

News Writing Across the Media

Sample Syllabus

Course description and semester overview



Please keep online browsing or texting to a minimum. If you have urgent business to take care of, it's fine to step into the hallway to do what you need to do.

CREVANS@UVM.EDU
802-656-2060

OFFICE HOURS are by appointment. If you contact me to request a conference, I'll try to meet with you within a day of receiving the request.

Your TAs

Abby Parker
abby@uvmtv.org

Cory Dawson
cynic@uvm.edu

Welcome to your UVM newsroom

By Chris Evans

In this class, we'll focus on the activity of writing for mass media. While we will discuss some work in theory, you will spend most of your time reporting, writing, revising, posting and publishing your work.

Required Texts

Bring "Inside Reporting" to every class, and bring "The AP Stylebook" to class whenever the syllabus indicates.

1. **Inside Reporting**, 3rd edition (with online access), by Tim Harrower

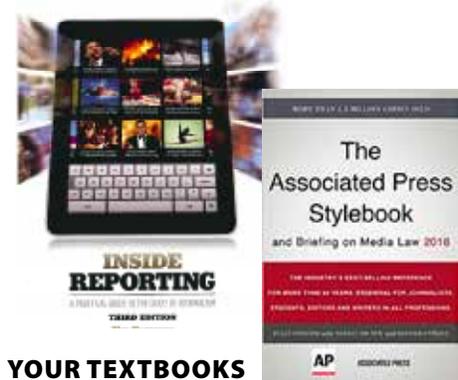
2. **The AP Stylebook**, either in book or electronic form, is available at www.apstylebook.com. If you opt for the print version, **order it early**. The UVM bookstore does not stock this book, so you **MUST** order it online or buy it locally in the first week of class in order to have it when you'll need it. Be sure to get the current edition.

Writing and revising

One of my early writing teachers was fond of saying, "There is no good writing, only good revising." In this course, you have the opportunity to revise your final three multimedia story packages, which together comprise nearly a third of your grade. With revisions, you can increase your score on these assignments by up to 20 percent apiece. While it's certainly possible to get an A in this course without revising, students who revise tend to score better than those who don't. Revisions are due with your finished portfolio at the end of the term.

Submissions to Blackboard.

All papers submitted to Blackboard must be in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx format). I will not attempt to read submissions that are submitted in any other format or those pasted in to the Blackboard interface.



YOUR TEXTBOOKS

Chapter and AP Homework, due Tuesdays

You'll receive a packet of 10 homework assignments dealing with assigned chapters and AP style. Unless otherwise noted, homework is due every Tuesday. You must *hand in a paper copy* for my TA, who will respond with notes intended to help you improve. If you're going to be absent on a Tuesday, deliver the paper version of the homework to my office before the class day and time or ask a classmate to bring it to class. Homework received after the beginning of class—as well as homework that is emailed, whether before or after the due date—will be subject to the penalties described in the "late work and attendance section" of the syllabus.

News Quizzes, given Thursdays

On Thursdays, you will take an in-class news quiz. The best way to learn to write news is to consume news, and these quizzes will encourage you to do that. Questions will deal with items that are prevalent in the media. You cannot make up a quiz, but you can drop your lowest news quiz score.

Plagiarism

If you cheat or plagiarize, you will receive a zero for the work. Depending on the severity of the infraction, you might fail the course.

SCORING POINTS

You will turn in work on Blackboard and your online Wordpress portfolio. In addition, you will submit to The Vermont Cynic and UVMtv three stories about a UVM organization with which you are not affiliated. If you publish a story in the paper version of The Cynic or show your video on UVMtv.org, you will receive extra credit.

YOUR STORIES (3 practice stories and 3 stories that you choose):

- Robbery (practice story) **15 points**
- Classmate profile (practice story) **15 points**
- SGA meeting (practice story) **20 points**
- Profile of a UVM organization leader **40 points**
- Coverage of a UVM organization meeting **40 points**
- Enterprise story about a UVM organization **80 points**

Weekly chapter/AP homework @ 10 points each **100 points**

Weekly news quizzes @ 5 points each (drop lowest score or missed quiz) **50 points**

Two TA conferences @ 20 points each **40 points**

Participation / attendance **50 points**

Wordpress portfolio: presented first in class then at end of term, with links, intro & revisions **50 points**

TOTAL: 500 POINTS

A = 100-90 percent / B = 89-80 / C = 79-70 / D = 69-60 / F = 59-0. / Except for A+, "plus" grades are 8s or 9s within the range; "minus" grades are 1s and 0s.

