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JOUR 270.01: Reporting

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The University of Montana

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Journalism 270, Reporting



Fall Semester 2009 Sec. 1, Tue-Thu 11:10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Instructor: Carol Van Valkenburg Office: Don Anderson Hall 413

Hours: T-Th, 2-4 p.m. or arrange appointment

Phone: 243-4008 E-mail: carol.vanvalkenburg@umontana.edu

Purpose: The course is designed first to teach you basic reporting, writing and audio production skills, then to use that foundation to progress to more complex assignments.

Deadlines: Reporters are under constant pressure to produce high quality copy in a short time. A well-written news story is of no value if it is handed in too late to get into the newspaper.

Deadlines in this class will be strictly enforced. A story turned in after the deadline will result in an F for that assignment.

If you are unable to complete an assigned story on time because of an emergency, you must inform me in person or by telephone **BEFORE** the deadline.

Grades: On each written assignment, I'll be looking for: accuracy; clear, concise and compelling writing; logical organization; correct grammar; adherence to AP style, and sound news judgment. Expect frequent, but unannounced, current events quizzes.

Grades will be given for both writing assignments and current events quizzes. At the end of the portion of the semester in which you'll learn print journalism all grades will given a numerical value of between 0 (F) and 10 (A). All current events quizzes will count as one writing grade. The total numerical grade will be divided by the total number of assignments.

Texts: "Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism," by Tim Harrower
"Broadcast News & Writing Stylebook," 3rd edition, by Robert A. Papper

Online reading: I recommend reading at least one national newspaper online every day. You must also read *The Missoulian* and *The Kaimin*. Not all *Missoulian* stories are online, so get a subscription or read one in the library. Additional required reading each weekday is this site, which is from the Poynter Institute for Media Studies:

<http://poynter.org/column.asp?id=45>.

If you go to www.poynter.org it is the **Romenesko** column link.

For more information about AP style, with additions about UM style, see

<http://www.umt.edu/urelations/Style/default.htm>

You MUST have a university email address that you check regularly. There will be times when I send you late-breaking information, or will need to get in touch with you personally, and that is how I will do it.

Preparation of copy

1. All copy should carry a slug. This is a two-word description of your story, plus your name and the date, which appear in the upper left-hand corner of the story. It will look like this:

Bennett speech	(story description)
John Smith	(your name)
Sept. 6	(day story is due)

2. Four typed lines (12-point type) equals one inch of copy. Thus, if I assign you to write a 10-inch story, you know that means about 40 lines of 12-point type. That is about 400 words.

3. Always read your completed story to check for errors of fact, writing and typing. An uncorrected typing error is a spelling error. Spelling errors are inaccuracies. Double-check all factual information — names, spelling, titles, etc.

4. All copy must be typed and double-spaced.

5. Your first assignment is to write your own obituary and email it to me by Wednesday at noon. (Read Pages 92-93.) Here's what the top of mine would look like, using the guidelines above:

Van Valkenburg obit
Van Valkenburg
Sept. 2

University of Montana journalism Professor Carol Van Valkenburg drowned Wednesday after she tried to cross the Clark Fork River to reach a favorite fishing spot and lost her footing. (Make sure it adheres to AP style. See page 55 for basic style tips.)

Course Overview

How the class unfolds will depend in part on events on campus, how well you perform on assignments inside and outside of class. Here's a general outline of what we'll cover in the first half of the semester. Always talk to me if you're having trouble understanding something.

- What is news? Who decides? How? Why?
- Story ideas and resources
- A basic story (obituary, for example)
- Leads and nut graphs
- Story organization and good writing
- Mechanics of attribution and quotation
- Interviewing
- Listening and note-taking skills
- Speeches and news conferences
- Spot news
- Journalism ethics and legal issues
- Multicultural sensitivity
- In-depth Reporting: Issue stories and profiles
- Story telling and feature techniques

Successful Jour 270 students will be able to:

- Write accurate, clear, concise, and interesting stories
- Learn and follow print and broadcast writing rules and organization
- Demonstrate good news judgment
- Exhibit strong research and interviewing skills
- Understand and use various print and broadcast story formats
- Be proficient with audio recording equipment and editing software
- Show an understanding of legal and ethical issues facing reporters

Class outline, including reading assignments

Week 1

Class 1: What's news, news budgets; blogs

Reading: pp. 16-28

Identifying news for various audiences. Understanding the role of a reporter/who is a journalist? Are bloggers journalists?

Write your own obituary, paying attention to AP style, p. 55

Class 2: Discuss which stories you would choose from a news budget, why. Obit critiques.

Week 2

Class 3: How to write hard-news leads, organize stories

Reading: pp. 34-41

Discussion of inverted pyramid leads, emphasizing clear, concise writing and identifying important news elements while focusing on telling an interesting story. News leads lab.

Class 4: What comes next? How stories are organized

Reading: pp. 42-54

Week 3

Class 5: How to handle quotes and attribution

Reading: pp. 80-83

Class 6: Covering meetings, speeches, press conferences

Reading: pp. 94-105

Week 4

Class 7: How to find enterprise stories, interview sources

Reading: pp. 66-79

Class 8: Discussion of story ideas. Interview of classmates based on a set of questions provided.

Week 5

Class 9: How to interview

Class 10: Interviewing techniques, the necessity of multi-source stories.

Writing the feature story

Reading: pp. 112-121

Week 6

Class 11 & 12: Interview story critiques & rewrites

Week 7

Class 13: Writing news for online

Reading: pp. 154-163

Class 14: How do journalists recognize and include diverse viewpoints in stories?

Why does it matter?

When race becomes THE issue:

<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=58&aid=167579>

Class 15: Libel & ethics. Last day of the print section will be Oct. 20

Reading: pp. 136-151

You'll then learn how to write for broadcast, and record and edit radio news stories.

Same Work for Multiple Classes in J-School

You may not submit for this course any assignment that has previously or will be concurrently submitted for another class unless you receive prior approval from the professor for this course. To do so without permission will result in an "F" for the assignment and could result in an "F" for the course.

Plagiarism

The UM catalog defines plagiarism as the act of “representing another’s work as one’s own.” Those who plagiarize “may fail the course or be remanded to the University Court for possible suspension or expulsion.”

In journalism, you’re guilty of plagiarism if you hand in a story that was written in part by someone else (another student, your mother, the *Kaimin*, the *Missoulian*, a Web site, etc.) That includes writing a story **based on reporting not your own**. If you must use material from another published source, attribute it.

Still have questions? Then check out Chip Scanlan’s tips for avoiding plagiarism:
http://poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=9506#tips

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

This course is accessible to and usable by otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process.

For more information, visit the Disability Services website at www.umt.edu/dds