

## Syllabus

### General Requirements, Testing and Grading

[INTRODUCTION](#) | [PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS](#) | [GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS](#) | [TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS](#)  
| [GRADING](#) | [TOP OF PAGE](#)

#### I. INTRODUCTION

This handout explains expectations of students in JOMC 753, “Newsriting & Reporting” The handout also describes the general types of assignments and tests and the criteria used to evaluate and grade your work.

JOMC 753 teaches students to gather and organize information and to write news articles on deadline according to acceptable professional standards. Students practice writing effective leads and various types of news stories. The course emphasizes respect for and correct use of the language, with particular stress on spelling and grammar, style consistency, accuracy and clear writing. Attention is also paid to bias, libel and ethical considerations. Students will use research and interviewing to produce stories.

The faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at UNC-Chapel Hill believes strongly that anyone interested in a career in any communications field must be able to write clear, tight copy with care and precision. The key words for any writing are full, fair and accurate.

[INTRODUCTION](#) | [PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS](#) | [GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS](#) | [TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS](#)  
| [GRADING](#) | [TOP OF PAGE](#)

#### II. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

JOMC 753 abides by standards the communications professions follow and expect of graduates of a professional school such as the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

**Writing ability** — Grammar and spelling; ability to tell a good story well; use of quotes, anecdotes and descriptive detail; use of active voice and strong verbs; ability to write leads that are inviting and that hit the point of the story; ability to write tightly and to organize information in logical, compelling sequence.

**Reporting ability** — Pursuit, digging, enterprise, diligence; ability and eagerness to see and pursue promising angles; ability to seek and obtain anecdotes, details and quotes that provide documentation and add liveliness to copy; ability to see the need for and to get both sides of the story; ability to cultivate good sources.

**Speed, productivity and efficiency**— Speed on deadline; speed and efficiency in completing non-deadline assignments; ability and willingness to manage more than one assignment at a time; ability and willingness to make frequent, substantive contributions to the content of the paper.

**Accuracy** — Skill with basic factual information such as names, addresses, dates and figures; ability to identify and make use of the best sources, whether they are documents, references or people.

**Work habits** — Punctuality, reliability, readiness to go beyond the minimum requirements of the job; interest in assuming and ability to assume more than minimum responsibility; ability and willingness to anticipate and fulfill the demands of an assignment without prompting; ability to deal even-handedly with peers and supervisors, to accept constructive criticism and to offer constructive suggestions; interest in all areas of the news operation; knowledge of community, regional, national and international events; regular and thorough reading of the newspaper.

**Judgment** — Commitment to fairness and balance; ability to recognize and assess possible adverse consequences of actions; knowledge of, respect for and observance of the news department's policies.

**Potential** — Likelihood that the reporter is a candidate for a more challenging reporting assignment or a supervisory position; evidence that he or she possesses the characteristics of leadership and supervisory ability expected of supervising editors.

The expectations of this newspaper are found in all other mass communications jobs. The work accomplished in "Newswriting & Reporting" will be the basis for students in subsequent courses in the School, whether they are skills or conceptual courses. At the end of the course, students will be better writers.

**NOTE:** Although students adhere to professional standards in this course, the news stories written for class should NOT be posted on the Internet or given to a potential employer as examples of your writing/reporting ability. The exercises are for class use only and sometimes will not represent real news events. In addition, you should not present material that has been substantially edited by a professor as your own work.

[INTRODUCTION](#) | [PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS](#) | [GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS](#) | [TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS](#)  
| [GRADING](#) | [TOP OF PAGE](#)

### III. GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### A. Course Materials

##### 1. Required Texts.

See the [Reading Assignments](#) section of the Sakai site.

##### 2. Recommended Texts.

The following texts are helpful for those who need more work on writing and grammar. They can be found at a bookstore or online retailers.

William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*

Kovach and Rosensteel, *The Elements of Journalism*

Jackson and Jamieson, *unSpun: Finding Facts in a World of Disinformation*

Clark, *Roy's Writing Tools*, a free audio version of Roy Peter Clark's book, *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*

**3. Reference Materials.** All classrooms have reference materials, such as dictionaries, almanacs, stylebooks, atlases, and telephone books. Many references can also be accessed online. Use these materials during class to double-check accuracy. You are also free to use materials in the School's Park Library during classtime as instructors allow. A Web site with names of local officials is available at <http://ibiblio.org/copyed/stafflink.html>.