Late work, attendance and other policies

In the media world, a deadline is the difference between a piece of work being 100 percent usable and 0 percent usable. In this class, you must make deadline. If your work is anywhere from one minute to one week late, your grade will be automatically reduced by one-third. After one week, you will receive a zero.

Although I don't take attendance, we do a huge amount of writing, critiquing and discussing while in class—all of which factors into your participation score. You'll need this instruction and practice to do well.

I honor UVM's policy regarding absences for religious holidays, which states: "Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Each semester students should submit in writing to their instructors by the end of the second full week of classes their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester. Faculty must permit students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance to make up this work."

Likewise, students who experience sickness or injury that prevents them from coming to class for extended periods of time should ask the dean or enrollment management professional in their department to send me an email to this effect. I will consider such absences on a case-by-case basis.

In other cases, I am unlikely to allow work to be turned in late without penalty. If you are absent on a day that homework is due, you can send it with a classmate or drop it off in my mailbox in Student Life (3rd floor of the Davis Center) before the start of class. If you are absent on a day that a story is due, you can turn it in online. News quizzes can always be found online in the first four minutes of class.

"Will this story be in the paper?"

When a source asks you this question, the answer is: **"It might be."**

You will be required to work with an editor and submit all three of your originally reported stories to The Vermont Cynic for possible publication. This means that you need to get your facts and quotes right in all cases. It also means that you need to conduct your interviews "on the record," with your source's permission to publish what s/he says.

Some sources will ask if they can "approve" a story before it goes to press. Never agree to show any part of your story to a source before publication—because that source will try to control what you report. If you allow a source to censor you, then you're working for that source rather than the reader.

When writing news, you should always work for the reader. You should seek truth, and you should report it.

News Writing Across the Media / Sample Syllabus
 CLASS SCHEDULE AND DEADLINES
Changes to dates will be announced on Blackboard.

		Do this before coming to class:	Class discussion:
T	1/13		Intro / Local Poets Receive AP/chapter homework
R	1/15	Read the news Begin Chapter 3: Newswriting Basics	Practice news quiz Your new blog
<i>Before the next class: Spend an hour exploring Wordpress Click "Portfolios" link on UVMedia.net to see examples of student blogs</i>			
T	1/20		Revising "Local Poets" w/ 5 senses
R	1/22	Bring "AP Stylebook" to class, if you have it	The AP stylebook Take in-class news quiz (Repeats weekly)
T	1/27	Finish Chapter 3: Newswriting basics	Turn in chapter/AP HW (Repeats weekly) News judgment: Do you have it?
R	1/29		Leads, nut grafs, inverted pyramid In-class writing: <i>Robbery</i>
T	2/3	Read Chapter 9: Broadcast journalism Put five or more grafs of <i>Robbery</i> on blog <i>Bring headphones or earbuds to class</i>	<i>Robbery</i> continued Broadcast writing, video editing iMovie tutorial
R	2/5	Deadline to identify your organization Bring <i>Robbery</i> TV script to class	Broadcast camera presence
T	2/10	Read Chapter 4: Reporting basics Deadline to meet with Cory to edit print version of "Robbery."	Finding and interviewing sources Clip: "All the President's Men" Profile reporting practice, part 1 <i>Determine focus of practice profile and set up interview w/classmate in story-appropriate location <u>before</u> 2/17.</i>
R	2/12	PRACTICE STORY 1 DUE: ROBBERY 1. Upload it to Blackboard 2. Post it to your blog <i>Do not tweet this story. Do not submit it to the Cynic.</i>	Focused interview with classmate Video interview practice
T	2/17	Read Chapter 8: Digital journalism Post classmate profile story & video to blog for use in today's class only	Fact-check with your classmate
R	2/19	PRACTICE STORY 2 DUE: CLASSMATE Upload it to Blackboard 1. Upload it to Blackboard. 2. Post it to your blog.	SGA visit

3. Tweet the link as a “classroom assignment” with hashtag #uvmstudentmedia
4. Optional: Submit the story to Cory for consideration in the Cynic.

