

COMM 4565: MEDIA PRODUCTION
Syllabus: Spring Semester 2014

Instructor: Taleen Washington **Office hours:** T and TH, 11 a.m. – noon
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Coursesite: www.uhclmediaproduction.com

Class meets: T, TH 4 – 7 p.m., