206-01 Writing for the Media

Wendy Maxian

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Writing for the Media  
COMM 206-01  
Fall 2014

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Email: maxianw@xavier.edu  
Office: Schott Hall 310  
Office Hours: Mondays, 2 to 4 p.m. at GSC Coffee Emporium  
Wednesdays, 2 to 4 p.m. in my office  
Also by appointment. Walk-ins are always welcome.  
Phone Number: 745-3126  
Classtime: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
Classroom: McDonald Library, room 134

Community Partner and Client: Freestore Foodbank's COOKS! Program

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Introductory level course on writing for the media, including public media and controlled media, in print, broadcast or online form. Develops skills in journalistic, news-style writing and feature writing, as well as other style used in advertising, news and public relations. Workshop/laboratory setting with deadline writing experience. Prerequisite: ENGL 101 or ENGL 115.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Throughout this class you will be developing:

a) Basic reporting and storytelling skills, such as interviewing and story development  
b) Research skills  
c) The ability to create original media content and narratives  
d) An understanding of how media content can help achieve an organization’s goals  
e) Editing and grammatical skills.

At the conclusion of this class, you should be able to recognize and utilize:

f) AP Style  
g) Basic writing techniques and standards associated with different media  
h) Client needs or goals and to create original media content to help achieve those goals  
i) Write concise and engaging media content for a variety of media formats
REQUIRED BOOKS


BASIC COURSE RULES
1. Attendance is expected. Please see the Grading section.
2. Deadlines are an important part of the mediawriting world. If you miss a deadline for an assignment, you should expect your grade to be heavily penalized.
3. Email will be the primary way to communicate with the instructor outside of class. Your instructor will occasionally send email to your Xavier email account, so be sure to check it regularly. Similarly the instructor will check her Xavier email account several times a day. She will make every effort to respond to your email in a timely fashion.
4. Students should check their Xavier email and Canvas accounts regularly. The instructor will occasionally send information relevant to class via email and post it in Canvas.
5. Plagiarism, cheating, or academic misconduct in any form will not be tolerated and will be subject to university policies and procedures.

INTELLECTUAL RIGOR
This class is designed to get you thinking about and engaging with writing. It is not designed for you to skate through with minimal effort. You will be required to think critically about abstract topics and to apply those thoughts to your work. This will require time and mental exertion. All class members are expected to participate in the creation of a classroom environment that encourages thinking, discussing, and practicing at a collegiate level. To that end, intellectual loafing will not be tolerated. Whether working by yourself or in groups, you will be expected to work. Any discussions should be productive and any assignments should be completed. Consistent loafing, mooching, or disrupting will not be tolerated and will be reflected in a lower participation and in-class assignment grades.

SERVICE-LEARNING COMPONENT
This course is designed to include a community partner, the COOKS! Program. Throughout the semester, students will work with the organization and its clients to create original media content. Working with the community partner is not happenstance, but is integral to the design of the class. Students will apply what they’ve learned in relation to the community partner’s needs and interests. Students will produce several writing pieces, which can be used by the organization in future publications and by the students in their portfolios.

PLAGIARISM
As future mediawriters, your currency and identity will be your ability to develop original ideas and create original writing. Although plagiarism is always unacceptable, it is particularly problematic for mediawriters. It is stealing another’s ideas and lying about it by passing those ideas off as your own. It is unethical and lazy. As such, the following penalties will be enforced for this class.
Students should take particular care to avoid plagiarism on written assignments. For the purposes of this class, plagiarism will be considered as **2 or more consecutive words taken from another's written or spoken work and presented as one's own without citation of the original work or attribution to the original author.** The first instance of plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, will result in a grade of zero for that assignment. A second instance of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the class.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**
This schedule has some items listed as TBD. A finalized schedule will be established within the first few weeks of class. After that, any major changes will be announced in class and via email. It will be assumed that you have read the chapter **prior to** the week in which it will be discussed. Readings that are not by textbook authors are on Canvas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Mechanics Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 25</td>
<td>Intro &amp; Client Presentation Researching</td>
<td>WwW: pp. 406-inside back cover</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 1</td>
<td>Interviewing, part 1 Visit COOKS! Program</td>
<td>Kramer &amp; Call: pp. 172-177 Missouri Group: Ch. 4*</td>
<td>WwW: Ch. 2 and 10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 8 (Tues. only)</td>
<td>Interviewing, part 2</td>
<td>Kramer &amp; Call: pp. 20-28, 66-74,145-154</td>
<td>Research Brief, DUE 9/12</td>
<td>WwW: Ch. 3 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 15</td>
<td>Narrative basics and writing about people Mediawriting style and content creation</td>
<td>WwW: Ch. 11, 12 and 13 Kramer &amp; Call: pp. 109-112, 239-243</td>
<td>WwW: Ch. 8 and 12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 22</td>
<td>AP Style</td>
<td>Peruse AP Stylebook</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>AP Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 29</td>
<td>Proper quotation</td>
<td>Yopp &amp; McAdams: pp. 204-213* Kramer &amp; Call: pp. 104-109, 189-193</td>
<td>Client Interview, no later than 9/28 AP Style Quiz, 10/2</td>
<td>WwW: Ch. 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 6 (Tues. only)</td>
<td>Leads</td>
<td>WwW: Ch. 14</td>
<td>Quote List, DUE 10/7</td>
<td>WwW: Ch. 6 and 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 20</td>
<td>Organization Workshop</td>
<td>Missouri Group: pp. 241-258*</td>
<td>Story tree, DUE 10/21 Feature Story, DUE 10/24^^^</td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 27</td>
<td>Sidebars*** Workshop</td>
<td>Bender, et al., pp. 414-416</td>
<td>Sidebars, DUE 10/31^^^</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 3</td>
<td>Fliers*** Workshop</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Fliers, DUE 11/7^^^</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Nov. 10  
Newsletter***  
Workshop  
Newsome & Haynes, pp. 264-273  
Newsletter, DUE 11/14^^^  
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Nov. 17  
Visual communication  
Photo vs. video  
TBD  
Photo list, DUE 11/21^^^  
--