T	2/24	Read Chapter 5: Covering the news <u>Required meeting outside of class time:</u> 7 p.m. SGA meeting, Davis Center 4 th floor Deadline for chat with org leader → Make plan to report profile, meeting & enterprise stories	NO REGULAR CLASS SESSION
R	2/26		Bring SGA notes to class
	3-2 to 3-8	----- SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS -----	
T	3/10	Read Chapter 6: Beyond breaking news	Story idea generation
R	3/12	PRACTICE STORY 3 DUE: SGA 1. Upload it to Blackboard 2. Post it to your blog. 3. Tweet a headline and link to your blog with hashtag #uvmstudentmedia <i>Do not submit this story to the Cynic.</i>	Guess the grade: Rubrics
T	3/17	Read Chapter 7: Law and ethics Deadline to conduct video interview with org leader	Ethical challenges in the digital age Begin <i>Shattered Glass</i>
R	3/19		Finish <i>Shattered Glass</i>
T	3/24	Read Chapter 1: The story of journalism Deadline to interview two secondary sources—preferably one supportive, one critical—for org leader profile. These interviews do not need to be on camera.	
R	3/26	ORIGINAL STORY 1 DUE: LEADER PROFILE 1. Upload it to Blackboard 2. Post it to your blog 3. Tweet a headline and link to your blog with hashtag #uvmstudentmedia 4. Email story to cynic@uvm.edu for possible publication 5. Email video link to abby@uvm.org for possible inclusion on UVMtv news	
T	3/31	Read Chapter 2: How newsrooms work	<i>The Paper</i>
R	4/2	Deadline to attend meeting of organization	<i>The Paper</i>
T	4/7	<i>No reading. No chapter/AP homework.</i> <i>Work on meeting story</i>	Possible newsroom visit
R	4/9	ORIGINAL STORY 2 DUE: MEETING COVERAGE 1. Upload it to Blackboard 2. Post it to your blog 3. Tweet a headline and link to your blog with hashtag #uvmstudentmedia 4. Email story to cynic@uvm.edu for possible publication 5. Email video link to abby@uvm.org for possible inclusion on UVMtv news	
T	4/14	Read Chapter 10: Public relations	Watch Stephen Glass interview
R	4/16	Bring New Republic press release to class	
T	4/21	No class. Production day. Consider meeting with Cory and Abby for help.	

- R 4/23 **ORIGINAL STORY 3 DUE: ENTERPRISE**
1. Upload it to Blackboard
 2. Post it to your blog
 3. Tweet a headline and link to your blog with hashtag #uvmstudentmedia
 4. Email story to cynic@uvm.edu for possible publication
 5. Email video link to abby@uvmtv.org for possible inclusion on UVMtv news
- T 4/28 (Last day of classes) Portfolio presentations
Show best lede
Show enterprise video
- M 5/4 **DUE TO BB: Portfolio Link**
- Paste a link to your complete portfolio into the Blackboard assignment slot.
- Include all originally reported work: org leader profile, org meeting and org enterprise.
 - Include revisions to any of these stories with the word “REVISED” after the headline. A revision must appear immediately before or after the original version of the story being revised.
 - Write the word “PUBLISHED” after the headline if your story was published in the print version of the Cynic.
 - Write the word “POSTED” after the headline if your video was posted on the UVMtv website.
 - Make your first post on the page a 500- to 800-word meta-text as described in the assignment description on Blackboard.

SUBMITTING TO BLACKBOARD

All stories submitted to Blackboard MUST be submitted in Word format: .doc or .docx. I will not attempt to read documents submitted in any other format, and I will not attempt to read stories that are pasted into the Blackboard interface. One exception to this rule is the final portfolio at the end of the semester. For this assignment, all you need to do is paste in your portfolio link.

HEADINGS FOR PAPERS

Please use the following format for all work you submit (placed in the upper left corner):

Your Name
News Writing Across the Media
Date
Assignment Name / Draft #

- Page 2 and after should include your name, the name of the assignment and page number at the top of the page.
- All articles completed in or outside of class should have one-inch margins on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. The text should be double-spaced and typed in a standard 12-point font, such as Times New Roman, with paragraphs indented.

METHODOLOGY

The best way to learn writing is to write. Therefore, we will be doing a lot of writing in this course, both in the classroom and through outside assignments. Much of what we will do will imitate an actual newsroom, including a strict adherence to deadlines, writing under pressure, rewriting, editing of your own articles, constructive criticism, coaching and teamwork.

It is imperative that you come to class prepared. At the start of each class, you should have already read the daily newspaper, you must have read the day's assignment and you must have the textbook with you. Classes will be conducted in a lecture-discussion format, with emphasis on participation by students.

Your assignment must be turned in before class on the day it is due. At times, you will be required to bring a paper copy of the work to class, so check the syllabus.

RESPECT FOR THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

In the interest of preserving an effective learning environment, as free from as many disruptions as possible, all telephones and iPods, etc., should be turned off while in the classroom, and students should refrain from doing non-class-related browsing online. While vigorous debate of ideas is encouraged, students must show respect for one another, the professor and any guests who might visit. Excessive disruptions by any student will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom.