

Loyola University Chicago

Fall 2015

Writing for the Web — COMM 206-21W

Tuesday, 7 - 9:30 p.m.

Corboy Law Center, Room 204

Instructor: Kalyn Belsha

Email: kbelsha@luc.edu

Cell phone: 631-833-4326

Office Hours: Tuesday, 5:45 to 6:45 p.m. in Lewis Towers 900
or by appointment

Course description:

This course will introduce you to skills and techniques for researching, reporting and writing nonfiction stories online. You will write news and feature stories, use social media and create interactive stories using data, photography and audio. You also will learn how to edit your online work, navigate changing ethics in online journalism and learn what it means to write professionally for online publications — including what it's like to freelance and develop your online brand as a journalist.

Some of your work will be displayed on websites hosted by the School of Communication (<http://loyolastudentdispatch.com/> and <http://blogs.luc.edu/hubbub/>).

Course objectives:

- Learn the reporting, writing, editing and multimedia skills necessary to work in online journalism
- Understand how to develop story ideas, pitch them to editors, conduct original research and execute successful interviews
- Understand how to find data, research, expert sources and archived information online
- Understand the demands of working online and using web-based platforms and tools
- Produce informative and compelling stories for the web

-Learn to how use a content management system to post your work online

-Learn how to promote your work through social media and measure the impact of your work

Course materials:

- Associated Press Stylebook (recent print edition or phone app)
- Course readings are all available online
- Audio recorder and camera (can borrow from Loyola or use your own, cell phone is fine)

Occasionally, there will be additional assigned readings, videos or audio stories related to current events or guest speakers, which I will send to you via email at least one week in advance.

For photo or multimedia assignments you may use your own equipment (including the recorder or camera on your cell phone/tablet) or borrow equipment from Loyola. Audio recorders and digital video cameras (Kodak Zi8 and Zi12) for this course can be checked out from the Owl Lab in SOC 004. Some tools may be checked out through Loyola's [equipment loan program](#). A list of software available in the digital media labs is available [here](#).

You are expected to keep up with Chicago and general national/international news on a daily basis. I suggest subscribing to [Muck Rack's daily digest](#), which gives a quick overview of top news stories journalists are talking about on Twitter, or following your favorite news organizations on Twitter and Facebook so your news consumption is integrated into your daily life. You can sign up for the Muck Rack daily digest [here](#). Another good way to stay on top of the news is to sign up for email newsletters. DNAinfo Chicago has some [here](#).

Course policies:

Attendance: Absences may be excused due to emergencies, serious illness/injury, a religious observation or because you will be attending an event as a representative of Loyola (athletics, debate, model government, etc.). Please make every effort to notify me at least 24 hours in advance of your absence. To be excused, you must provide documentation explaining your absence by your first day back in class. (Acceptable documentation depends on the circumstance. Examples include: note from doctor or nurse, receipt of medicine you purchased, obituary, copy of memorial program, etc.)

If your excuse is valid, you may make up whatever you missed. Unexcused lateness or absences will result in a lower class participation grade, in addition to zeros on missed in-class assignments.

Deadlines: In this class, you will be treated like a working journalist. Deadlines are extremely important. An assignment is considered late if you do not turn it in at the beginning of class, or send it to me by the assigned time. From the minute an article or assignment is late until 24 hours from that time, you lose an automatic 10 points from your score. After 24 hours, an additional 10 points will be deducted, and so on until the assignment is handed in, or the score becomes a 0. (Note: If you are late to class on the day an assignment is due, the lateness policy applies.)

Style: We'll be following AP style in this course. Attention to detail is an incredibly important skill for journalists. Errors in style, grammar, punctuation and spelling will result in point deductions. You will also be penalized for fact errors, including misspelled names and locations. (See common deduction points at end of syllabus)

Academic integrity: You cannot copy someone else's writing, audio, video or visuals from the Internet or any other source without proper attribution. Any use of another journalist's work should be limited and clearly warranted in your story. At all times possible, a link to the original work should be provided.

You must submit original work for this class. You cannot submit work that was written or produced for another class in any semester, of any year. Make sure to consult with me and your other professor(s) before attempting to submit work with similar or overlapping content. It may be permissible to cover a similar topic for more than one course if: 1) the stories are in different formats (such as audio and print), and 2) the professors know about and approve of the arrangement.

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Committing plagiarism results in an automatic "F" for that assignment, though depending on the severity of the case it can also result in an "F" for the course. All instances of academic dishonesty are reported to the journalism section head and the dean of the School of Communication. Cheating will result in similar low grades. In journalism, you cannot invent quotes, facts, or other material. I will occasionally check to verify that you have interviewed people you've listed as sources for your work.

