

SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY Madrid Campus
College of Arts and Sciences

CMM 2100 Journalism: News Writing

Prerequisite: English 190

12:30 -1:45 Tuesday and Thursday

3 Credits

Professor: Pamela Rolfe

Office hours: Tuesday 11:00-12:20, and by appointment

E-mail: prolje@slu.edu

Course Description

This is a hands-on course in news writing for undergraduate students who have had little or no previous coursework in journalism. We will concentrate on the skills that are the bedrock of good journalism: accuracy, fairness, objectivity, thoroughness and meeting deadlines. Using the city of Madrid as our workshop, we will focus on reporting and writing hard news and features. Emphasis is on writing for print and online media, but the basics learned in this class generally apply to all communication media.

READINGS

Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism, by Tim Harrower (Required)

The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (Required)

The International Herald Tribune (Strongly Recommended)

CLASS PREPARATION

This class presumes proficiency in writing fundamentals-- correct grammar, spelling, clarity of expression and organization. If you earned lower than a B in English 190, you should get tutoring at the Writing Lab. The Writing Center is located on the ground floor of Manresa Hall. You will also be expected to know current events found in local and/or international newspapers.

ATTENDANCE

You will do a lot of writing in class so attendance is critical. Classes are interconnected and absences will make it difficult to follow the course. **If you miss class, you are responsible for the information discussed and must obtain it from a classmate.** Absences will be excused with a doctor's note or other written documentation. More than two unexcused absences will affect your final grade. Each absence deducts points from your participation points. Arriving tardy for class regularly will affect your grade.

Journalism improves little by little. It's a mistake to think you can satisfactorily pull together projects in the last minute or through spurts of activity throughout the course.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Academic Dean's Office (San Ignacio Hall) or by going to <http://www.slu.edu/madrid/learning-resources>.

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also must notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course. Please contact Disability Services at disabilityservices-madrid@slu.edu or +915 54 58 58, ext. 230 for an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services. For more information about academic accommodations, see "Student Resources" on the SLU-Madrid webpage.

Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact Disability Services.

UNIVERSITY TITLE IX STATEMENT:

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX deputy coordinator, Marta Maruri, whose office is located on the ground floor of Padre Rubio Hall, Avenida del Valle, 28 (mmaruri@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 213) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX deputy coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the SLU-Madrid's Counseling Services on the third floor of San Ignacio Hall (counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 230) or Sinews Multipletherapy Institute, the off-campus provider of counseling services for SLU-Madrid

(www.sinews.es; 917-00-1979). To view SLU-Madrid's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address:
<http://www.slu.edu/Documents/Madrid/campus-life/SLUMadridSexualMisconductPolicy.pdf>.

POLICY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The following is a statement of minimum standards for student academic integrity at Saint Louis University.

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity, such as would be expected at a Jesuit, Catholic institution. As members of this community, students, faculty, and staff members share the responsibility to maintain this environment. Academic dishonesty violates it. Although not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, it can be said in general that soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of any work submitted toward academic credit is dishonest. It not only violates the mutual trust necessary between faculty and students but also undermines the validity of the University's evaluation of students and takes unfair advantage of fellow students. Further, it is the responsibility of any student who observes such dishonest conduct to call it to the attention of a faculty member or administrator.

Examples of academic dishonesty would be copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed-book exam, submitting materials authored by or editorially revised by another person but presented as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, tampering with another student's work, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in an act of academic dishonesty.

Where there is clear indication of such dishonesty, a faculty member or administrator has the responsibility to apply appropriate sanctions. Investigations of violations will be conducted in accord with standards and procedures of the school or college through which the course or research is offered. Recommendations of sanctions to be imposed will be made to the dean of the school or college in which the student is enrolled. Possible sanctions for a violation of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. The complete SLU Academic Honesty Policy can be found at the following link:

http://spain.slu.edu/academics/academic_advising/docs/Academic_integrity.pdf

GRADING POLICY

Plagiarism, the fabrication of quotes or any other form of cheating is unethical and forbidden and will result in an automatic F in this class. Professional journalists are not board-certified and only have their reputation to stand on. Any reporter caught plagiarizing or making up information would lose his or her job and never find work at a major publication again.

Deadlines in journalism are tight and unbending; they will be in this class also. **You are expected to turn your work in punctually. Missing a class is no excuse for missing a deadline and missing a deadline will result in a progressively lower grade until the story is turned in.**

In-class exercises cannot be made up.

GRADES

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Three original writing assignments worth 100 points each	300	
In-class and take home exercises worth 15 points each		120
Three quizzes worth 40 points each		120
Three contact lists worth 10 points each	30	
Final Exam	150	
Attendance and Participation in class discussion		100

TOTAL: 820 points

GRADING

Because this class is a practical class, I understand that you will not be instantly proficient in journalistic writing. Grading will be more lenient on early assignments. By the middle of the term, you will be held to **strict AP style, grammar and spelling**. I expect you learn by doing. I will allow you to rewrite some of the original writing assignments. I will **ONLY** accept the rewritten exercise at the beginning of the next class after the original effort was returned. However, your grade will only improve a **MAXIMUM** of one letter grade.

EXTRA CREDIT

There will be opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester. Publishing a story during the term—*not on a blog*-- will add two points to your final grade.

FORMAT FOR STORY ASSIGNMENTS

1. Assignments should be written in Word for Windows, double spaced, using the Times New Roman, 12 point font. You are expected to turn your work in punctually. Submit paper copies of all take-home assignments. **Unless you are instructed otherwise, I will not accept e-mailed assignments.**
2. Include the word count at the bottom of the each story.
3. Spell-check (and check punctuation) before turning in.

