

Mass Communication  
MC2010 Media Writing  
Spring 2013 semester  
M/W 2:30-4:20 p.m.  
Journalism #111

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**Required Texts**

Bender, J. R., Davenport, L. D., Drager, M. W., & Fedler, F. (2012). *Reporting for the Media* (10<sup>th</sup> edition); Strunk, W. (2012). *The Elements of Style*; Associated Press Stylebook (2012 edition).

**MC2010 objectives**

This course is the beginning writing course for mass communication majors and minors. It introduces skills associated with writing, grammar, style, and information gathering and is meant to prepare students for advanced writing courses in all Manship School concentrations. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Develop skills in writing lead sentences and in organizing news stories in an inverted pyramid and hourglass structure under deadline pressure.
2. Develop skills in conducting interviews and using the Internet and the library for information gathering.
3. Develop understanding of the basic legal and ethical principles of mass communication, including principles of libel as outlined in the *AP Stylebook*.
4. Develop ability to recognize news bias and to write with sensitivity to diverse audiences.
5. Develop skills in using Associated Press style.
6. Refine basic grammar and language skills that include, among other things, parallel structure, subject-verb agreement, active-passive voice usage, and spelling.

**Classroom expectations**

You are expected to come to class on time, well-read, and prepared to make contributions. You are expected to hand in all assignments on time. Food and drink are not allowed in the lab. You should come to each class with your text books and materials for note taking. It is also recommended that you create a Dropbox account with an MC2010 folder.

**Academic integrity**

Academic integrity is held to the strictest of standards. The work you turn in is yours – and no one else’s. LSU’s policy on plagiarism states: “Plagiarism is defined to include any use of another’s work and submitting that work as one’s own. This means not only copying passages of writing or direct quotations but also paraphrasing or using structure or ideas without citation.” If you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism please see the instructor or visit <http://saa.lsu.edu/Plagiarism.html>.

### **Late work policy**

I extend the benefit of the doubt to everyone once and only once. This means I will accept late work resulting from illness, conference (or any other circumstance I deem acceptable) for 1 assignment if you notify me **prior** to the start of class as to the reason for your absence. No-shows do not have the luxury of make-up work except in the most extreme of circumstances (such as severe medical or family emergency) and may require documentation. *All unapproved late work will receive a zero.*

### **Written work**

All written work must be typed in 11 or 12-point Times New Roman font. All papers must be free of factual errors, grammatical errors and typos. Written work with misspelled proper nouns (especially names), erroneous facts or A.P. style violations will face a **significant** reduction in grade. *I do not accept unstapled papers.*

### **Assignments**

Weekly quizzes:.....	10% (100 pts)
A.P. exams:.....	10% (100 pts)
Media moments:.....	5% (50 pts)
Spot news story:.....	5% (50 pts)
Press release: .....	5% (50 pts)
Blog entry:.....	5% (50 pts)
Midterm exam:.....	20% (200 pts)
Participation:.....	15% (150 pts)
Final project:.....	25% (250 pts)

A = 930-1,000 pts; B = 850-929 pts; C = 770-849 pts;

D = 690-769 pts; F = 689 pts or less

**Weekly quizzes:** Each Monday we will begin class with a short quiz covering the skills learned the previous week.

**Media moments report:** A brief 1-page report on an influential or defining media moment. Your report should comment on how that moment influenced the media and/or news business and you should elaborate on broader societal or democratic significance.

**Spot news story:** Using a provided fact sheet you will craft a spot news story applying what you learned in class including newswriting techniques, inverted pyramid and A.P. style. This is an in-class assignment.

**Press release:** Using a provided fact sheet you will craft a press release applying what you learned from class. You will also include an emailed news pitch. This is an in-class assignment.

**Blog post:** You will craft a blog post by applying skills learned in class, including interpretive tones, hyperlinking and key words. Your content can be based on one of the following three themes: news/current events, consumer advocacy or partisan politics.

**Final project:** The two-part final consists of 1) an in-class news story covering a press conference 2) an original profile feature story. Each is worth 125 points and combines to account for 250 points, or 25% of your final grade. Details to follow.

**Participation:** This includes attendance, reading and writing exercises, and Manship exams at the testing center. You will have a number of small writing exercises both in and outside the classroom that are not listed on the syllabus. Completion of these will count toward your participation grade.

### **Dates & Deadlines**

- Monday-Friday, Jan. 14-18: Manship Pre-Assessment (Testing Center)
- Wednesday, Jan. 23: Final date for dropping courses w/out receiving a “W”
- Wednesday-Friday, Feb. 6-8: AP Style Exam #1 (Testing Center)
- Sunday, April 14, 6 p.m.: AP Style Quiz Bowl (Tentative Date)
- Monday-Friday, April 15-19: AP Style Exam #2 (Testing Center)
- **Wednesday, April 17, Final Project, Part I (in-class)**
- Monday-Friday, April 29-May 3: Manship Post-Assessment (Testing Center)
- Friday, May 3: Manship application deadline (This year’s application includes resume and 250-word essay.)

