

Mass Communication  
MC2010 Media Writing  
Summer 2013, Session B  
M-F 11:00-12:50  
Journalism #100

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

**Required Texts**

Bender, J. R., Davenport, L. D., Drager, M. W., & Fedler, F. (2012). *Reporting for the Media* (10<sup>th</sup> edition); 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 & Grading*

Final project:.....	20%	(200 pts)
Midterm exam:.....	15%	(150 pts)
Participation:.....	15%	(150 pts)
A.P. exams:.....	10%	(100 pts)
Spot news story:.....	10%	(100 pts)
Press release: .....	10%	(100 pts)
Media moments:.....	5%	(50 pts)
Article critique.....	5%	(50 pts)
Speech story:.....	5%	(50 pts)
Quizzes.....	5%	(50 pts)

A = 930-1,000 points; B = 850-929 points; C = 770-849 points;  
D = 690-769 points; F = 689 points or less

**Media moments report:** A brief 1-page report on an influential/defining media moment. Your report should comment on how that moment influenced the media and/or news industry and you should elaborate on broader societal or democratic significance. Your report will also serve as an introduction to putting A.P. style to use.

**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:** Assume you are a public relations coordinator for a new business in Baton Rouge. 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 aimed at convincing a reporter that the event is newsworthy and of interest to their readership. This is an in-class assignment.

**Article critique:** Using a provided worksheet, you will critique a news story for news values/newsworthiness, news writing structure, A.P. style, objectivity and sources cited by the reporter. You will informally present your findings to the class.

**Final project:** The two-part final project consists of an in-class spot news story and a feature story in which you conduct an interview with a newsworthy subject and write an original profile piece. Details to follow.

**Participation:** Participation includes attendance, completion of in-class reading and writing exercises and contributions to class discussions. You will have a number of small writing exercises that are not listed on the syllabus. Completion of these will count toward your participation grade.

**Current events credit:** As a student of media and mass communication, staying abreast of current events is a crucial component of your job and following the news helps us become stronger media writers. Each Friday there will be an (optional) extra credit quiz covering your knowledge of the top headlines and news stories for that week. You can earn up to a total of 6 extra credit points per quiz, for a possible total of 30 points for the semester. Since the course operates on a 1,000-point scale this means that earning the full 30 current events credits bumps your final grade up 3 points; 2 points for 20 current events credits, and 1 point for 10 credits.

### **Dates & Deadlines**

- Wednesday, June 12: Last day to drop courses without receiving a “W”
- Thursday-Friday, June 20-21: A.P. Style Exam #1 (Testing Center)
- Tuesday, July 2: Last day to drop courses and receive a “W”
- Tuesday-Wednesday, July 2-3: A.P. Style Exam #2 (Testing Center)

### **Tentative Schedule**

#### *Week 1 Storytelling, Grammar & Composition; Intro to A.P. Style and News Leads*

- Monday, June 10: Introductions/syllabus/course expectations. Discussion on excerpt from Brinkley’s *The Great Deluge*.
- Tuesday, June 11: Read Bender et al, Chap. 5 (pp. 107-120). Introduction to A.P. style. Review Manship/A.P. style guides.

- Wednesday, June 12: Read Bender et al, Chap. 2 (pp. 21-36). Grammar, spelling and A.P. style review. **Media moments report due.**
- Thursday, June 13: Read Bender et al, Chap. 3 (pp. 51-61) & Chap. 4 (pp.78-89) Newswriting style and the language of news.
- Friday, June 14: Read Bender et al, Chap. 8 (pp. 187-197) and Chap. 9 (223-231). Intro to summary and alternative news leads; lead writing workshop. **Quiz 1.**

Week 2 Structure of News: Leads, Inverted Pyramid, Hourglass Style etc.

- Monday, June 17: Read Bender et al, Chap. 10 (242-259). Inverted pyramid and structure of news stories. Intro to spot news.
- Tuesday, June 18: Read Bender et al, Chap. 11 (279-291). Quotations and attribution. Inverted pyramid, hourglass style etc. reviewed.
- Wednesday, June 19: **In-class spot news story.**
- Thursday, June 20: **A.P. Exam I** (@ Testing Center)
- Friday, June 21: Read Bender et al, Chap. 12 (pp. 305-317). Interviewing techniques. In-class interviews. **Quiz 2.**

Week 3 Media Law and Ethics; Intro to Event/Beat Coverage.

- Monday, June 24: Read Bender et al, Chap. 6 (pp. 129-146). Media law discussion. **Article critiques due.**
- Tuesday, June 25: Read Bender et al, Chap. 7 (pp. 154-171). Media ethics; objectivity revisited. Interpretive vs. descriptive newswriting.
- Wednesday, June 26: Read Bender et al, Chap. 15 (pp. 377-388). Reporting speeches and meetings. **In-class speech story.**
- Thursday, June 27: **Midterm exam.**
- Friday, June 28: Readings TBA (on Moodle). Citizen journalism and social media. Information gathering and background research. Web scavenger hunt.

Week 4 Narrative Journalism, Feature Writing and Beat Reporting

- Monday, July 1: Read Bender et al, Chap. 17 (441-448) and “The Whistler” (on Moodle). Intro to feature writing; revisit alt. leads. **Profile interview notes due.**

- Tuesday, July 2: Read “Derek Boogard: A boy learns to brawl” part I (on Moodle). Feature writing continued.
- Wednesday, July 3: **A. P. exam II** (@ Testing Center).
- Thursday, July 4: No class.
- Friday, July 5: Read Bender et al, Chap. 14 (pp. 353-364). Writing for the web; blogs and social media. Readings TBA. In-class blogging exercise.

Week 5 Intro to Public Relations Writing

- Monday, July 8: Read Bender et al, Chap. 20 (pp. 535-545). Intro to public relations writing.
- Tuesday, July 9: PR writing continued. Readings TBA. **In-class press release.**
- Wednesday, July 10: Headline writing and intro to news editing.
- Thursday, July 11: Semester recap. **Final: (in class) spot news story.**
- Friday, July 12: Informal discussions on feature project. **Final: Profile story due.**