4. Writing proficiency counts in this class. Basic grammar, spelling and punctuation are to be correct on all assignments. I will take off points for misspelled names or factual errors.
5. Stories should be written in AP Style
6. You must hand in a complete source list with each story.
7. Do not wait until class time to print out your story. Computer crashes, printer problems or unavailable computer labs are no excuse for missing a deadline. I expect you to hand in copy at the beginning of class.

Week by Week Class Schedule:

*This is a general guideline for the course. **You can count on changes.***

- WEEK 1 Sept. 5 & 7
 Course Overview- Becoming a trained observer and thinking like a journalist.
 What is news? Conceive, Collect and Constructing news stories. The 5 Ws.
 Due: Harrower Chapter 1, please write a short summary (one line each) of the 10 things you found the most interesting in the chapter for class on Thursday.
- WEEK 2 Sept. 12 & 14
 TUESDAY—Guest Speaker David Hoffman, Pulitzer Prize Winning Author and Journalist
 Due: Harrower Chapter 2, please write a short summary of the 10 things you found the most interesting in the chapter for the next class.
In-Class Exercise
- WEEK 3 Sept. 19 & 21
 vs. The most important paragraph: the lead (hard news features).
 Due: Harrower Chapters 3 and 4, please write a short summary of the 10 things you found the most interesting in the reading
In-Class Exercise
- WEEK 4 Sept. 26 & 28
 Objectivity: Fact Finding and Detachment
 Due: Read the introduction “Objectivity” of David Mindich’s *Just the Facts: How Objectivity Came to Define American Journalism*
 the **Sept. 26** Please come to class prepared to discuss the chapter.
 Sept. 28 In-Class Exercise
- WEEK 5 Oct. 3 & 5:

Structuring hard news: the inverted pyramid, delayed attribution, nut graff

Oct. 3 Quiz #1

Oct. 5 In-Class Exercise

Read: AP Stylebook: Punctuation Guide (pg. 322-333)

WEEK 6 Oct. 10

Keep the reader interested: clear, vivid language. Associated Press Style

Read: AP Stylebook: A - G

Observation **In-Class Exercise Part 1 and Part 2.**

DUE OCT. 10: Take-home campus newspaper story and Contact List

WEEK 7 Oct. 17 & 19

Hard News: creating images for readers and bias-free language. Writing about international issues for a distant audience

Oct. 19 In-Class International Story

WEEK 8 Oct. 24 & 26

Where's the meat? How to find the news through the spin. (speeches and press conferences)

In-Class Exercise

Due: Harrower Chapter 5 and 10 Things

Oct. 24 Quiz # 2

WEEK 9 Oct. 31 & Nov. 2

Reaction Stories: recording the mood of a society.

WEEK 10 Nov. 7

Meet at Moncloa Metro Stop at 12:30 on Nov. 7

DUE NOV. 14 Take-home reaction story and Contact List

WEEK 11 Nov. 14 & 16

Feature writing: using anecdotes, giving detail, bringing the issues home.

Due: Harrower Chapter 6

WEEK 12 Nov. 21 & 23
Press Releases
Nov. 21 Quiz #3

WEEK 13 Nov. 28 & 30
Interview preparation and techniques.
Features Focus

In-Class Exercise

WEEK 14 Dec. 5 & 7
Media ethics and professional conduct.
Harrower Chapter 7 & 8
In-Class Exercise

DUE DEC. 7: Take-home feature story and Contact List

WEEK 15
Dec. 12: Wrapping it up

LAST DAY OF CLASS: December 12

IMPORTANT DATES:

Sept. 17. Last day to drop without receiving the grade of W

Oct. 30. Last day to drop and receive a grade of W

Nov. 2. Pre-registration for Spring 2015

Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec. 20 12:00-15:00

OUT OF CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:

Stories must fall within the word limit.

CONTACT LIST

The contact list is a complete identification of each of your sources used in the piece. You must state their full name, profession, age, and phone number, address and/or e-mail. This is an important source for you to evaluate how complete your information is and it is a tool for me to verify that your sources exist. The more complete the information, the better your score.

CAMPUS NEWSPAPER STORY (300 words and 150 words)

Most beginning reporters are sent to cover speeches or meetings.

Pretend you are a reporter for your campus newspaper and write a story that could run in the SLU newspaper. You can cover a speech, outing, special visitor, event at a local bar popular with students, opening of a new restaurant that students patron, or anything you think would

appeal to your readers. Your story should run to about 300 words. The remaining space is used to explain why you think this is news. You should state:

1. Who is your intended audience?
2. What questions they might have?
3. How you answer the questions?
4. What type of related story could accompany the piece?

REACTION STORY (700-800 words)

Journalists foster public debate on controversial topics by publishing ordinary people's opinions of government actions. They also record the mood of a society after a crisis. Choose a controversial topic or dramatic event in the news. We will go to the Moncloa Metro station for this assignment, but you can additionally go to a busy area like the Puerta del Sol, a metro or bus stop, a shopping mall, or even a tapas bar. You will need to ask at least five people about their reaction to your topic. Your subjects should differ in age, sex and background. In your story, include occupations, ages and any MEANINGFUL gestures your subjects make while speaking. You should also clearly explain the issue itself early in the story and actively seek out a range of opinions (this isn't a random survey; it is your job to frame the debate). Brief transitions should lead the reader from one point of view to another.

FEATURE STORY (1,000-1,200 words)

Choose a feature of Spanish life that you find intriguing (meal times, store hours/siesta, holiday celebrations, immigration, bullfighting, etc.) and choose an angle that you think would be interesting to U.S. readers. Quote **at least six people** (on site and experts) about how these things have changed over time and what is their present significance. Where appropriate ask them what it means to them and its importance in Spain. You must supply background research to flesh out the story.