### **Tentative Schedule**

#### *Week 1 The Importance of Storytelling*

- Monday, Jan. 14: Introductions/syllabus/course expectations.
- Wednesday, Jan. 16 Read D. Brinkley’s *The Great Deluge* excerpt (p.181-197). Introduction to A.P. style.

#### *Week 2 Introduction to Grammar and Composition*

- Monday, Jan. 21: **No class. MLK holiday.**
- Wednesday, Jan. 23: Read Strunk, sections II & III (pp. 7-32); Manship Writing Guide and A.P. Style study sheet.

### Week 3 Grammar and Newswriting Style

- Monday, Jan. 28: Quiz 1. Read Bender et al, Chap. 2 (pp. 21-36).
- Wednesday, Jan. 30: Read Bender et al, Chap. 3 (pp. 51-61). **Media moments report due.**

### Week 4 Precision of Language (A.P. Exam Week)

- Monday, Feb. 4: Quiz 2. Read Strunk, sections V & IV (pp. 36-49). A.P. style review.
- Wednesday, Feb. 8: Read Bender et al, Chap. 4 (pp. 78-89).

### Week 5 Information Gathering and Interviewing Techniques

- Monday, Feb. 11: **No class.** Mardi Gras.
- Wednesday, Feb. 13: Read Bender et al Chap. 6 (129-146), Chap. 12 (305-317).

### Week 6 Structure of News: Ledes, Headlines, Inverted Pyramid & Hourglass Style

- Monday, Feb. 18: Quiz 3. Read Bender et al Chap. 8 (187-197), Chap. 9 (223-231).
- Wednesday, Feb. 20: Read Bender et al Chap. 10 (242-259).

### Week 7 News Values; Law, Ethics & Attribution

- Monday, Feb. 25: Quiz 4. Read Bender et al Chap. 5 (107-120), Chap. 7 (154-171).
- Wednesday, Feb. 27: Read Bender et al Chap. 11 (279-291). Spot news story (in class).

### Week 8 Midterm Week

- Monday, March 4: Midterm review
- Wednesday, March 6: Midterm exam

### Week 9 Writing for the Web, Blogs and Social Media

- Monday, March 11: Read Bender (p. 4-9) and Chap. 14 (p. 353-364).
- Wednesday, March 13: Blog entry (in class).

Week 10 Narrative Journalism and Feature Writing

- Monday, March 18: Quiz 5. Read Bender et al Chap. 17 (441-448). Read “The Whistler” (on Moodle).
- Wednesday, March 20: Read John Branch (*New York Times*), “Derek Boogaard: A boy learns to brawl” (on Moodle).

Week 11 Introduction to Public Relations Writing

- Monday, March 25: Quiz 6. Read Bender et al Chap. 20 (535-545).
- Wednesday, March 27: Press release (in-class).

Week 12 Spring Break

- Monday, April 1: **No class.** Spring break.
- Wednesday, April 3: **No class.** Spring break.

Week 13 Speeches, Press Conferences and Meetings

- Monday, April 8: Quiz 7. Read Bender et al Chap. 15 (377-388).
- Wednesday, April 10: Read Bender et al Chap. 18 (459-473).

Week 14 Beat Reporting and Newsroom Simulation (A.P. Exam II)

- Monday, April 15: No class (feature writing workshop).
- Wednesday, April 17: **Final Project, Part I: Press conference**

Week 15 Introduction to Sports Writing

- Monday, April 22: Quiz 8. Readings TBA.
- Wednesday, April 24: Sports cont./feature writing workshop.

Week 16 Introduction to News Editing

- Monday, April 29: Headline and caption writing (in-class).
- Wednesday, May 1: **Final project (part II) due.** Informal discussion of feature projects in Curet Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Hodges Hall.

# Manship School of Mass Communication

# WRITING ESSENTIALS

Writing skills are essential for all of our students, and writing is a skill to be developed in all courses offered in the Manship School of Mass Communication. Manship faculty will evaluate student writing with consideration for these fundamental writing concepts.

