

Western University
Faculty of Information and Media Studies

MIT 2154G



Journalism Practices and Principles Course Syllabus – Winter 2020

Instructor: Mark Kearney

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Course Information

Lectures: Tuesdays 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., **FNB 1220**

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

Course Description

This course investigates some of the controversies about, and skills of, journalism, studying both mainstream news services and citizen journalism, and providing an introduction to journalistic writing and news production, and the everyday practices of various types of news organizations.

In this course, we will study a variety of genres of journalistic writing, from hard-news stories written on deadline to event coverage and profiles/features. The genres of writing will be examined in several ways — as products of the news media system, as sources of information, and as the first rough draft of history. Students will have opportunities to practise different journalistic genres.

Writing for the mass media incorporates the basic requirements of good writing as well as knowledge of the special requirements of journalism. The course will focus on the skills and

techniques of writing for mainstream media such as daily newspapers, but will also offer insight into citizen journalism and journalism in electronic media.

The course will also examine some of the ethical aspects of journalism and how these affect the daily practices of journalists.

Course Goals /Learning Outcomes

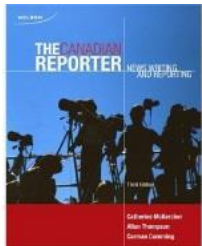
At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- . Recognize genres of journalistic writing
- . Evaluate the appropriate use of each genre
- . Understand how news is gathered
- . Produce journalistic stories in specific genres
- . Identify ethical concerns relating to journalism and evaluate the appropriate response
- . Critically engage with contemporary issues and debates relating to journalism and the movement of information.

Course Tools and Learning Materials

Web Page: OWL will be the primary tool for communication outside the classroom. Please check the announcements regularly as well as your email. Additional readings and information on assignments may be posted on the site.

Recommended Reading:



This text is **not required** but it has good information that some students in the past have found useful. I will have this on reserve in Weldon library.

The Canadian Reporter, 3rd edition, by Catherine McKercher, Allan Thompson and Carman Cumming (Nelson, 2011).

It's usually available at the UWO bookstore if you want to purchase it and an electronic version of the text is available from <http://www.coursesmart.com> at a reduced cost, if you prefer.

<http://www.coursesmart.com/the-canadian-reporter-news-writing-and-reporting/mckercher-thompson-cumming/dp/9780176407018>

This link should take you to the e-book where it's available to rent for 180 days at a lower price.

- . Read at least one newspaper daily – electronic or paper.
 - . You may be asked to bring a newspaper or link to news website to some classes.
 - . In addition, you should regularly view or listen to broadcast news.
 - . **You should acquaint yourself with Canadian Press style which I will discuss in class**
- Other required or suggested readings may be posted on the course site.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Expectations: Because this is a second-year class, an emphasis is placed on rigorous engagement with the course materials and active participation in class discussion. **It is expected that students will attend each class**, have completed any required readings, and be prepared to participate thoughtfully and respectfully in discussion on an ongoing basis. **Missing classes means missing an opportunity to participate which will affect your overall grade for participation.**

Assignments will be submitted electronically via the OWL site set up for the course. Yes, grammar and spelling do matter in all written work.

Evaluation:

Assignment	Due Date
Journalistic writing assignments:	
Assignment One (in class) 15%	Assignment One: Jan. 28
Assignment Two (Event) 25%	Assignment Two: Feb. 26
Group Reporting Project 20%	Group Reporting: March 11
Assignment Three (Profile) 35%	Assignment Three: April 1
(Profile proposal due week by March 20)	
Participation/In-class work 5%	Continuous

Participation/In-Class Work:

Participation/In-Class Work: (5%) This mark will account for students being evaluated on the quantity and quality of their contributions to in-class discussions, to the intellectual life of the class and completing in-class practice writing assignments to determine your grade. Students who are clearly and consistently engaged with the course will be rewarded. **This grade is not for attendance. It is entirely possible to attend every class and still receive a grade of zero if the student does not demonstrate knowledge of any readings, fails to engage in class discussions, doesn't participate in the in-class work and/or disrupts the course.** Students can also demonstrate they are engaged with the course material by discussions with me during office hours or by e-mailing to me (through the course website) articles, web sites, news stories,

and other content related to course topics. If you have a valid reason provided by email or in person to me **prior to class**, the absence will not detract from your grade.

Journalistic Assignments:

There are *two news writing assignments*: one will be completed in-class and the second will be mostly completed on your own time as you will be asked to cover and write about an event.

The *third writing assignment* will be in the form of a profile on a subject/person of your choosing. **However, you will not be allowed to profile and/or interview any family members for this or any other assignment.** A short three or four line proposal will be due for approval and input from the instructor. **The proposal will not be marked, as such, but must be submitted and approved or you will receive a five-mark deduction on the grade of the profile.**

The *Group Reporting Project* will involve teams of students working on an assigned topic for a story or a suggestion proposed by the group. Each student will be assigned to a group of four or five. The topics will likely be tied to news stories or trends of the day and will involve using classroom hours to interview people, take photos and to write up a story or stories based on what the team has gathered. This is a group mark and the process will take place over Weeks 7 to 9.

Detailed information on assignments will be distributed in class and/or via OWL.

Please note that students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. This year, the date by which students are to have received at least 15% of their grade in a second semester course is around March, 4 2020. Students can find details about this academic policy here: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf.

Please note, students who receive academic accommodation for the assignments on which these grades are based may not receive feedback in time to meet this deadline. Students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

Deadlines

Deadlines are sacred in journalism and assignments should be submitted electronically before the specified time via OWL. I will indicate that for each assignment. If necessary, you may in certain circumstances also be able to hand them in to me at the beginning of the class in which they are due. Unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor at least 48 hours in advance of the due date, late assignments will be subject to a **deduction of five per cent per day**.

Submissions will not be accepted after the assignments have been returned to the class.

Contacting the instructor

E-mail: Students must regularly check the course website on OWL and possibly their UWO accounts for important announcements such as additional information regarding class preparation, assignments, or class cancellations or changes.

Please allow a 24-hour turnaround for an email response – and please do not expect quick responses over the weekend.

Any email correspondence should have MIT 2154 in the subject headline. **Use the OWL website and your UWO email account ONLY. No messages from hotmail or Gmail accounts please.**

E-mails to the instructor, however, are best reserved for short questions that require a brief response. E-mail is often not a useful pedagogical tool for explaining course concepts or providing detailed advice on assignments. These issues are best handled with a face-to-face discussion, so please see me during my office hours or at some other time that is convenient for both of us.

I cannot give out or discuss grades via e-mail.

Please respect your fellow students:



Cellphones should be turned off during class.

Checking your phone and/or texting can be disrupting to others around you.

Laptops should be used ONLY for taking notes, writing stories, or other purposes related to the class – not checking email or browsing the Web (unless requested by the instructor for specific journalistic reasons).

I reserve the right to disallow them should they interfere with the class.

With all that said, I am here to help you achieve your potential in this class. Mass media and journalism are a vital part of our everyday life; knowledge of the role of journalism and how it is produced helps us to evaluate the information we receive and use it to our best advantage.

Please also read the *Notes from the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Information and Media Studies* that I have placed on the OWL site for this class.

Welcome to the course and let's work together to make it productive and enjoyable.

Land Acknowledgement

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local

First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments

	Topic	Suggested Readings in The Canadian Reporter
Week One		
Jan. 7	Mass Media/What is News	Chapters 1, 2
Week Two		
Jan. 14	Writing for a Mass Audience Writing Leads	Chapter 9
Week Three		
Jan. 21	Gathering Information Story Ideas	Chapters 3, 4
Week Four		
Jan. 28	Covering Events/CP Style Assignment 1 in class, Submit story via OWL	Appendix A – Language Chapter 12
Week Five		
Feb. 4	Interviewing More news writing practice	Chapter 7
Week Six		
Feb. 11	Features/Profiles Writing for the Web and Social Media	Chapters 6, 11
Feb.17 -Feb 23	Reading Week - no classes	

Week Seven

Feb. 25 Features/Profiles Continued Chapter 8, Chapter 10
Introduction to Group Reporting (Profile section)
**Assignment Two due via OWL on
Feb. 26**

Week Eight

March 3 Basic Editing/ Headlines
Working on group reporting in class

Week Nine

March 10 Working on group reporting in class
**Group reporting assignment due this week
Profile Proposal due March 14**

Week Ten

March 17 Other kinds of journalism – opinion, columns,
longer features, beat reporting

Week Eleven

March 24 Specialized reporting, freelancing, Chapter 19, Chapter 13
Other journalistic skills

Week Twelve

March 31 Ethics and Legalities
Workshopping Profile

Assignment Three (Profile) due March April 1

Week Thirteen

April 7 Future of Journalism
Wrap up/ Profiles returned
