

Course Title

Beginning Journalism

Course Instructor

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Course Description

The intention of this English-elective course is not only to sharpen students' storytelling skills, but also to show them how to approach content legally and ethically. The class is open to freshmen through seniors and it meets 50 minutes daily. For many, this class serves as a training ground for student media.

Student Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to (adapted from [ACEJMC's 12 competencies](#)):

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Understand how to become independent thinkers and apply skills instead of just memorizing information
- Understand the importance of a multiperspective approach in addressing issues importance to students
- Understand the basics of design and its implementation
- Understand a wide variety of content coverage — including exploring different media for the work.

Course Calendar

Weeks 1 and 2

[Overview of the First Amendment](#)

A lesson on determining the five freedoms in the First Amendment.

[News Judgment](#)

A lesson on news judgment and the “Rule of Eight” news values to understand what makes a story newsworthy.

[Interviewing Basics](#)

This lesson begins with an introduction to interviewing including how to plan, conduct and conclude an interview, suitable for beginners who have no interviewing experience. In part two

of the lesson, students will play an icebreaker game that will help make them comfortable with asking questions, and they will critique each other's performances. In part three, the culminating lesson, students will use the 5W's and H as well as other question types to conduct their first interviews for profile stories about each other. After preliminary interviewing and research, or using a guided set of questions provided, students will develop their own questions and interview each other in depth. They will transcribe their interviews, conduct additional interviews for the same story and write a simple profile story to share with the class.

[Introduction To Personality Profiles](#)

A lesson to introduce profile basics including content, differing types and the final assignment of a 500-700 word profile

[Personality Profile: Finding A Theme And Gathering Information](#)

A lesson about what makes a good profile subject and how to gather information

[Start Strong. End Strong](#)

A lesson on how to construct strong leads and endings

Week 3

[What's In The Middle?](#)

A lesson on how to structure the middle of a feature story

[Sidebar. Your Honor?](#)

A lesson exposing students to different storytelling formats as supplemental or standalone coverage

Week 4

[News Writing Structure](#)

A multi-part lesson teaches a basic, effective structure for news writing, a modified inverted pyramid form of Lead-Quote-Transition-Quote (LQTQ)

[Writing for Social Media](#)

A lesson introducing students to techniques used in writing for social media, with a particular focus on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest

Week 5

[The Difference Between News and Opinion](#)

A lesson on determining the purpose of a piece of writing

[Organizing an Editorial](#)

A lesson on editorial structure and how to order its parts

Weeks 6-9

[Researching about court cases important to student journalists](#)

Students will research and report in groups on law cases pertaining to scholastic press rights

[SPLC Media Law Presentation: Libel law](#)

An overview of libel law and how it pertains to the student press

[SPLC Media Law Presentation: Copyright](#)

An overview of copyright law and how it pertains to the student press

[SPLC Media Law Presentation: Reporter's Privilege](#)

An overview of reporter's privilege

[Reading, Writing and Discussing the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

Understanding the often erroneous application of FERPA, also known as the Buckley Amendment, to scholastic journalism

[SPLC Media Law Presentation: Freedom of Information](#)

An overview of the importance of access to information and how to access it

[SPLC Media Law Presentation: Invasion of Privacy](#)

An overview of laws addressing invasion of privacy and their relation to journalism

[SPLC slideshow review](#)

These scenarios serve as review for some of the information in the slideshows: Press Freedoms, Libel, Copyright, Invasion of Privacy, Freedom of Information Act and Reporter's Privilege

[Just Because You Can, Doesn't Always Mean You Should](#)

A lesson on the differences between law and ethics

[Making TUFF Decisions](#)

An exploration in another way to analyze ethical scenarios using the TUFF formula

[When Journalists Must Navigate Ethical Situations](#)

A lesson on the application of ethical principles using real world scholastic journalism scenarios

[When Journalists Err Ethically](#)

Student research projects address an area of journalistic ethical misconduct

[Ethical guidelines and procedure statements: Creating the foundation](#)

In this lesson, students will analyze current policies and write guidelines and procedures. Students will then analyze the others' classwork and provide feedback. Students will be able to rewrite their contribution after the feedback is given. Students will also audit the publication's diversity.

[The Importance of Dissenting Voices](#)

John Stuart Mill forwarded the importance of the Free Exchange of Ideas in 1859. But how does this exchange of ideas matter today? Some may argue it's more important to understand in today's society of political correctness. Using examples from current events, such as protests at the University of Missouri, students will examine and discuss the impact of dissenting voices.

Week 10

[Comparing print and online journalism](#)

A lesson on common differences between print and online stories, coverage

[Chunking, Linking and Liking — Making online stories reader-friendly](#)

A lesson on three strategies to make online stories easier to read.

[Interactive alternative copy tools for the Web](#)

Students explore a variety of multimedia tools and experiment with one of them.

Week 11

[Principles of Design Basics](#)

A lesson about the basic principles used in arranging elements

[Principles of Design Analysis](#)

A lesson measuring design principles by quiz and hands-on application

[Design Basics for Double-page Spreads](#)

A lesson introducing common terminology for spread design as well as steps for placement to complete a basic layout

[Basic Newspaper Design](#)

A lesson based on basic design principles in creating a newspaper layout

Week 12

You Wouldn't Even Know It's Data

A lesson introducing the key components of an infographic to represent large amounts of data in a reader-friendly format

[Design Capstone Project](#)

A culminating project to combine what students learned into one design assignments

Week 13

[Coaching Writers](#)

An interactive lesson for students to pair and share their work while giving and receiving constructive feedback

[Fact Checking in the Digital Age](#)

A lesson on how to best navigate fact from fiction using online resources

[How the Pros Fact Check](#)

This lesson walks students through the fact checking process of professionals at the American Press Institute and Politifact. Then, students will apply this same process to their own fact-checking exercise.

[Truth and Social Media](#)

A lesson on evaluating truth in social media.

Week 14

[Days 2-6 from Video Basics: Shooting & Editing](#)

An introduction to basic video production skills

Week 15

[Capture the Moment](#)

In this lesson, students will learn about the importance of storytelling in journalistic photography. Using selected student photography, they will discuss the visual impact that can occur when photojournalists capture unique storytelling moments.

[Play By The \[Composition\] Rules](#)

In this lesson, students will learn basic composition techniques (rule of thirds, framing, leading lines, strong subject, angles, repetition, selective focus) as well as common composition errors. After that, students will work with partners to take a sample photo of each of the seven composition rules, and the class will discuss and critique photos together. Students will then write a short reflection about what they have learned during this lesson. They will also look at sample photo stories to determine how to tell an effective story through photography.

Week 16

[Publication Branding](#)

This lesson prompts students to examine the ways to use theme and publication branding as a marketing tool.

[Understanding Budgeting Concerns](#)

This lesson introduces students to the budgeting concerns that every media organization must consider, giving them a framework through which to understand what is necessary and optional for a publication as well as the pressures that advisers can feel when staffs do not understand monetary constraints