

# The University of Western Ontario Faculty of Information and Media Studies



## MMJC 9101: Introduction to Journalism Fall 2018

### *Instructor Information*

**Instructor:** Mark Kearney

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 2 – 4 pm, FNB 4134

Other times by appointment. Please email to arrange a time.

**E-Mail:** mkearney@uwo.ca

### *Class Information*

**Class times:** Thursdays 1:30 pm to 4:20 pm FNB 3050

The course format will consist of lectures, group work, and assignments that will be completed both in and outside of class time.

### **Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to the fundamentals of journalism theory and practice, with an emphasis on news judgment, story conception and development, lead writing, hard and soft news writing, interviewing skills and techniques, story structure, issues in the changing world of media and journalism. It is designed to take students with little or no knowledge of journalism and provide them with the basic foundational skills and learning to grow as a journalist.

## Course Goals / Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students should:

- be grounded in some of the basic principles and practices common to all news media
- understand and practise the fundamental skills of interviewing
- have basic skills in gathering and organizing information necessary for the production of journalistic stories
- be able to conceive and write clear, complete and accurate stories
- be able to critically evaluate their own approach and processes in producing journalism
- be familiar with research methods for the internet, libraries, archives, documents, databases and other electronic sources
- be able to critically evaluate the work of other professional journalists.
- show an understanding of the legal and ethical principles and practices in journalism

## Course Tools and Learning Materials

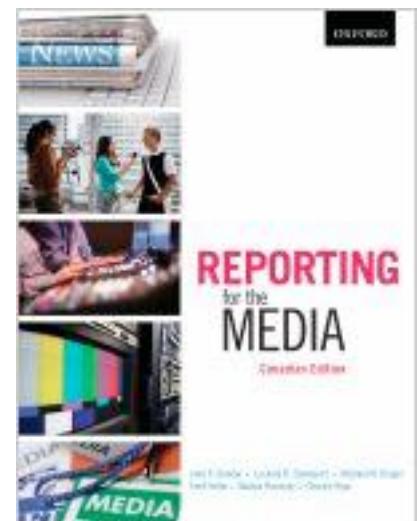
### ***REQUIRED TEXTS***

Reporting for the Media: Canadian Edition, John R. Bender et al. Oxford University Press.

Kovach and Rosenstiel, The Elements of Journalism, Three Rivers Press, New York, 2007.

CP Caps and Spelling

The Canadian Press Stylebook, Toronto.



## **RECOMMENDED**

Cumming and McKercher, *The Canadian Reporter*, Harcourt Brace & Co., Canada, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2011

(All books are available at the UWO Bookstore)

Students in this graduate program are required to attend all classes and expected to be on time. Class participation and discussion are important. Students are expected to immerse themselves in the news culture – reading newspapers and online news sites and following current events.

To fully participate in the class and the program, you must be abreast of current events. You must “read-in” daily and be aware of news events locally, nationally and worldwide. We recommend that you read at least two credible news sites (or newspapers) a day – one national and one local. We regularly discuss articles, stories, editorials, online play, trending stories, page layouts, social media developments and other issues in class. **You must be prepared.**

## **Methods of Evaluation**

**Deadlines and accuracy are important in journalism.** Each assignment will be graded based on the quality of writing, the strength of its lead, the overall structure of the story and how it meets the specific criteria for the type of work being produced.

Late work will not be accepted without penalty (unless medical or compassionate grounds are established) and there will be penalties for work that contains name or fact errors.

## **Participation**

*Participation:*

This is not to be confused with attendance. Attendance in the graduate program is mandatory. Participation speaks to your contribution to the class. You must do the readings, be up to date on news events and be prepared to discuss and contribute. Students will be evaluated on the quantity and quality of their contributions to in-class discussions and to the intellectual life of the class. Students who are clearly and consistently engaged with the course will be rewarded.

Simply being present in class does not guarantee marks. Students must demonstrate knowledge of readings, be present and focused (cell phone and non-relevant laptop activity is disruptive) Students can also demonstrate they are engaged with the course material by discussions with the instructor during office hours or by e-mailing to the instructor comments, relevant articles, web sites, news stories, and other content related to course topics.

*In-Class Work:* will consist of **short news quizzes** and non-graded writing exercises. Your quizzes will be pass/fail (minimum 7 out of 10). If you are absent for an assignment or quiz, your mark will be zero. If you have a valid reason provided by email or in person to the instructor **prior to class**, the absence will not detract from your grade.

# Assignments

1. Two hard-news stories – (10% for each. Total: 20%)
2. Interview story (15%)
3. A personal job profile 25%
4. An enterprise story 30%
5. In-class participation and attendance and quizzes. Attitude counts. Be keen and professional (10%).

*Assignments will be submitted online through the OWL site for this course.*

# Schedule

**(This is an approximate schedule and may change depending on circumstances and other developments.** Any changes will be announced in advance on the class website, in class, and by email.

## 1. Week One

**(Sept. 6)**

Introduction. Outlining the course, assignments, deadlines, grading, participation and professionalism.

Introduction to some basics of journalism.

In-class writing exercise: short bio of fellow student. Not for marks.

Assigned Readings: The Elements of Journalism, Chapters 1-3

Reporting for the Media: Chapter 1

## 2. Week Two

**(Sept. 13)**

What is Journalism For?

The Nature of news: Basic news values.

Objectivity, Fairness and Balance.

Simplicity in Writing

Understanding and writing leads

In class news practice

Assigned Readings: The Elements of Journalism, Chapters 4 and 6

Reporting for the Media: Chapter 2

## **3 . Week Three**

(Sept. 20)

The basic news story: form and structure

Interviewing basics

More about leads

Assigned Reading: Reporting for the Media: Chapters 5 and 9

News story 1 (Due: Sept. 21)

Assign interview story.

## **4 . Week Four**

(Sept. 27)

Discussing assignment 1

More lead writing: Hard leads, covering events, basic news reporting.

What makes for news. Doing some of the exercises in the text in class.

Reporting for the Media: Chapter 4

Interview story due Oct.12.

## **5 . Week Five**

(Oct. 4)

More hard news stories: Police stories, fire, accidents, disasters, etc.

More lead writing practice and discussion

Assigned Reading: Reporting for the Media: Chapter 7

## **6 . Week Six**

(Oct. 11)

Alternative leads, soft news story forms

Constructing and writing the profile

Assigned Readings: Elements of Journalism: Chapter 7 and 8

Assign Profile

## **7. Week Seven**

**(Oct. 18)**

Generating ideas, finding stories. Basic journalistic research

Assigned Reading: Reporting for the Media: Chapter 8

News story 2 (Due Oct. 19)

## **Oct 22-26 – MMJC Research week.**

### **No classes**

## **8. Week Eight**

**(Oct. Nov. 1)**

The enterprise story. More on features. Style and form.

Libel, privacy and other legal matters

Checking in on profile, possible workshopping

Assigned Reading: Reporting for the Media: Chapter 9

Profile due Sunday, Nov. 4

## **9. Week Nine**

**(Nov. 8)**

Critical thinking, accuracy and problems in reporting

Statistics and numbers in the news.

More about Enterprise reporting

## **10. Week Ten**

**(Nov. 15)**

Critical Thinking: Sources, Evidence and False Balance. Critical Thinking and Reporting

Other types of coverage – events, beats, speeches etc.

Copy editing introduction.

Assigned Reading: Reporting for the Media: Chapter 13

# 11. Week Eleven

(Nov. 22)

Following up with enterprise story.

Other approaches, how to pull the stories together, challenges in writing.

Ethical issues in journalism.

Assigned Readings: Elements of Journalism: Chapters 9 and 10

# 12. Week Twelve

(Nov. 29)

Advanced Interviewing: The Sawatsky Method

Assigned Reading: The Question Man by Susan Paterno on AJR <http://ajrarchive.org/article.asp?id=676>

Workshopping enterprise story.

Enterprise story Due: Saturday, Dec.1

# 13. Week Thirteen

(Dec. 6)

Final class. Review and wrap up.

## Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

“All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

“Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.”

## **Support Services**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Western’s “Health and Wellness” [http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.