

**Loyola University Chicago**

**Spring 2018**

**Reporting Basics I**

**COMM 205-24W**

**Mondays 4:15-6:45 pm**

**Class location: 6443 North Sheridan Road in between ChiTown Magpie gift shop  
and Third Coast Comics.**

**NOTE THAT THIS IS NOT THE ROOM ON LOCUS. THIS IS A STOREFRONT  
WE WILL RUN AS A NEWSROOM.**

**Professor Patricia Lamberti**

**Office Hours:**

**Mondays 3-4**

**Wednesdays 3-4 in**

**In our classroom**

**Or by appointment, Skype, Facetime, etc.**

**Office Phone: (312) 915-6860**

**Email: [plamberti@luc.edu](mailto:plamberti@luc.edu)**

### **Course description**

This course will introduce you to the skills required to work as a journalist or as a professional communicator in such fields as advertising, public relations, corporate communications, etc.

But even if you're not interested in any of the careers mentioned above, remember that all jobs involve writing, research and interviewing. Will you write emails in your dream job? Will you write memos or reports? Will you be need to research the industry you plan to work in? Will you need to sit through a job interview to obtain your dream job? Do you hope to one day be in a position to interview and hire others to work for you? If you have answered yes to any of these questions, then this class is for you.

In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of interviewing, researching, concise writing, presenting information on different platforms, proper grammar and brainstorming.

This course is writing intensive.

### **Objectives:**

In this course, students will:

- Develop skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals working in journalism and professional writing.
- Develop skills in expressing ideas through writing and visual storytelling.
- Practice interviewing skills.
- Learn how to write concisely and with proper grammar.
- Learn more how to research, from using library databases to advanced Google options.
- Structure writing in an organized and engaging manner.
- Craft engaging opening paragraphs, a skill that transfers to all types of writing.

### **Course Materials**

- Inside Reporting by Tim Harrower – Third edition (prices start at \$25 through Amazon; if you cannot afford that, the second edition will suffice but you must make sure that you are reading the chapters listed below)
- AP Stylebook (older versions are acceptable; prices start at \$0.25 through Amazon)
- Occasional online readings (free; links below)

### **Course Policies**

I'm not your parent. I'm a facilitator of your education. I'm a guide to help you reach your dreams.

I don't want to waste our time together arguing about behavior. Let's agree to the following ground rules so that we can focus on learning:

#### **Absences and Tardiness:**

In order to learn, it is imperative that you attend class and arrive on time.

I'll do my best to make this class engaging. Your end of the bargain is to show up at every class (unless you're really sick or otherwise unable to attend), prepared and alert. If you fail to show up or show up late regularly, I will notice and react accordingly.

That said, stuff happens. If you need to miss a class due to an illness or emergency, and you don't want to be penalized for missing a class, you need to:

1. Notify me **beforehand** and explain your absence
2. Provide documentation that explains your absence

Acceptable documentation depends on the circumstance. If someone has passed away, I'll accept an obituary and/or memorial from the ceremony. If you were sick enough to visit a doctor, he/she will give you a note. If you weren't sick enough to visit a doctor, but were still ill, bring me receipt from a store for any medicine, soup or liquids you bought to treat your illness. Notes from parents are generally not acceptable, nor are notes from your friends/roommates.

It is up to my discretion to accept your excuse and documentation. If your excuse is acceptable and verified with documentation, I will allow you to make up whatever you missed. If it's not acceptable and verified, your absence will not be excused and you cannot make up the work.

**If you don't notify me ahead of time and simply don't show up**, you cannot make up whatever work we did in class.

Remember that I teach this class on Mondays between 4:15 and 6:45pm. It is not a requirement of my job to reteach any class at a time more convenient for you simply because you chose not to attend a class. If you have an excused absence, I'll help you catch up. But if you don't have an excused absence, I won't.

In either case, if you miss a class, please don't ask me, "Did I miss anything?"

The answer is yes. You did miss something. We didn't all sit around in silence, wondering how to fill our time, because you weren't in class.

