Course Outline

Most classes will begin with a brief lecture and/or discussion. The lecture will cover assigned reading and the previous writing assignment. The reading should be completed prior to class. An assignment or writing exercise will follow, so be prepared to immediately use what we discuss. Most of the assignments will be written in class, on deadline—which means they will be due by the end of class. The following outline is a guide. It will change, so don’t tattoo it to your forearm.

Aug 20: Introduction and class overview. Distribution of syllabus and discussion of expectations, grading, etc. An installment of Media Writing Theater, followed by a take-home assignment.

Aug 22: Format, AP Style, grammar and spelling. Reading: Chapters 1, 2 and Appendices B, C, E.

Aug 27 & 29: Newswriting style and language of the news.
Reading: Chapters 3, 4.

Sept. 5: News judgement, objectivity, accuracy and ethics. Reading: Chapter 5.
Sept. 10/12: Basic news leads.
Reading: Chapter 6.

Oct. 1/3: Speeches and meetings. Reading: Chapter 11.
Oct. 8/10: Review Leads, quotes and meetings.
Oct. 15/17: Obituaries. Reading: Chapter 12.
Oct. 29/31: Feature stories.
Reading: Chapter 14

Nov. 5/7: Public affairs reporting. Reading: Chapter 15.
Nov. 12/14: A week for catching up, attacking weaknesses.
Nov. 19-23: Thanksgiving break (no class)
Nov. 26/28: Writing for broadcast and public relations.
Reading: Chapters 16 & 17.
Dec. 3/5: Putting it all together: individual meetings regarding feature stories.
Dec. 10/12: Finals week.
Submission of feature story.

JAMM 121

Media Writing

Fall 2007 - MW 3:30-5:20 p.m.
Administration Building, Rm. 225

■ Reaching your instructor

Craig Staszkow: Mondays by appointment, Administration Building, Rm. 340
Phone: (208) 882-5561, ext. 252 (w); (208) 596-0260 (cell)
E-mail: craigs@uidaho.edu

■ Some basics

Required text: Reporting for the Media, 8th Edition (Fred Fedler, et al.)
Recommended reading: A daily newspaper, either print or online: Moscow-Pullman Daily News; Lewiston Tribune; Idaho Spokesman-Review; University of Idaho Argonaut; Washington State University Evergreen; your hometown newspaper.

It can only help: You should own a good dictionary and thesaurus
Prerequisites: Passage of English 101 & 102 and the ability to use a computer to research, type, edit and print a word document.

What’s at stake: A “C” or better is required in this class for students wishing to major or minor in a Journalism and Mass Media (JAMM) area.

■ Why we are here

We are here to write. You will learn basic writing skills needed to succeed in a career in communications and prepare you to succeed in other JAMM courses. Not a JAMM major? Don’t worry. The ability to write well is one of the most important skills you will acquire in college. You will use what you learn.

■ Attendance

This is a lab class and attendance is key. About 90 percent of your grade will be derived from the writing assignments and quizzes completed in class. Missing a class means a “0” for that day’s assignment and/or quiz. There will be little “homework” aside from assigned reading. That’s good and bad. You won’t have a lot of outside work, but students expecting to pass will need to come to class ready to listen and ready to learn.

■ Grading

In-class writing assignments (80 percent): Expect about 15 writing assignments during the course of the semester. The majority will be done in class, on deadline. The two lowest in-class assignment grades can be dropped. That means you can miss two classes without direct effect on your grade. I don’t want to hear an excuse, and you don’t need to offer one. After two missed assignments, a third assignment can be made up with a 25-point penalty. Miss any more than three assignments, and the grade is an automatic “0” that will count against you.

Quizzes (10 percent): These will pop up periodically and cover basic elements of the reading assignments. The lowest quiz grade can be dropped.

Feature story (10 percent): In the absence of a final exam, you will be required to develop, research and write a feature story.

Extra Credit: There will be opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester.

What your grade means:
A (90-100); B (80-89); C (70-79); D (60-69); F (60 or below)

■ Plagiarism/fraud/academic dishonesty

The University of Idaho is not in the business of sending dishonest students into the real world, and any such dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. Students who have engaged in obvious plagiarism will fail the assignment and be referred immediately to the dean of students.

■ Accuracy, accuracy, accuracy

A gentle warning to the hopelessly sloppy or terminally unfocused. This class is all about accuracy. Names MUST be spelled correctly. Facts MUST be correct. Your assignment grade will automatically drop one full grade with each misspelled name or major error in fact.

■ My philosophy, your chances of succeeding

For starters, I’m a working journalist. You’ll quickly find my approach to teaching is less about theory, more about nuts and bolts. Successful students will do five things: Read the textbook; come to class; listen to and apply information from lectures; pay attention to detail, and learn from mistakes. There’s never been a student in my class who has done these things and not passed.