#### B. Course Requirements

**1. News Reading.** Come to class every day prepared to share your thoughts and questions about the news judgment and writing structure of global, national, local and campus news stories -- including politics, business, sports, entertainment and other topics.

##### 2. Attendance.

1. If you miss a class, you are responsible for anything you missed.
2. Before asking me what you missed, ask a classmate.
3. If you must miss a class, I will be more able to help you the earlier you let me know.
4. If you miss a in-class quiz or in-class writing assignment, I will not let you take it at a later date unless you make arrangements in advance.

**3. Assignments and Deadlines.** All writing assignments must be turned in as a Word document by the deadline specified. Because this is a professional class, every effort is made to simulate realistic professional conditions. That means meeting deadlines.

You may miss deadline on two assignments IF YOU GET MY PERMISSION IN ADVANCE. Those deadlines can be missed by no more than a total of seven days.

If you miss deadline on more than two assignments, or by a total of more than seven days you will begin to lose points -- 10 points for each 24 hour delay.

**4. Outside Assignments.** During the course, you will gather and write news about events. Make arrangements now to accommodate these assignments

Nov. 4, 7-10 p.m. -- Election Night assignment

Nov. 17, 2014, 4-5 p.m. -- Nelson Benton Lecture: Gerard Baker, Editor-in-Chief, Wall Street Journal

Nov. 24, 2014, 7-10 p.m. -- Chapel Hill Town Council meeting

**5. Research.** Stories, whether news articles or persuasive pieces, need facts. You will be required to do research for your outside assignments as well as some inclass work as your instructor indicates. You can learn what's available to help you in your research by accessing the [JOMC 153 resources guide](#) provided by Librarian Stephanie Brown. To improve your research skills beyond the information in the textbook, Google has two self-paced online courses ([Power Searching and Advanced Power Searching](#)). Attributed to your sources— whether human or document—any information acquired in a face-to-face, online or email interview or through research.

**6. Honor Code.** The University's Honor Code is in effect in JOMC 753 as in all other courses. There are times when professional reporters work together on stories, however. Your instructor will explain and clarify under which particular, limited circumstances such cooperation will be appropriate and acceptable in the course. On all other assignments, you are expected to do your own work and abide by the Honor Code of the University. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://instrument.unc.edu/basicframe.html>. You should review it.

Plagiarism is an increasing problem on this and other college campuses. You are to cite your sources appropriately and according to the assignment. The Code of Student Conduct states that expulsion or suspension can result from "(a)cademic cheating, including (but not limited to) unauthorized copying, collaboration or use of notes or books on examinations, and plagiarism (defined as the intentional representation of another person's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own)." If you have questions about citations or usage on your work, ask your instructor.

### C. Format and Style of Writing Assignments

Submit you assignments as Word documents to the appropriate section on the Assignments section of Sakai. I will return the assignments to you via Sakai using Word's "track changes" feature.

Each assignment file should be saved as "lastnameYMMDD" format for the file name.

Each assignment should have your name and date at the top of it.

Failure to follow this format will result in a five-point deduction on your assignment.

[INTRODUCTION](#) | [PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS](#) | [GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS](#) | [TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS](#)  
| [GRADING](#) | [TOP OF PAGE](#)

## IV. TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS – THE COMPONENTS OF GRADES

### Minor Assignments - 30%

These 15 assignments will mostly be completed in class. Their goal is to prepare you for the major assignments. These assignments allow you to "fail fast, fail cheap." All of you will make mistakes on these assignments. Success will come to those who avoid making the same mistakes twice. See the "Assignments" and "Gradebook" section of Sakai for details and deadlines.

### Quizzes - 10%

Five quizzes will focus on:

- Grammar and word usage
- AP Style (2 quizzes)
- Legal and Ethical issues
- Numeracy

Details and dates are available on the "Calendar", "Tests & Quizzes" and "Assignments" sections of Sakai.

### Major Assignments - 60%

These three major assignments most closely mimic professional environments and build on your work on preceding minor assignments. They will be done mostly outside of class. They are the [FAQ](#) assignment, the [Live Speech](#) assignment and the [Final Event](#) assignment.

Details and deadlines for these major assignments are available in the "Calendar", "Assignments" and "Gradebook" sections of Sakai.

[INTRODUCTION](#) | [PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS](#) | [GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS](#) | [TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS](#)  
| [GRADING](#) | [TOP OF PAGE](#)

## V. GRADING

### A. Grading Policy

Instructors in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication maintain high standards and a fair but rigorous grading system. The following statement sets forth the School's grading standards, which are followed in evaluating work in all writing and reporting courses. Instructors consider each assignment as a professional editor would, applying the same professional guidelines and standards that any good editor would in accepting or rejecting stories.

News professionals must be able to report and write and produce newsworthy, accurate, fair, complete, interesting, readable and mechanically clean stories. Thus, grades reflect a student's performance as a reporter, as a writer and as one who uses the language correctly. In evaluating **writing**, the instructor considers the quality of the lead, use of language, economy of expression, readability, organization of material and transition, among other factors. In evaluating the **mechanical** dimension, the instructor considers spelling, grammar, punctuation, conformity to AP and UNC-CH style, proper use of copyediting symbols and similar factors. In evaluating **reporting**, the instructor considers news judgment in gathering and selecting information used in the story, accuracy, approach to the story, choice and use of appropriate sources, thoroughness, use of appropriate information-gathering methodologies and related factors.

### B. Grading Scale

Grading in JOMC 753 and in other writing and reporting courses in the School is conducted on a numerical scale. Each student begins each assignment with a raw score of 100. Points are added or subtracted according to the standards listed below. You may determine your approximate grade standing in the course by converting your numerical grades to letter grades on assignments according to this scale:

**H(onors) = 95–100%**

**P(assing) = 80–94%**

**L(ow) = 70–79%**

Using the definitions established by UNC-Chapel Hill, students who receive the following letter grades are considered to have reached the level of attainment defining that letter. Thus, letter grades received for reporting and writing courses may be interpreted this way:

**H = highest level of attainment / suitable for publication in a professional news source with minor edits**

**P = high level of attainment / acceptable work from an intern at a professional news organization**

**L = adequate level of attainment / but not yet appropriate for submission to a professional news source**

### C. Evaluation of Writing Assignments

Your instructor devotes a great deal of time and effort to evaluating papers. The instructor will return graded papers as soon as possible, often before assigning a new writing exercise. Review your papers immediately and thoroughly. It's an important

part of your learning. The instructor will turn papers around rapidly in the expectation that you will learn from your errors and avoid repeating them.

Grades are determined by plus and minus points on each assignment. Plus points are added when the work is above the ordinary, but not when the work is at an average level. In fact, it is not unusual to earn more than 100 on a paper. Superior papers containing few errors can achieve scores above 100. Minus points will be deducted for each error and from work that falls below the minimum level of acceptability.

Below is a grading guide to the two main areas the instructor will evaluate in your stories.

### 1. News judgement & organization:

- Leads: -20 (missing it altogether) to +5 (clever, brief and accurate)
- Story Organization: -10 to +10 for EACH ineffective organization or treatment of material, including but not limited to:
  - wordiness;
  - use of jargon or clichés;
  - inclusion of unnecessary, non-newsworthy or obvious information;
  - repetition;
  - redundancy;
  - inappropriate choice or use of quoted material;
  - incorrect word choice;
  - transition or introduction of material

- Legal & Ethical Issues:

-10 for a minor factual error, such as an inaccurate street address or the time element if the effect on the story is relatively insignificant

**-50 for a misspelled name of a person, business, agency or institution on first reference, a misquote or other major factual error. Writing the School of Journalism and Mass Communications would be a -50 because there is no "s" on the end of Communication.** For the FAQ assignment and earlier assignments, each major factual error will result in a deduction of 25 points, not 50, from a paper's total grade. This grace period will allow you to become familiar with standards of verification and accuracy expected of communications professionals. After the first competency exam, such errors will receive the 50-point deduction. This deduction is not an arbitrary punishment. Such errors go to the heart of credibility for you and your organization. Errors can also have serious legal ramifications, such as libel suits.

-10 for misspelling a person's name on second or later references (e.g., Brown on first reference, Brwon on second reference)

+ or - 20 for legal errors, such as libel, violation of legal right of privacy, copyright violation and others

### 2. Writing Style

-2 for each error or inconsistency in AP or JOMC style

-5 for each spelling error, and a typographical mistake (a typo) is considered a spelling error

-5 for each grammatical error, such as improper subject-verb agreement or noun-pronoun agreement, improper use of a word, or misplaced modifier

### AEJMC CORE VALUES

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Units requesting evaluation of a graduate program must also demonstrate how their master's graduates attain this additional core competency:

Contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

[INTRODUCTION](#) | [PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS](#) | [GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS](#) | [TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS](#)  
| [GRADING](#) | [TOP OF PAGE](#)

## Required Reading

 [Reading Assignments](#)