A better way to phrase this question (consider this your first lesson in interviewing) is, "What did I miss? What can I do to catch up?"

Unexcused absences will result in lower scores in the areas of participation, professionalism, quizzes and in-class exercises. Your grades in these areas start at zero (not 100), and you earn points as the semester progresses. I do not calculate these grades until the end of the semester.

This absence policy does not apply on days that a project is due.

### **SSWD Policy:**

Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Students will provide professors with an accommodation notification from SSWD, preferably within the first two weeks of class.

If attendance will be an issue, you must meet with me to complete a form that outlines how we will handle such absences within the first two weeks of classes.

Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. For more information or further assistance, please call 773.508.3700.

### **Due Dates:**

I will be treating you like communication professionals, which means deadlines **MUST** be met. You cannot negotiate or fib your way out of meeting a deadline. I know that you have many other obligations in your life. I'll always give you plenty of notice so that you can complete assignments on time. I cannot accept excuses about how you didn't complete an assignment on time because you had other work, class, internship, social, etc. obligations.

Unfortunately, because of numerous problems in the past dealing with the issue of late assignments, this class has a very rigid late policy with harsh penalties. An assignment is considered late if you do not turn it in at the beginning of class (or email it to me per assignment sheet) on the day it is due. In other words, don't come into class 20 minutes late the day an assignment is due and think you can still turn it in without penalty.

Assignments not submitted by the given deadline will lose one letter grade every day (not class period) they are late. On the sixth day after the due date, your grade becomes an automatic zero.

If you are not attending class on the day an assignment is due, you must notify me beforehand via email. You must have a legitimate, documented excuse to miss a deadline. You must provide me with advanced notice. Otherwise, you must accept the one-letter-grade-per-day penalty.

I won't think you're a bad person if you miss a due date. I'd rather have you learn how to graciously accept consequences to your actions (like the one-letter-grade-per-day penalty) as opposed to practicing fibbing skills.

### **Style & Spelling Policy:**

To be a successful communication professional (or simply write a good cover letter), you must know proper grammar, punctuation and spelling.

If you make grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors, in a cover letter, your saying to a potential employer "hire me even though I can't pay attention to details: a skill most jobs require".

Hopefully, you caught the errors in the above sentence. If you didn't, here is the correct version:

If you make grammar, punctuation and spelling errors in a cover letter, you're saying to a potential employer, "Hire me, even though I can't pay attention to details, which is a skill most jobs require."

Read your AP Stylebook throughout the semester to fine tune your grammar, punctuation and spelling.

I am a huge fan of the Grammar Girl web site and podcast. She makes learning about these issues fun.

As an incentive, and because clear writing is essential when writing for screens, I deduct points for all grammar, spelling and punctuation errors.

### **Participation and Professionalism:**

You will never be penalized for voicing your opinions, whatever they may be.

You will, however, be penalized for disrupting class. Talking on cell phones, texting, whispering with classmates, e-mailing, arriving late/leaving early, sleeping, closing your eyes and hoping I don't notice, doing Sudoku and using computer programs other than the ones we are working on in class will lead to a lowering of the participation/professionalism portion of your grade.

The golden rules? While we are talking, don't touch anything electronic. While we are using the computer, only use software we are working with.

Remember that the number of classes you miss impacts your professionalism and participation grades. You can't participate if you're not in class. Not coming to class is also not very professional.

You will also be penalized for not speaking at all. To be a successful media professional (or successful in any field), you must learn how to voice your opinions and contribute to conversations. Your participation and professionalism grades start at 0. It's up to you to work your way up the grade scale.

The grading scale for participation is as follows:

A: Frequent and meaningful contributions to class discussion that show insight and understanding of material.

B: Frequent and meaningful contribution to class discussion.

C: Occasional participation to class discussion.

D: Only participates when called upon.

F : No class participation

### **Academic Dishonesty Policy:**

Plagiarism of any form, of any kind and of any length will be reported to the Dean of Students and the student will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.

Cheating on in-class assignments or any other work associated with this class will receive a similar punishment. As you know, plagiarism constitutes using another's words or ideas without acknowledgment.

