

CIVIC REPORTING

Course Information

Instructor: Terrance Armstard

Meeting Day/Time/Place: TBD

Office: Communication / Education Building, Multimedia Journalism Program., Room 358

Office Hours: 11:00 AM -12 NOON | MONDAY – FRIDAY

Office Phone: (870) 972-3212

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Textbooks and Materials

Textbook: “News Reporting and Writing” by Melvin Mencher (12th Edition)

- Associated Press Stylebook & Libel Manual (2020)
- Arkansas Freedom of Information Handbook
- Dictionary
- Thesaurus
- Supplies needed: Flash Memory 32GB
- Adobe Creative Cloud

Other Recommended Resources

- Delta Digital News Service
- Hearst Multimedia Journalism Winners
- National Public Radio’s Morning Edition
- National Public Radio’s All Things Considered
- NPR’s Radiolab
- USA TODAY
- The Marshall Project (organization covering America’s criminal justice system)
<http://www.themarshallproject.org/>

Course Description: Reporting on public affairs, emphasizing courts, government and data-driven reporting. Stories (with photo slideshow, information graphic, audio package, video package, data journalism, social media posts): city council, school board, quorum court, education, economy, political, industry, enterprise. Pre-req: MDIA 2013.

In this Civic Reporting class, students are required to attend city council meetings, school board meetings, and quorum court meetings, as well as filing stories for several other areas. Each student does a separate education story, an economy story, a healthcare story, a political story, an industry story and an agriculture story, and an extra story for a total of 10 stories. Each story is a full-length story of at least 500 words that must contain multimedia elements. Students must file a story that contains a photo slideshow in one, an information graphic in one, an audio package in one, data journalism in one, and a video package in one. The others must have some form of a multimedia package and they are also making social media posts with their stories as well.

Purpose and Goals/Learning Outcomes:

Degree programs at the Department of Media are accredited by ACEJMC, which requires its accredited units to prepare students to be aware of, to understand, and to apply the values and competencies.

- think critically, creatively and independently;

- think analytically by conducting research and evaluating information using appropriate methods, including applying basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- understand and respect others in a diverse and global society, which includes diversity of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, culture, and national origin.
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of messages, images and information;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness; apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world;
- communicate effectively using words and images for multiple platforms, ranging from interpersonal communication to digital media.
- understand the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press and how they are applied nationally and internationally;
- understand the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- understand professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;

The department has reduced these values and competencies to three targeted foundations of learning and eight learning outcomes for all of our students.

THINK

We promote problem solving by enhancing students' ability to:

- conduct research to write and produce content for a wide variety of media platforms
- explain how domestic and international diversity influence the production, dissemination and consumption of mass communications in a global society
- apply concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information

COMMUNICATE

We promote strong communication skills by demanding students:

- write and edit in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions
- apply current tools and technologies in the production and evaluation of media content for different platforms

BE PROFESSIONAL

We promote professional conduct and integrity by requiring that students:

- apply the principles and laws that underlie different media systems
- summarize the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
- explain the legal and professional codes of ethics and conduct that undergird mass communication in a global society

Goal: Have students report and write/produce multimedia stories from covering governments with an efficient grasp of correct grammar, sentence structure, word processing, and professional writing mechanics. They will write coherent copy on deadline with proper media writing style.

Outcome: For publication, students will write clear and accurate print and online articles and radio broadcast news scripts true to professional form and style.

Goal: Students will exercise critical judgment and values in selecting facts, elements, and materials for media writing; and evaluate copy for accuracy, fairness, clarity and style;

Outcome: Students will edit their own work and that of others for errors, fairness, style, accuracy and clarity; and understand the basic principles of research, reporting and fact-finding.

Goal: Students will be made aware of the First Amendment and legal principles, especially libel, as they apply to media writing; develop an appreciation for diversity and multicultural considerations in media writing; and understand basic professional ethics.

Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of ethical principles (professional codes of ethics) and fairness in their writing and judgment; and develop a diverse resource directory.

Course Objectives: This course will provide students with strong multimedia portfolios that covering several topics such as; Education, Politics, Crime, Courts, Government, Religion, Business, Agriculture and more.

