)

10	original idea that suits the medium, length (2:30 to 3:30 minutes)
20	interview minimum of two people who appear on camera, includes source list
30	video is edited in logical sequence, includes a variety of shots and angles, has B-roll and A-roll
30	your voice-over writing, original research, quote choice
10	camera and audio work (lighting, camera steadiness, audio volume, etc.)

Some common deductions when calculating writing scores (there are others):

- 1 point AP Style error
- 1 point punctuation error
- 2 points spelling error
- 2 points grammar error
- 5 points for weak nut graph
- 2 points per run-on sentence
- 5 points for weak lede
- up to 10 points for research lapses or errors
- up to 10 points for organizational errors
- up to 10 points for lack of source/not meeting source requirement
- 5 points if there is no photo with article
- 5 points for no source list