In journalism, it is also considered equally dishonest to invent quotes, facts, scenarios and so on. I will occasionally check to verify that you have indeed interviewed the people you claim to have interviewed.

I also consider it an act of academic dishonesty to turn in work for an assignment in this class that you wrote for another class (any semester, any year). You must turn in original work for all class assignments.

### **Email policy:**

I will respond to all emails within 24 hours, except for weekends.

Keep in mind that I may not check my email right before an assignment is due. Ask questions early and re-read the assignment sheet. Often, the answer is there.

### **Laptop and cell phone policy:**

Although technology has revolutionized the media landscape, it doesn't always help you learn. Every piece of research shows that multitasking impedes learning, and actually makes you perform tasks slower. Multitasking is also disruptive to me and the students sitting around you.

Consider the following:

- Former Stanford researcher Clifford Nass found that multitaskers perform worse than non-multitaskers in nearly every category, including critical thinking skills and memory tests.
- Researchers at Princeton and the University of California had students watch a lecture, randomly assigning them either laptops or pen and paper for their note-taking. Those who used laptops to take notes understood substantially less than those who took notes with a pen.

- Researchers at [York University](#) and [McMaster University](#) in Canada found that the learning of students seated near laptop users is [negatively affected](#).

Since you're old enough to join the army, I'm going to assume you're old enough to understand this research. So while I won't "ban" laptops, please don't use them unless I tell you to. You're doing yourself – and the people next to you – a huge disservice.

### **Grading:**

Grading is a complex issue.

At best, grades motivate you to learn as much as you can.

In the worst-case scenario, grades make you feel bad about yourself, question your life goals and hate school.

When thinking about grades, keep a few things in mind.

Grades don't always indicate how much you're getting out of a class, or school in general.

When you were in elementary school and high school, teachers and parents used grades to help keep you on task and unearth your talents.

But you are now an adult. It is your responsibility to learn as much as you can, keep yourself on task and uncover your passions. Grades may help you do this, but grades aren't your only guide on this road.

As an adult, you need to push yourself to learn – without the reward or punishment of a grade.

Getting As on assignments shouldn't be a reason to tell yourself, "I am a master at this. I don't need to try anymore. I'm checking out." You're not a master yet. An A means you're exceptional for storytellers at this stage of their careers. You can always improve.

Likewise, getting Cs shouldn't be a reason to give up. In fact, a C makes sense. That's an average grade, and you just started doing this. Telling stories through words and images takes practice. After all, there are no child prodigies when it comes to writing.

I take a lot of time to make my grading policy transparent. You will receive a rubric for each assignment, along with an explanation of potential point deductions.

I will always evaluate your work and provide you with an explanation of why you've earned your grade.

Your first assignment is worth less than latter ones. After all, as you learn, you should get better.

The in-class writing assignments are purely for practice. I will look at them. But you either earn an A for putting some degree of effort into it and an F if you don't.

Please remember that I do not grade based on effort alone. I will not give you an A on one of the assignments simply because you tried your best.

Quizzes on the readings will occur nearly every week. You are expected to read your assignments before class begins.

News quizzes will also occur throughout the semester. Sometimes, you will be able to find the answers online for these quizzes. Other times, I will expect you to know the answers because you should be consuming news regularly in your spare time.

### **Grade disputes:**

You may not agree with a grade I give you. If you think you deserve a better grade, you must write one to two paragraphs explaining why and visit me to discuss the matter.

### **Rewrite Policy:**

The best way to become a better writer is to rewrite your work based on feedback. You have until the last day of class to rewrite any piece of content you produce for this class. However, the rewrite must include significantly new information. Acceptable information is a new interview in which you quote someone directly, a new study explained in full detail, new statistics, and other forms of new research.

You may only rewrite an assignment once. Your final grade on the piece will be an average of the two grades.

If you rewrite a piece, you must give me a copy of the old version, and the new version. Please print out both versions and give them to me in class.