Nov. 24  
(Tues. only)  
Script basics  
WwW, Ch. 15  
Missouri Group, pp. 278-283^  
--

NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break, Thurs., Nov. 27

Dec. 1  
Promotional script***  
--

Dec. 8  
Follow-up visit  
Testimonials  
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FINAL EXAM—Tues., Dec. 16 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.  
Testimonial DUE, Portfolio Creation, Reflection

COURSE SCHEDULE KEY

+ = PDF in Canvas
*** = peer reviewed piece
^^^ = client project assignment. All assignments DUE Friday no later than 5 p.m.
Unmarked items in the “Assignments” column are considered in-class assignments.

GRADING

This class has several components on which you will be graded. Grade percentages, stipulations and general descriptions for each follow. A detailed description of each assignment and the final exam will be given when each is assigned.

😊 Attendance
Your attendance in this class is expected; however, it will not be directly graded. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class for record keeping purposes. Please note that if you are not in class, you are responsible for the information that you miss. Attendance will indirectly impact your grade through in-class assignments, mechanics practice and the client project.

😊 Mechanics Practice (20%)
Writing mechanics are critical to mediawriting. Being able to use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar are mandatory. As such, you will be required to practice these mechanics. Practice will occur largely on your own. All practice worksheets will be provided in Canvas and will due the Thursday of each week a topic is listed. In class, we will go over the basics of the mechanics topic, but you should read assigned chapters on your own before completing the worksheets. Assignments can be completed by submitting a handwritten worksheet or a typed, clearly labeled paper.

😊 Prep, Practice and In-Class Assignments (25%)
Throughout the semester you will be required to complete assignments related to different class topics. These assignments will be designed to help you apply concepts discussed in class. Assignments will either be due or assigned during class. Assignments may be individual or group-based. They may also be objective or involve writing. Some
assignments may be graded for completion, while others will be given a numeric grade. Clear deadlines and instructions will be provided with each assignment.

😊 Client Project (35%)
This semester, we are partnering with the local Habitat for Humanity affiliate. Throughout the semester you will learn about the organization so that you can create excellent and original media content for them. You will be placed in a group for organizational purposes only. You will complete all assignments on your own. There will be no group assignments or grades. Some of the assignments will be considered in-class assignments and some will count toward this project. See the Course Schedule to determine which assignments will count under each heading.

😊 Peer Reviews (10%)
For each of the major, client-related writing assignments, you will be required to proofread and constructively critique a classmate’s draft. You will provide a copy of your written feedback to the instructor and your classmate. Grading will be based upon completion and depth of the critique. If you complete a thoughtful critique, you will be given full credit.

😊 Final Exam (10%)
The final exam will require you to assemble a writing portfolio and reflect upon your service-learning experience. Directions will be provided at a later date.

These assignments may be graded for completion, while others will be given a numeric grade. Clear deadlines and instructions will be provided with each assignment.

There will be no set distribution of grades in this class. You will be graded on how you perform. Other class members’ scores will have no influence over your scores. Your final grade will simply be the percentage of points you accumulate put into the following scale. Finally, there will be no rounding of grades in this class. Your final average will determine your grade. A 93.87% will be an A-, not an A. The grade requirements have been established and adjusting them arbitrarily is unfair to all students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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</table>
CLASSROOM DECORUM
To create a relaxed and open intellectual classroom filled with critical thought and lively discussion, everyone must feel comfortable and able to contribute. As such, the following rules must guide every class.

1) **Be critical of ideas, not people.** You can challenge a person’s ideas, but cannot attack the person.
2) **Common courtesy is required.** Listen attentively and quietly to everyone’s ideas even if you do not agree. Every class member has the right to fully express his or her ideas.
3) **Be respectful of other class members.** We are all adults. As such, we should behave in a civil manner. Any form of verbal or non-verbal disrespect will not be tolerated. Examples include, but are not limited to, mocking, name calling, eye rolling, using obscenities, and gesturing. Demeaning other class members is absolutely unacceptable.
4) **Other students’ learning may not be disrupted.** The point of attending class is to learn about the topic at hand. When you disrupt your classmates’ learning, you are rude. Talking to other classmates, texting your friends, checking your Facebook page or going online, and reading or working on material for other classes is unacceptable. If you do not want to be a part of class, please do not attend.

The first time you do not follow any of these rules during a class, you will be called out. Should you opt to continue disregarding these rules during a class, you will be asked to leave. Constant disruption of multiple classes will have a negative impact on your grade.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION
- Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements.

- **The disclaimer:** This syllabus is designed to be a general outline for this course. Events that transpire during the semester may require the instructor to change the syllabus. If changes are made, they will be done so as soon as possible and you will be notified in class. *It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes and be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc.*