Syllabus/Community Newspaper Journalism
Journalism 316/Fall, 2015
Texas A&M University-Commerce

Instructor: Dr. Lamar W. Bridges, Professor
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Catalog description: "The course explores various topics in community newspaper journalism, including photojournalism, business-related operations such as advertising and circulation, newspaper management, technology, and community relations. Prerequisites: Jour 114 or consent of the instructor."

The course: J316 is designed to be a small junior-level seminar class for those students enrolled in the news-editorial sequence. The objective is to combine the practical sides of producing a community newspaper with the current developments and "research findings" about community journalism in order to present some insightful concepts into a broad segment of the newspaper profession broadly defined as non-metropolitan daily journalism. One might include in this non-daily journalism weekly newspapers, suburban newspapers, alternative newspapers, and daily newspapers with small circulations. There is no universal agreement upon what level of readership or circulation classifies a newspaper as a community newspaper.

The course will explore the community concept, what local news is -- which has been an often-cited criterion of a community newspaper --and what operations constitute this segment of the newspaper profession.

Students must also produce content for consideration for publication.

Textbook ordered: *Saving Community Journalism, The Path to Profitability* by Penelope Muse Abernathy, ©2014, The University of North Carolina Press.

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Objectives: Students will learn to (1) write clearly and accurately in a style appropriate for community-focused newspapers, especially smaller outlets; (2) develop an understanding of the role and responsibilities of community newspapers in American society and our press system.

Plagiarism: I will provide a plagiarism statement for you to read and sign as an acknowledgement of your responsibilities to submit work that is yours and yours alone. Attribution will be expected on data not yours. Address any questions to me. I file these statements in my office.

Class attendance: The class is designed to be a seminar in which all students participate; the sharing of ideas is one goal of the seminar. It is vital, therefore, that you attend classes. Attendance will be checked; absences will be recorded, per University policy. I may request that any student who misses more than two classes be dropped from the class. *Please be aware of this statement.*

It is also vital that students be in class on time.

And, of course, the instructor expects all students to act with civility toward other persons in the classroom. In addition, please note these two advisories.

♦One: Students enrolled at the University should exhibit common decency and acceptable behavior toward their fellow classmates, faculty and staff members, and individuals they encounter on campus.

♦Two: Students requesting accommodations for disabilities should contact the Office of Student Disability Resources and Services. That office's statement will be distributed in class.

Preparation of assignments: content submitted for J316 must be prepared on a computer. No handwritten papers will be accepted, unless so noted by the instructor. Submission of assignments beyond announced deadlines will not be accepted without a valid reason. Journalism students, as well as professionals, must meet deadlines with no excuses and prepare work cleanly. "Cleanly" means correct spelling, correct grammar, and careful usage of the mechanics of the English language.

And it means preparing one's work with pride and concern for intellectual honesty. Note the statement on plagiarism.

And, in J316, you must follow the format given by the instructor. In J316, it does not matter what other style, format or directions you are accustomed to following. Prepare materials as instructed.

Course requirements: J316 will combine instructor-led sessions, discussion, and both verbal and written assignments from students. Writing assignments will be undertaken and will be required of each student. Team projects may be incorporated. Professionals will be utilized as guest speakers if possible.

More specifically, this class requires each student to participate fully in the sessions; the enrollment is limited to 12. J316 is not intended to be a class in which the instructor simply "talks" about topics relevant to community newspaper journalism.

Each student will be expected to contribute his or her thoughts to the class. A seminar is a class of ideas – not mere repetition of facts, but an exchange of ideas and analysis. However, please note that facts are a good first step to sound opinions. Mere speculation or assumptions are not.

Therefore, it should be apparent that participation means regular class attendance, as noted above. I have assigned points as a measurement.

Second, practical writing assignments will be required of each student. These assignments will be off-campus or on-campus with targeted audiences. Some of the assignments will probably depend upon the instructor's assessment of the strength of each student's writing.

Solid writing is central to journalism, as is critical thinking. And, it is the content that matters, regardless of the delivery system. You must learn to write and write well. A lack of writing skills and the lack of a passion for writing will keep you out of the professional world faster than anything else.

Knowing how computers or social media delivery options work is not the essence of writing!

Third, each student in the class will examine community newspapers.

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I have used several different approaches in past semesters, and I will determine the nature of the project after the class meets and gets underway. One possibility is to examine some newspapers that are the property of Dr. Bridges and are extra issues of newspapers being utilized in a national study by Dr. Bridges and his colleagues at three other universities.

If utilized, these newspapers are not to be thrown away. Do not lose them or use them beyond what is instructed for this class. Details would be explained as the course unfolds.

*Number two is labeled newspaper project.

Fourth, a final examination will be given at the designated hour in the University's schedule of finals (December).

Grading: Here are the weights assigned to the above requirements.**

(1) attendance/discussion	50 points
(2) newspaper project*	50 points
(3) writing assignments	300 points
(4) final examination	100 points
	500 points total

**Subject to change by the instructor as determined.

Schedule: TBD. The first week will be an introduction to basic copy rules and exercises to gauge the writing of enrollees.

Outside reading: Materials from Gee Library or online materials may be utilized as appropriate or as needed. Any outside reading assignment will be announced in class, and students are responsible for any reserve readings in Gee or online. These materials could be included on tests.

-LWB, 8-31-2015