LIBRARY RESOURCES: The library has adequate bound journals and periodicals necessary for students to complete in-depth assignments. In addition, the library has adequate up-to-date electronic (online) databases useful for conducting research.

WRITING CENTER: The Arkansas State University Writing Center is a comfortable learning space in which ALL members of the A-State community, undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff, can receive feedback on their writing. You can utilize the center by walking in, setting up an appointment in person or via phone at 870-972-3451, scheduling weekly appointments with the same tutor, attending one of our Discipline Drop-In Hours in the Writing Center and across campus, attending one of our workshops, and joining one of our writing groups.

COMMUNICATION CENTER: The Communication Center is a non-judgmental space for students to practice and prepare oral presentations for any assignment, project, or speaking opportunity. Our trained student coaches are able to assist clients in developing, organizing, and delivering speeches -- from preparation to presentation.

EMAIL: Students are responsible for any instructor emails throughout the semester. Note: Emails will not be posted as announcements on Blackboard. Emails will be sent to students' A-State addresses. Most often I respond to email within 24 hours if received before 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. However, few if any emails will be answered after 5 p.m. Friday until the following Monday.

COMPUTER HARDWARE/SOFTWARE: As a student in a writing class, you are expected to be familiar and comfortable with both your computer and the Internet. You should have access to a computer that is capable of running the latest versions of Microsoft Office and a Web browser (such as Internet Explorer, Safari or Firefox.) Visit the Students section of the Arkansas State University website for information on free software, computer labs and more.

Course Requirements

First, all assignments are to be *double-spaced, printed in 12-point Times font*. Generally, that means use the default settings for most computer word processing programs, including the margins. Assignments will be graded for accuracy, depth, and style. Spelling, grammar, and writing mechanics are very important. ***Factual errors in any written assignment can and may result in an automatic score of zero for that assignment.***

EQUIPMENT: The use of a digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera is required in this course. The School of Media & Journalism can provide cameras and lenses for students in this course for 24-hour checkout, with approval from the instructor. Lost, stolen or broken cameras and equipment will be the financial responsibility of the student. The school will put a financial obligation hold on your registration until the camera/equipment is replaced. Failure to return equipment on time will result in a one-letter grade deduction for that assignment for each day late.

You can use your Voice Memo on your smartphone for audio recording or check out a recorder from the Equipment Checkout Room. You should be familiar with audio editing software, such as Audacity or Adobe Audition.

Classroom Format

This class will run like a professional newsroom. News meetings will occur weekly to look at agendas and decide what meetings/courts/etc., to cover. Students must attend government meetings and most meetings are held on Monday and Tuesday nights. Make sure you can get off work or other personal schedules to cover the assigned meetings. (Just know that, for example, the Jonesboro City Council will not reschedule a meeting when you can't attend.) Missed deadlines will adversely affect your final grade. Use Twitter and Facebook Live during assigned events/meetings. MEETING STORIES ARE DUE BY 1:30 P.M., THE NEXT DAY.

QUIZZES will cover local, national, state and international issues.

ONLINE PORTFOLIO: Students will create a professional online portfolio as a tool to market themselves for jobs or internships. WordPress is preferred.

Policies

Students with Disabilities: If any student has a disability or problem requiring accommodation in order to succeed in the course, please contact me as soon as possible. Confidentiality will be maintained, and every reasonable effort will be made to meet your needs. Any student requiring accommodation must be registered with A-State's Office of Disability Services, 870-972-3964. If Disability Services recommends that you should be allowed to take exams in their office, it is your responsibility to schedule that exam with them for the same date and time as the exam will be administered to the other students in the class. <http://www.astate.edu/a/disability/faculty-resources/>

Inclement Weather Policy: Information on campus closure can be found on the A-State web page, KASU, and local radio and television stations. If inclement weather prevents you from coming to campus and campus is not closed, please email immediately at tarmstard@astate.edu. You may be expected to complete assignments online during the inclement weather days. Sign up for University alerts.

Attendance: Three unexcused absences will lower your final grade by one letter. Six will lower your final grade by two letters. Students who are late to class three times will receive one unexcused absence. Students who leave class early will be marked absent.

While the ultimate decision to attend class is up to you, please consider the following. You must be present to learn. Any missed class is a loss for you and a zero for all assignments that day. If you arrive late to class and miss a quiz, you will not be allowed to make it up.

Acceptable reasons for missing a class include serious illness/hospitalization, death in your immediate family (parents, spouse, sibling and children) with documentation, and participation in university-related and sanctioned events with advanced notice from the instructor/adviser/coach. Car trouble, relationship problems, situations involving pets, traffic conditions, alarm clock failure, arrests, appointments and jobs are not examples of excused absences. Whenever there's doubt, talk to your instructor.

Late assignments will not be accepted. If you must be absent, any work due on that date should be submitted in advance. You cannot make up in-class work.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT *(from the Student Handbook)*

Arkansas State University enthusiastically promotes academic integrity and professional ethics among all members of the A-State academic community. Violations of this policy are considered as serious misconduct and may result in severe penalties.

A. PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of taking and/or using the ideas, work, and/or writings of another person as one's own.

Discipline: Faculty members may respond to cases of plagiarism in any of the following ways:

1. Return the paper or other item for rewriting; the grade may be lowered.
2. Give a failing grade on the paper or other item — "F" if a letter grade is used or zero if a numerical grade is used.

3. Give the student who plagiarized a failing grade in the course.
4. Recommend sanctions, including disciplinary expulsion from the university.

B. CHEATING

Cheating is an act of dishonesty with the intention of obtaining and/or using information in a fraudulent manner.

1. Observing and/or copying from another student's test paper, reports, computer files and/or other class assignments.
2. Giving or receiving assistance during an examination period. (This includes providing specific answers to subsequent examinees and/or dispensing or receiving information that would allow the student to have an unfair advantage in the examination over students who did not possess such information.)
3. Using class notes, outlines, and other unauthorized information during an examination.
4. Using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting, in part or in whole the contents of an examination or other assignment not authorized by the professor of the class.
5. Using for credit in one class a term paper, book report, project, or class assignment written for credit in another class without the knowledge and permission of the professor of the class.
6. Exchanging places with another person for the purpose of taking an examination or completing other assignments.

Discipline: Faculty members may respond to cases of cheating in any of the following ways:

1. Allow the testing to progress without interruption, informing the offending student about the offense — and award a failing grade on the test — "F" if a letter grade is used or zero if a numerical grade is used.
2. Seize the test of the offending student and give a failing grade on the paper.
3. Give the offending student a failing grade in the course.
4. Recommend sanctions, including disciplinary expulsion from the university. Sanctions for Academic Misconduct may be imposed by the faculty member or instructor discovering the Academic Misconduct except in the case of dismissal from a particular program which shall be made by the department chair or program director, or suspension or expulsion from the university, which shall be made by the dean.

The following sanctions may be imposed for Academic Misconduct:

- A failing grade on the paper or project;
- Rewriting or repeat performance of course work;
- A failing grade for the class;
- Dismissal from the class;
- Dismissal from a particular program;
- Suspension or Expulsion from the university;
- Other appropriate sanctions as warranted by the specific acts of the student.

A Student may not avoid academic sanctions by withdrawing from a class, a program, or the university.

NOTE: Cheating can be detected on GroupMe and other computer messaging, screenshots and ProctorU. Also read what happened at Ohio State University, 83 students on GroupMe:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/11/13/dozens-of-ohio-state-students-accused-in-cheating-ring-using-group-messaging-app/?tid=ss_mail&utm_term=.2a3fa31a3370

For more information from the Student Handbook, including specifics about what constitutes plagiarism, discipline or cheating, see A-State's Academic Integrity Policy at <http://www.astate.edu/a/student-conduct/student-standards/handbook-home.dot>

Sexual Misconduct Policy

Arkansas State works to provide a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and university policy prohibit [sexual discrimination](#), which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Sexual violence can undermine students' academic success.

If you have been sexually assaulted, you can immediately speak with someone at NEARK's [Family Crisis Center's](#) 24-hour Sexual Assault Line: **870-933-9449**. Reports to law enforcement can be made to the University Police Department: **870-972-2093**.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, receive support from the [Counseling Center](#) and [Pack Support](#). The Student Health Center provides [Sexual Assault resources](#). Alleged violations can be reported non-confidentially to the [Title IX and Institutional Equity office](#). It [provides](#) local, state and national resources for counseling, law enforcement, medical treatment, financial assistance, and legal services.

Deputy Coordinator Students **Stephanie Lott**

slott@astate.edu

Phone: 870-972-2034

Student Union Suite 2008

CONFIDENTIALITY AND MANDATORY REPORTING

We, here, want to create a safe learning environment. The university also holds me accountable for a **mandatory reporting responsibility** related to my role as a faculty member and a student publications adviser. I want you to feel safe to share life experiences in classroom discussions, written work, and during any individual meetings. I do not wish to share your private information, but I am **required** to share information about sexual misconduct or any crime that may have occurred on campus with the University. Students may speak to someone confidentially by contacting NEARK's Family Crisis Center's 24-hour Sexual Assault Line: **870-933-9449**.

Classroom Code of Conduct: No text messaging, ringing or audible technology tolerated in this classroom. Unless it is used for note taking and in-class assignments, put all phones and technological equipment away (off desks, laps, books, purses, backpacks, etc.) when in class. If you are caught text messaging, talking on the phone, or your telephone rings or beeps, you will be marked absent for the class and receive a 0 (zero) for all assignments or tests that day. You may not work on social media, email, text, or surf the web during class. Students caught doing any of the above will receive a 0 (zero) for all assignments or tests on which they are working. (It will not be announced, just recorded in the grade book.) You may not nap. Guest speakers and classmates should be treated with the utmost respect. Class disruptions will not be tolerated but class participation is a must. Please do not bring pets, children, or other unapproved visitors to class and please do not bring any weapons to class. Dress appropriately for class so it does not distract the instructor or other class members. No pajamas. No sagging, top or bottom. No caps/hats may be worn in class. No pork chop gear in the classroom. If an A-State administrator came to class, should you be wearing University of Arkansas gear?

GRADING

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 0-59

Points To Remember:

- Meeting deadlines is at the heart of being a good journalist and media specialist. If you consistently fail to turn in stories on time when working professionally, you'll soon lose your job.
- This is a college-level writing class. High School work is unacceptable.

- There will be unannounced quizzes based on AP style, current events, readings and material covered in the course. (Quizzes are not a form of punishment but a means to test your knowledge of what is going on in the world and in class.)
- If you fall behind in your class work, it is extremely difficult to catch up. See your instructor ASAP.
- No food, drinks, weapons, or smoking/vaping allowed in the classroom.
- If you arrive late to class and miss a quiz, you will not be allowed to make it up.
- Wikipedia cannot be used as an Internet source.
- None of your human sources can be School of Media & Journalism and Department of Communication Studies faculty, staff or students, or friends, relatives, spouses, classmates, associates, fraternity or sorority members, church members, etc., unless approved in advance by the Instructor.
- No interviews may be conducted via e-mail unless approved by the Instructor ahead of time.
- There will be no study guides. This is not a K-12 setting with the “No Child Left Behind” policy, where there is teaching to the tests. You must take notes.

There will be no extra credit given to boost your grade. Complete assignments as they are due and you won't need extra credit.

- There are scheduled office hours for you to see the Instructor. If those hours are not accommodating, please schedule an appointment for another time.

If you want to be successful in this class:

- Don't miss class.
- Come to class prepared. Read your text and do your homework. Take notes in class.
- Ask questions and participate in class discussions.
- Read and watch news every day.
- Turn up your “curiosity meter” and be a sponge.
- Come to my office hours or make an appointment if you need help, and/or have class concerns or issues.
- Please check bad attitudes at the door. You can pick them up on your way out.
- Maintain a healthy dose of humor and ability to learn from constructive criticism.
- Be nice. Rudeness will not be tolerated.
- Always try your best. BE AWESOME!
- Take notes in class.

WRITING GRADING RUBRIC

Grade A: Accurate, fair and newsworthy with a compelling lead, sound

- organization and excellent writing that clearly and thoroughly
- covers the topic with little or no editing; publishable.

Grade B: Accurate, fair and newsworthy with an acceptable lead,

- organization and writing. Although containing no serious
- information gaps or factual errors, communication contains
- minor grammar, style and spelling errors: publishable with
- minor editing and/or rewriting.

Grade C: Publishable if extensively rewritten to fix:

- minor factual errors
- obvious questions need answering
- better lead or story structure
- unclear writing
- grammar, style or spelling issues

Grade D: Cannot publish due to:

- lack of newsworthiness
- multiple minor factual errors
- unfair treatment of subject or sources

- weak lead or poor organization
- inadequate subject coverage
- cluttered, confused writing
- numerous style, grammar and spelling errors

Grade F: Cannot publish due to major defects including:

- plagiarism
- serious factual errors or fatal errors
- blatantly unfair treatment of subject or sources
- libelous statements
- information gaps
- disregard for grammar, spelling, style and/or assignment

Tentative Class Schedule (subject to change with notice)

Week 1 (Aug. 23-29)	Set meeting schedule for the semester. Assign portions of the Civic Reporting Media Guide. Read Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 11
Week 2 (Aug. 30 - Sept. 5)	Civic Reporting Media Guide due Thursday Read Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 & 12
Week 3 (Sept. 6 – 12)	Read Chapters 13, 14, 15, 16 & 24 (What are the questions?)
Week 4 (Sept. 13 - 19)	Read Chapters 17, 18 & 20
Week 5 (Sept. 20 - 26)	Read Chapter 21
Week 6 (Sept. 27 – Oct. 3)	Read Chapter 25
Week 7 (Oct. 4 – 10)	Read Chapters 8 & 19 Midterm – Thursday
Week 8 (Oct. 11 – 17)	Read Chapter 22
Week 9 (Oct. 18 – 24)	Read Chapter 23

Week 10 (Oct. 25 – 31)	Read Chapter 9
Week 11 (Nov. 1 – 7)	Read Chapter 26
Week 12 (Nov. 8 – 14)	Read Chapter 27
Week 13 (Nov. 15 – 21)	Voting 2020 story
Week 14 (Nov. 22 – 28)	H O L I D A Y B R E A K
Week 15 (Nov. 29 – Dec. 5)	Portfolio presentation with multimedia stories published during the semester.
Week 16 (Dec. 6 – 12)	
Week 17 (Dec. 13 – 19)	Final Examinations

Dates to Remember:

- November 23-27 = Thanksgiving Break
- November 27 = Last Day to DROP a course or WITHDRAW from the University
- December 10 = Last Day of Class for Fall 2020
- December 11 = Study Day
- December 14 – 18 (M – F) = **FINAL EXAMINATIONS**
- December 18 = Friday Inclement Weather/Final Exam Make-Up Day (if necessary)
- December 19 = Saturday Commencement Ceremony

**COVID-19 University Syllabus Statement
 Fall 2020**

Arkansas State University has made every effort to provide a safe and comfortable learning environment for our return to in-person instruction during the Fall 2020 semester. The University is following the most up-to-date guidelines set forth by the Arkansas Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Given the uncertainty surrounding the continuing threat from the COVID-19 pandemic, we acknowledge there is potential for the interruption of in-person instruction during the course of this semester. While it is the goal of the institution to offer traditionally face-to-face classes, the social distancing measures arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused many of the classes to be offered in a hybrid format this semester (i.e. a combination of face-to-face and remote modes of delivery). This means nearly every course offered will have a component where

internet access is essential to course success. Students are strongly encouraged to secure WIFI access they can use for the semester either on or off campus. The purpose for this strategy is to protect our students, faculty, and staff while adhering to social distancing recommendations from public health officials while accomplishing the course learning objectives.

If the university transitions to all-online instruction, campus housing will remain available for students who do not have a safe place to move or who do not have access to the internet elsewhere. Students who leave campus will need to ensure that they have reliable access to the internet to continue their course work. Web cameras may also be required by instructors to facilitate remote instruction (please see technology recommendations section). University officials will provide students with as much advanced notice and information as possible if the transition to all-online instruction becomes necessary.

Please remember, all official notifications are made through your official A-State email account, the university website, and Blackboard Learn. You are responsible for checking your university email to ensure you receive the latest updates regarding this course.