### **Final grade breakdown:**

In-class writing and editing exercises/news quizzes/pop quizzes: 100 points

Professionalism/Professionalism: 100 points

Assignment one: 100 points

Assignment two: 150 points

Assignment three: 150 points

Assignment four: 200 points

Final project: 200 points

**Grading Criteria:**

A: Publishable work with a maximum of one spelling, grammatical, or punctuation error and the proper information and sources written in a lively, well-organized manner.

B: Minimal spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Minimal missing information and sources; minimal problems with the lead and organization.

C: Notable number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Noticeable missing information and sources; problems with the lead and organization.

D: Significant number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Significant missing information and sources; Significant problems with the lead and organization.

F: Misspelling of proper names. Other major spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Almost total lack of information and sources; Severe problems with the lead and organization.

Here are some deductions (there are others) I use to calculate grades for articles:

- 1 point spelling error
- 1 point grammar error
- 1 point punctuation error
- 5 points for weak nut graf
- 2 points per run on sentence
- 3 points per weak lead
- 10 points for not meeting direct quotes requirement on assignment sheet
- up to 10 points for not meeting technical requirements

- up to 10 points for research lapses or errors
- up to 10 points for organizational errors
- up to 10 points for formatting errors (how it looks on the web site)
- 5 if there's no photo with article

**Individual Assignment Grade Scale:**

A: 100-94  
 A-: 93-90  
 B+: 89-88  
 B: 87-83  
 B-: 82-80  
 C+ 79-78  
 C: 77-73  
 C-: 72-70  
 D+: 69-68  
 D: 67-63  
 D-: 62-60  
 F: 59-0

**Total Semester Grade Point Scale:**

A: 1000-940  
 A-: 939-900  
 B+: 899-880  
 B: 879-830  
 B-: 829-800  
 C+ 799-780  
 C: 779-730  
 C-: 729-700  
 D+: 699-680  
 D: 679-630  
 D-: 629-600  
 F: 599-0

***Schedule***

*Readings should be completed by the Monday of the week they are listed under. If the links aren't active, copy and paste them into your browser.*

**Week One – Jan 15**

No class; MLK holiday

**Week Two – January 22**

*Last day to drop without a W*

Readings due by start of class:

1. Inside Reporting, Chapter 1 “Story of Journalism”
2. IR Chapter 2 “How Newsrooms Work”
3. IR Pages 68-70 “Where Stories Come From”

**Week Three – Jan 29**

**Assignment one due**

Readings due:

1. Ten Simple Rules for Good Writing

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/10-simple-rules-for-good-writing.html>

2. IR Chapter 3 “Newswriting Basics” Only pages 36-52

**Week Four – Feb 5**

Readings due:

1. IR Chapter 3 “Newswriting Basics” pages 52-64

2. Stephen King’s 20 Rules for Good Writing

<http://www.openculture.com/2014/03/stephen-kings-top-20-rules-for-writers.html>

**Week Five – Feb 12**

Readings due:

1. IR “The Morgue: 12 Step Program to Good Writing” page 300-303

**Week Six – Feb 19**

**Assignment two due**

Readings due:

1. IR Chapter 4 “Reporting Basics” Pages 70-80

**Week Seven – Feb 26**

1. IR Chapter 4 “Reporting Basics” Pages 83-92

**Week Eight – March 5**

**No class – Spring Break**

**Week Nine – March 12**

**Assignment three due**

Readings:

1. How Journalists Can Become Better Interviewers

<http://www.poynter.org/2013/how-journalists-can-become-better-interviewers/205518/>

2. IR Chapter 5: Covering the News

**Week Ten – March 19**

Readings due:

1. IR Chapter 6: Beyond Breaking News”

**Week 11- March 26**

Readings Due:

1. IR Chapter 8: Digital Journalism

**Week 12 – April 2**

**Assignment four due**

Private meetings in classroom

**Week 13 – April 9**

Readings due:

1. IR Chapter 7: Law and Ethics

**Week 14 – April 16**

Readings:

1. IR Chapter 9: Broadcast Journalism

**Week 15 – April 23**

Work on Final project

Final project due on Sakai by end of finals time