Special needs: If you have a special circumstance that may impact your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact me as soon as you can so arrangements can be made with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD). I will accommodate your needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of the course content and processes. It is your responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet your own needs and assignment due dates. Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, can be found on the [SSWD website](#).

Email: I try my best to respond to questions via email as quickly as I can, but please keep in mind that I am a working journalist with a full-time job. Please allow up to 24 hours for a response, especially if you send me a message from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. on weekdays. I check my cell phone regularly. If it's an emergency, you may call my cell phone (number listed at top of syllabus).

Class participation and professionalism: For this course you'll likely be using your laptop/cell phone/tablet to do research, complete in-class assignments and take notes. Using technology for purposes unrelated to class will result in a lower class participation grade. If I see you using technology for reasons other than working or participating in class, I may ask you to leave.

Contributing to class discussions, completing in-class work, presenting your work and engaging with guest speakers all factor into your class participation grade.

The grading scale for class participation is as follows:

A (100): Student often contributes to class discussion, provides meaningful insight and demonstrates knowledge from readings.

B (86): Student often contributes to class discussion and provides meaningful insight.

C (76): Student occasionally participates in class discussion.

D (66): Student only participates when called on.

F (0): No class participation.

In-class grades: In-class writing assignments are for practice. I will look at them, but they are graded based on how much effort you put in: an "A" for good effort, a "C" for some effort and an "F" for no effort.

Grade disputes: If you do not agree with your grade, you may write one to two paragraphs explaining why and set up a time to discuss the matter during my office hours or on the phone. Please do not argue your point after class on the day I return an assignment. I expect you to communicate grade disputes with me within 48 hours of receiving your graded assignment.

Grades:

Final grading scale:

95-100	A	90-94	A-
87-89	B+	83-86	B
80-82	B-	77-79	C+
73-76	C	70-72	C-
67-69	D+	65-66	D
< 65	F		

*I do not calculate grades until the end of the semester when all work has been completed. It is your responsibility to keep track of your grades along the way.

Grade breakdown: I will always evaluate your work and provide you with feedback aimed at helping you to improve. Your earlier assignments are worth less than the ones you will complete later in the course.

10 percent	Class participation and attendance
10 percent	Writing and editing exercises
10 percent	Article one (news story)
20 percent	Article two (feature)
20 percent	Multimedia assignments (photo slideshow, map, Q&A)
30 percent	Final project (will have writing and interactive components)

Presentations: Each week, one or two students will lead a 10- to 15-minute discussion at the start of class about a news story related to online journalism that was published in the last two weeks. You are expected to email a link to the article(s) at least 48 hours in advance of your presentation to me and to your classmates, as well as five questions you want us to think about. You'll present a summary of the article(s) in class and then facilitate a discussion based on the five questions. Articles about journalism controversies and ethical questions often make for good discussions.

This presentation will factor into your class participation grade. Examples of sources to consult include, but are not limited to: [Poynter](#), [Wired](#), [Nieman Journalism Lab](#), [the public editor's blog](#) at the New York Times, the [On the Media](#) radio program and podcast from WNYC, the Gimlet podcast [Reply All](#), [PBS Mediashift](#) and the [Columbia Journalism Review](#).

Rough Drafts and Rewrites: You will write a rough draft and final draft of both your articles. Rough draft scores are factored into your final article score. The rough draft counts for one-third of your grade, the final draft counts as two-thirds.

This is a writing-intensive course; you may do a rewrite on any writing assignment (except a rough draft) if you're unhappy with your grade. If you choose to do a rewrite, please let me know. You will have until the last day of class to hand in any rewrites. A rewrite must include significant new information, such as a new or expanded interview, additional research or substantial rewriting of the lede/nut graph/body/kicker. You are responsible for including any new events or updates that occur before you hand in the rewrite to keep the piece up-to-date and timely. You may only rewrite a story once.

I will average your rewrite score with your original score to determine the final score.

Class Schedule:

Week One: Aug. 25

In class: Introductions, review syllabus. Discuss different forms of online storytelling. Review news story structure and lede writing.

Homework for next week:

- Complete lede writing exercise, print and bring to class on Tuesday, Sept. 1

Reading:

- Lede: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/735/05/>
- Lede: <http://cubreporters.org/leads.html> (read text only)
- The five Ws of writing for the web: <http://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/2011/11/14/the-5-ws-and-how-of-writing-for-the-web/>
- Writing an article versus writing a blog post:
<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~natt/newmedia/10rules.htm>

Week Two: Sept. 1

In class: Review homework. Writing for online vs. writing for print. Review of AP Style. How to pitch story ideas.

Homework for next week:

- Complete AP Style exercise, print out and bring to class on Tuesday, Sept. 8
- Press release writing exercise, print out and bring to class on Tuesday, Sept. 8
- Come up with an idea for your first article and email me a pitch by Sunday, Sept. 6 at noon. (See Sakai for examples from other students.)

Reading:

- Consuming news: http://www.cjr.org/cover_story/steams_of_consciousness.php
- News round-ups: http://www.cjr.org/news_literacy/news_roundups.php
- Focusing on the positive:
http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/good_news_is_good_business_but.php
- Email newsletters: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/30/business/media/for-email-a-death-greatly-exaggerated.html>
- Reading on the Internet: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/21/business/media/riding-the-juggernaut-that-left-print-behind.html>

Week Three: Sept. 8

In class: Review AP style and press release exercises. Interview best practices. Finding experts and sources. Consuming news on the web. Review Article #1 requirements.

Homework for next week:

- Email me a word document of Article #1 rough draft by Monday, Sept. 14 at 5 p.m. (at least three-quarters of 800 words with outline of whatever you need to finish). No photo or source list needed.

Reading:

- Photo permissions: <http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2013/01/who-really-owns-your-photos-in-social-media-updated-2013-edition025/>

- Creative Commons: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Week Four: Sept. 15

In class: Using a CMS: Uploading photos and embedding videos. Photo and video permissions. Review common mistakes from Article #1 rough drafts.

Homework for next week:

- Email me a word document of Article 1 final draft by start of class, Tuesday Sept. 22 (800 words). Must have source list and photo.
- Create a Storify account, if you don't already have one

Reading:

- Hyperlinking: <http://www.ojr.org/080215niles/>
- Twitter headlines: <http://www.copyblogger.com/twitter-headlines/>
- SEO and headlines: <http://mashable.com/2012/05/08/google-seo-headlines/>
- Tips for great headline writing: <http://blog.journalistics.com/2014/how-to-write-a-great-headline/>

Week Five: Sept. 22

In class: Hyperlinking best practices. Headline writing for the web. Reporting and creating a photo slideshow.

Homework for next week:

- Email me pitch for a Q&A story by Sunday Sept. 27 at noon.
- Photo slideshow is due by start of class, Tuesday Sept. 29

Reading:

- Audio for print journalists: <http://www.niemanlab.org/2009/03/audio-tips-for-print-reporters-from-nyt-sound-sage-amy-oleary/> (watch video or read transcript)
- Selected audio listening assignment (I will email to you)
- Editing quotes: <http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=1340>
- Content aggregation vs. patchworking: <http://www.poynter.org/news/mediawire/188789/patchwriting-is-more-common-than-plagiarism-just-as-dishonest/>

Week Six: Sept. 29

In class: Recording and producing a Q&A for the web. Best practices for content aggregation. Exercise: Multi-tasking at the scene.

Homework for next week:

- Q&A with audio and photo is due by start of class, Tuesday Oct. 13.

Reading:

- Ethics of phone apps: <http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/11/through-my-eye-not-hipstamatics/>
- Future of ethics: <http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2013/08/why-we-need-radical-change-for-media-ethics-not-a-return-to-basics/>
- Social media lessons (part one): <http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/01/if-a-tweet-worked-once-send-it-again-and-other-lessons-from-the-new-york-times-social-media-desk/>
- Social media lessons (part two): <http://www.niemanlab.org/2015/01/dont-try-too-hard-to-please-twitter-and-other-lessons-from-the-new-york-times-social-media-desk/>
- Twitter for journalists: <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/digital-strategies/146345/10-ways-journalists-can-use-twitter-before-during-and-after-reporting-a-story/>
- Citizen reporting: <http://www.pbs.org/idealab/2013/06/7-ways-newsrooms-can-boost-citizen-reporting157>

Week Seven: Oct. 6 — Fall Break — no class

Week Eight: Oct. 13

In class: Changing ethics in online journalism. Social media for online journalists and using citizen journalism. How to use Storify.

Homework for next week:

- Storify post is due by start of class, Tuesday Oct. 20.

