

# COMM 205 – 20W Reporting Fundamentals I: Writing & Interviewing

Fall 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30-9:45 a.m.  
School of Communication Room 003

Professor Lee Hood, Ph.D.

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“To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful. It is as simple as that.” Edward R. Murrow

## ◆ Course Goals and Objectives

This course is designed to teach you the fundamentals of journalistic-style reporting and writing, incorporating processes of newsgathering, sourcing, interviewing, language precision and working on deadline. These skills are applicable across multiple journalism platforms, as well as in fields such as public relations. It is a fact-based discipline that does not leave room for your personal opinion. As a writing-intensive course, you can expect many writing assignments throughout the semester. Most of these will be fairly short (up to ~400 words). This is the first in a two-course journalism sequence, so you should take this class *before* Comm 208 Reporting Fundamentals II.

An informed public depends on journalists who are up to date on issues and events, both locally and around the world. Therefore, you will be expected to keep up with the news. Read newspapers and credible online news sources. Watch TV news and follow local, national, and international news events. Listen to news on radio and/or podcasts. We'll discuss contemporary issues in news, to enhance your critical reflection about professional practices in journalism and related fields.

Covering news inevitably raises issues of ethics and diversity. We will assess the ethical implications of story selection and framing, word choices, "expert" opinions, fairness and balance. Your work also will be evaluated for sensitivity to issues of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other cultural issues on which news coverage often can improve. This year the School of Communication has adopted a social justice theme on the topic of **mental health**. Stories on this topic will be particularly valued.

## ◆ Text

(required) Writing & Reporting for the Media (11th edition) by John R. Bender et al., 2016, Oxford University Press.

\*\*\*Also, Style Guide for News Writers & Editors (accompanies textbook)

## ◆ Class Organization

There will be several outside writing assignments, as well as regular in-class writing. Class periods will include a combination of instruction, discussion, and practicing what you have learned. Expect **regular quizzes** on assigned readings, style, and word usage (grammar, spelling, etc.). These will be given at the beginning of class, so it is important to arrive on time. Quizzes cannot be made up, but at the end of the semester your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

There will be a **mid-term exam** on style, word usage, and the content that has been covered up to that point in the semester. This exam will include take-home and in-class portions. In lieu of a **final exam** will be a final project designed to highlight what you have learned throughout the course.

## ◆ Grading

### Grades will be weighted as follows:

Outside writing assignments	35%
In-class writing, quizzes, attendance+	15%
Smaller assignments, news reading log	15%
Mid-Term Exam	15%
Final project	20%

**Grade scale:** Assignments will be graded on a point system. At the end of the semester, the cumulative points will be converted into a letter grade based on the following scale: A 94-100%; A- 90-93%; B+ 87-89%; B 84-86%; B- 80-83%; C+ 77-79%; C 74-76%; C- 70-73%; D+ 67-69%; D 64-66%

- Loyola does not recognize a grade of D-, so a grade below 64% is failing.
- There may be opportunities for extra credit in some categories, but the total you can earn in each category is capped at 100% of the total points for that category.

**Assignments:** Assignment instructions will be distributed in hard copy and available electronically on Sakai. Assignment will be designated by category: OWR (outside writing); IC (in-class writing); SA (smaller assignments). Be sure to read the instructions carefully and ask for clarification as necessary, to complete assignments as instructed.

**News Reading Log:** To encourage your engagement with news and professional journalistic writing, you will have an ongoing assignment throughout the semester to read at least five news stories a week and to keep a log of the stories and sources. Additional instructions will be distributed separately.

### Other writing and grade considerations:

- **Story Subjects:** For objectivity and in keeping with standard professional practice, **avoid** doing stories using your own family members, significant others, close friends or roommates as subjects. The best rule of thumb is: Don't build stories around people you are related to or are particularly close to. Likewise, **avoid** doing stories about groups you belong to. Such stories will receive a grade reduction, unless: 1) it is a unique circumstance, 2) the story is *about* your connection to the story subject, *and* 3) the connection is revealed in the story.

- Fact error deduction: Facts are vitally important in journalism, so fact errors will receive an automatic deduction. Take care to spell names correctly and ensure other facts are accurately presented. In the words of the late President Lyndon Johnson, “In the arsenal of truth, there is no greater weapon than fact.”
- Deadlines: Meeting deadlines is vital in journalism, as in many professions. Assignments not turned in on time will receive an automatic reduction in grade, the equivalent of one letter grade (10%) for every day they are late.

### **Attendance+Punctuality/Professionalism**

- You are expected to attend every class, and absences will impact your ability to get the most out of the course. If you have a genuine emergency, please notify me *prior* to class if possible. Assignments missed for unexcused absences may not be made up.
- Because timeliness is an important attribute in communication, as in many professions, timely arrival to class is part of your attendance grade. In addition, points may be deducted for excessive disruption or obvious disengagement from class sessions (such as texting and web surfing).
- At Loyola, we respect that you may miss class due to religious observances. In these circumstances, please notify me ahead of time that you will be gone.

## **◆ Other Expectations and Resources**

### **Academic Integrity**

Loyola University and the School of Communication expect academic integrity and have policies regarding academic dishonesty. Specifically for the SOC:

1. Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Plagiarism in your work will result in a minimum of a failing grade for that assignment. The case may carry further sanctions from the School of Communication or the University, the most serious being permanent expulsion. Avoid turning in work that could be interpreted as plagiarism or academically dishonest (e.g., failing to properly credit a source or using someone else’s words or ideas without clarifying that they are not yours). In an academic community, being uninformed or naïve is not an acceptable excuse.

### **2. It is dishonest to:**

- Turn in the same work for two classes;
- Turn in a paper or other assignment you have not done yourself;
- Copy from another student or use a “cheat sheet” during an exam.

*\*\*\*Specifically for this course: Do not copy the wording from another news source or website. **Always** rewrite.*

*Turning in work that is not your own and representing it as yours will result in failure on the assignment and possible dismissal from the class. You can find the university’s full policy at [www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml).*

### **Writing Help**

Because this is a writing-intensive course, you may find you need additional assistance. If your difficulties are with basic English and sentence construction, the Writing Center will be a good resource (see [www.luc.edu/writing/](http://www.luc.edu/writing/)). However, because journalism is a distinctive type of writing, your issues may be beyond the center's capabilities. If you need help with *journalistic-style* writing, come see me.

### **Other Special Needs**

If you have a special circumstance that may impact your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so arrangements can be made with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). We will accommodate your needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes (such as the demands of working on tight deadlines). Loyola's policy is that it is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates. Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SSWD website: [www.luc.edu/sswd/index.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/sswd/index.shtml).

### **Classroom Conduct**

Electronic devices are increasingly ubiquitous, and are often quite distracting. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices before class begins. If you use a laptop computer to take notes in class, you will be required to send Professor Hood a copy of the notes at the end of class. Do not use your computer for any activity not directly related to the class. The Internet and social media are tremendous resources, but the convenience of using your computer (or cell phone) in class may be revoked if you abuse the privilege.

### **◆ Electronic Communication & Information**

**Sakai:** Course information and assignments will be available on Sakai. Please notify me if you have any problems using the class Sakai site.

**Email:** I will answer email within 24 hours on weekdays but will not always access it on weekends. You may not receive a response to a late Friday email until Monday.

### ◆ **About your professor**

This is my ninth year at Loyola, after several years teaching at the University of Colorado. I began my journalism career at age 16, as a staff writer for my hometown newspaper. After working in newspapers for several years, I branched into radio news and eventually television. I spent 18 years in television news, most of it as a newscast producer, though I also have experience in reporting and anchoring (both news and sports), photography and editing. I spent most of my news career in a Top 20 market (Denver), with earlier experience in Huntsville, Alabama and Columbia, Missouri. My newscasts earned regional Emmys and other awards. I hold a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Colorado. My research interests include several aspects of local news: reporters' use of social media, the audience relationship to news, as well as corporate and consolidation influences and news outsourcing. I have a master's degree from the University of Colorado and a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri. I am a member of the Chicago regional board of directors for the National Television Academy.

## Reporting Fundamentals I

Fall 2017 Schedule\*

*Note: Reading assignments are to be completed before the start of class on the assigned day.*

*Also note: Additional assignment due dates will be added throughout the semester.*

Wk 1 **Aug. 29** General introduction: journalism basics; what is news and what makes a story newsworthy? Where do you get news? (Survey)

**Aug. 31** In-class writing: Classmate interview and short story

*Read:* Bender Preface, Ch. 1 Journalism Today, Ch. 2 Selecting and Reporting News

Wk 2 **Sept. 5** The Importance of Leads

*Read:* Bender Ch. 7 Basic News Leads

**Sept. 7** Leads vs. headlines and how to do both well

Wk 3 **Sept. 12** To be or not to be: clear writing; grammar for journalists;

*Read:* Bender Ch. 4 The Language of News, Appendix B (possessives)

**Sept. 14** Associated Press style

*Read:* Bender Ch. 3 Newswriting Style

Wk 4 **Sept. 19** Story Structure; Getting to the point: the “First Five Graphs” principle

*Read:* Bender Ch. 9 The Body of a News Story

**Sept. 21** Story Structure continued

Wk 5 **Sept. 26** Interviewing, Quotes, and Attribution

*Read:* Bender Ch. 10 Quotations and Attribution, Ch. 11 Interviewing

**Sept. 28** Interviewing, Quotes, and Attribution continued

Wk 6 **Oct. 3** Covering meetings, speeches and events

*Read:* Bender Ch. 15 Speeches and Meetings

**Oct. 5** In-class speech writing

Wk 7 **Oct. 10 FALL BREAK, NO CLASS**

**Oct. 12** Law and Libel

*Read:* Bender Ch. 5 Libel, Privacy and Newsgathering Issues

Wk 8 **Oct. 17** Ethics for Journalists and Storytellers

*Read:* Bender Ch. 6 Ethics

**Oct. 19** Mid-term review

Wk 9 **Oct. 24 Mid-term Exam (in-class portion; take-home section due)**

**Oct. 26** Breaking news: Fires, Crimes, Accidents  
*Read:* Bender Ch. 18 Public Affairs Reporting (pp. 365-373 section)

Wk 10 **Oct. 31** Public Affairs Reporting II: Covering politics, social justice issues  
*Read:* Bender Ch. 18 Public Affairs Reporting (pp. 373-386)

**Nov. 2** Tales from the Field: Robert Herguth, Chicago Sun-Times

Wk 11 **Nov. 7** Blending of styles: Online writing, multi-media  
*Read:* Bender Ch. 13 Digital Media: Online, Mobile and Social Media

**Nov. 9** Broadcast Writing and Visual Journalism  
*Read:* Bender Ch. 12 Writing for Radio and TV News, Ch. 14 Visual Journalism

Wk 12 **Nov. 14** Multimedia storytelling: tips and tools

**Nov. 16** Practicing Multimedia; mobile newsgathering in the field

Wk 13 **Nov. 21** Putting mobile stories together (in-class work day with instructor help)

**Nov. 23 THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS**

Wk 14 **Nov. 28** Other story types and writing styles; final project planning  
*Read:* Bender Ch. 17 Feature Stories

**Nov. 30** Public Relations Writing  
*Read:* Bender Ch. 20 Journalism and Public Relations

Wk 15 **Dec. 5** PR Writing continued

**Dec. 7** Semester wrap-up and looking to the future

Wk 16 **Dec. 16 Final Projects due by 11 a.m.**

\* We will try to stick to this schedule, but there may be changes if circumstances dictate or special opportunities arise.