<b>WORD CHOICE</b>	<p>The following words are often confused or misused in writing. Make sure you understand the difference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accept, except</li> <li>• a lot</li> <li>• all right</li> <li>• affect, effect</li> <li>• among, between</li> <li>• anxious, eager</li> <li>• because, since</li> <li>• due to, because of</li> <li>• farther, further</li> <li>• fewer, less</li> <li>• its, it's</li> <li>• media (plural), medium (singular)</li> <li>• principal, principle</li> <li>• stationary, stationery</li> </ul>	
<b>ACTIVE/PASSIVE VOICE</b>	<p>English sentences have three basic elements: a subject, a verb, and an object. In active voice sentences, the verb is the action element of the sentence, the subject is the "doer" of the action, and the object is the recipient of the action. In passive voice sentences, the subject is not "doer" of the action; the object becomes the "doer" of the action. These sentences flip-flop the subject and the object. In general, active voice sentences are preferred because they focus the reader's attention on the "doer of the action." Active voice is also more concise because it usually involves fewer words. Although there are situations where passive voice is proper, reliance on passive voice produces a cumbersome text.</p>	<p><b>Active:</b> The executive committee <u>approved</u> the new policy.</p> <p><b>Passive:</b> The new policy <u>was approved</u> by the executive committee.</p>
<b>ANTECEDENT/PRONOUN AGREEMENT</b>	<p>A pronoun usually refers to something earlier in the text (its <u>antecedent</u>) and must agree in number — singular/plural — with that to which it refers. A pronoun's antecedent may be either a noun or another pronoun, but it <i>must</i> be clear what the antecedent is in either case.</p> <p>A pronoun should have only one possible antecedent. If there is more than one possible</p>	<p><b>Incorrect:</b> If a student loses their books, they should go to lost and found.</p> <p><b>Correct:</b> If students lose their books, they should go to lost and found.</p>

	<p>antecedent for a personal pronoun in a sentence, make sure that the pronoun refers only to one of them:</p> <p>Also, please note that countries and organizations are NOT people. In a sentence in which a country or organization is the subject, the second reference is to “it” (singular) and “its” (singular possessive).</p>	<p><b>Incorrect:</b> Jerry called Steve 12 times while he was in Reno.  <b>Rationale:</b> The pronoun "he" could refer either to "Jerry" or to "Steve."  <b>Incorrect:</b> McDonald’s cancelled all of their advertising, and they later regretted doing so.  <b>Correct:</b> McDonald’s cancelled all of its advertising, and it later regretted doing so.</p>
<p><b>PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION</b></p>	<p>An article or a preposition applying to all the members of a series must be used either before the first term or be repeated before each term.</p> <p>Correlative expressions (both, and; not, but; not only, but also; either, or; first, second, third; and the like) should be followed by the same grammatical construction.</p> <p>When making comparisons, the things you compare should be couched in parallel structures whenever that is possible and appropriate.</p>	<p><b>Incorrect:</b> The French, the Italians, Spanish and Portuguese  <b>Correct:</b> The French, the Italians, the Spanish and the Portuguese  <b>Incorrect:</b> It was both a long ceremony and very tedious.  <b>Correct:</b> The ceremony was both long and tedious.  <b>Incorrect:</b> My income is smaller than my wife.  <b>Correct:</b> My income is smaller than my wife's.</p>
<p><b>ATTRIBUTION/ CITING</b></p>	<p>Presenting ideas and phrases from another writer as your own is plagiarism and is unacceptable.</p> <p>In journalistic writing, attribution is indicating your source for a piece of information. You must attribute any judgment or opinion statements. You should not attribute known facts.</p>	

<b>PUNCTUATION OF QUOTES</b>	Commas and periods always go inside quotation marks. Semi-colons and colons do not go inside quotation marks. If a statement ends in a quoted <u>question</u> , allow the question mark within the quotation marks to end the sentence. On the other hand, if a question ends with a quoted statement that is <u>not</u> a question, the question mark will go outside the closing quotation mark.	<p>“I like to go swimming,” she said, “but I am afraid of getting sunburned.”</p> <p>May asked her daughter, "Who are you going out with tonight?"</p> <p>Who said, "Fame means when your computer modem is broken, the repair guy comes out to your house a little faster"?</p>
<b>SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT</b>	Singular subjects need singular verbs; plural subjects need plural verbs. Collective nouns (herd, team, board, faculty, etc.) take singular verbs.	My brother <u>is</u> a nutritionist. My sisters <u>are</u> mathematicians.
<b>PREPOSITIONS</b>	A preposition describes a relationship between other words in a sentence. Examples are: after, at, beside, between, during, into, on, with, etc. In everyday speech we often use prepositions where they are not necessary. Eliminate unnecessary prepositions, particularly those at the end of sentences.	<p>The book fell off <del>of</del> the desk.</p> <p>Where did they go <del>to</del>?</p> <p>Where is your college <del>at</del>?</p>

**For more help with writing style, the following Web sites and books are recommended:**

The Guide to Grammar and Writing - <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>

The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University -

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

*Latest edition of* Strunk, W., White, E. & Angell, R. The Elements of Style, Longman.

*Latest edition of* The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law