Reading:

- Using Storify: <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsgathering-storytelling/116025/the-best-of-storify/>
- Using Storify: <http://zombiejournalism.com/2010/10/10-ways-journalists-can-use-storify/>
- Advanced Google searching: <http://ijnet.org/blog/top-tips-googles-power-searching-course-part-i>
- Advanced Google searching: <http://mashable.com/2011/11/24/google-search-infographic/>

Week Nine: Oct. 20

In class: Advanced research on the web. Creating a map using web research and data.

Homework:

- A 400-word story with map is due by start of class, Tuesday, Oct. 27.

Reading:

- Editing your own copy: <http://thewritelife.com/edit-your-copy/>

- Storyboarding (stop at “Example”):
<http://multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu/tutorials/starttofinish/storyboarding/>
- Feature writing: <http://collegemediamatters.com/2013/01/08/10-feature-writing-tips-from-tampa-bay-times-staffer-author-jeff-klinkenberg/>

Week Ten: Oct. 27

In class: Feature writing for the web and multimedia production (part one).

Homework for next week:

- Email me a pitch for Article #2 (feature) by start of class, Tuesday Nov. 3.

Reading:

- E-books: <http://niemanreports.org/articles/its-a-long-article-its-a-short-book-no-its-a-byliner-e-book/>
- Atavist: <http://niemanreports.org/articles/journalism-done-the-atavist-way/>
- Going long in the digital age: <http://www.ajr.org/article.asp?id=5165>
- Future of longform: http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/longform_conference.php
- Longform as the gateway: <http://www.poynter.org/news/mediawire/190421/as-longform-finds-a-new-home-at-buzzfeed-perhaps-its-a-good-gateway-drug/>

Week Eleven: Nov. 3

In class: Feature writing for the web and multimedia production (part two).

Homework for next week:

- Article 2 rough drafts are due to me by email by Sunday, Nov. 8 at noon. (at least three-quarters of 1,000 words plus outline of anything you need to finish). No source list or photo needed. Bring a printed copy to class on Tuesday, Nov. 10 for your writer’s workshop.

Reading:

- I will email you an audio listening assignment to get you ready for the writing workshop.

Week Twelve: Nov. 10

In class: Writing exercise. Writer’s workshop using your rough drafts.

Homework for next week:

- Article #2 final draft is due by start of class, Tuesday Nov. 17. Must have source list, hyperlinks and photo. (1,000 words)

Reading:

- Should metrics drive newsroom culture?
http://www.cjr.org/analysis/how_should_metrics_drive_newsroom_culture.php

- Lessons in innovation: <http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/05/the-leaked-new-york-times-innovation-report-is-one-of-the-key-documents-of-this-media-age/>
- Minutes over page views: http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/upworthy_attention_minutes.php
- The hamster wheel: http://www.cjr.org/cover_story/the_hamster_wheel.php
- The golden age of podcasting: http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/is_this_the_golden_age_of_podc_1.php

Week Thirteen: Nov. 17

In class: The business of writing and producing for the web. Measuring the impact of your work.

Homework for next week:

- Work on final project due by start of class, Tuesday Dec. 1

Reading:

- The first five years: <http://www.niemanlab.org/2012/06/realtalk-for-the-j-school-graduate-on-the-first-five-years-of-your-career/>
- A day in the life: <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/03/a-day-in-the-life-of-a-digital-editor-2013/273763/>
- Branding: http://www.cjr.org/cover_story/look_at_me.php
- Personal or professional? http://www.cjr.org/realtalk/balancing_the_personal_and_the.php
- Rules of the freelance game: http://www.cjr.org/realtalk/the_rules_of_the_freelance_gam.php

Week Fourteen: Nov. 24 — Week of Thanksgiving break

In class: Freelancing, working for online journalism companies, creating a journalist's online brand.

Homework for next week:

- Final project is due by start of class, Tuesday Dec. 1. Be prepared to present your project and tell the class 1) how you got your idea, 2) challenges you encountered and 3) your favorite part of producing the project. Email me a copy of your project and source list by the start of class.

Week Fifteen: Dec. 1 — Last day of class

In class: Final wrap-up. Presentation of final projects.

Writing grade guidelines:

A: Publishable work with a maximum of one spelling, grammatical, or punctuation error

and the proper information and sources written in a compelling, well-organized manner with proper web formatting.

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

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.

Some common deductions (you may lose points for other errors):

- 1 point AP Style error
- 1 point punctuation error
- 2 points spelling error
- 2 points grammar error
- 5 points for weak nut graph
- 2 points for run-on sentence
- 5 points for weak lede
- up to 10 points for research lapses or errors (each)
- up to 10 points for organizational errors
- up to 10 points for lack of source/not meeting source requirement
- 5 points for missing photo
- 5 points for missing source list