

**Department of Journalism  
Western Washington University  
Bellingham, WA 98225-9161  
(360) 650-3252, Fax (360) 650-2848  
Journalism 207, Newswriting (4 Credits)**

### **Catalog description**

Writing for news media; clarity in use of language, style and punctuation; sentence and paragraph structure and organization of stories; credibility of information and news judgment; basic methods of researching and writing. Weekly news discussions based on a newspaper as one of the texts.

### **Introduction**

Journalism 207 provides training for the kind of quality writing expected in news articles, but also in reports, letters, memos and research papers. Many graduates who have taken this course now are recognized writers on newspapers and magazines. Some are book authors, and many work in public relations, public information or in similar jobs that place an emphasis on the ability to take a complex topic and write about it with clarity and accuracy.

Students determine the news of an event or topic, analyze its important aspects and summarize the information in a form that is easily readable. Completed stories should be accurate, clear and concise and should offer readers information from which they can gain a better understanding of the event or topic.

Students will use a daily newspaper in class to consider regional, national and international events. Reading the newspaper on the Web will NOT be accepted as a substitute for taking the paper edition.

### **The course**

Students write news stories during class sessions under the pressure of deadlines similar to those faced by professionals. On occasion, students will have their stories critiqued by other students as a classroom exercise in editing.

They also will write stories out of class; these can include a feature story, a news event on campus and a profile.

Students will work on organization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, use of the English language and news-writing style found in "The Associated Press Stylebook." This stylebook is a common resource used beyond news organizations, such as in public relations and public information.

Classroom discussion and writing assignments will include leads (the beginning of a story), how to do research, news values, ethics and libel. Joseph Pulitzer, commenting on what he thought was the most important aspect of journalism, said: "Accuracy. Accuracy. Accuracy." Students should take his advice to heart!

## **Instructor's expectations of students**

Students will be expected to attend every class meeting, take part in the discussions about news events and practice habits of careful writing and editing. Students will be quizzed in writing AP news style and on punctuation, spelling and grammar.

Late papers without an authorized excuse will be penalized at least 10 percent per day of the total paper score. Incorrectly spelling a name, mistaking a position title or making a significant fact error can result in a loss of 10 percent of the paper's point total.

At the end of this course, students should know what constitutes news and be able to write a basic news story.

## **Texts**

The most recent editions of:

“Telling the Story,” The Missouri Group

“Working With Words,” Brooks, Pinson, Wilson

“The Associated Press Stylebook”

“Webster’s New World Dictionary” or equivalent dictionary

An assigned daily newspaper

(Note: The above books are used in other journalism courses, so once you've purchased these, you might not need more for other journalism writing or staff courses.)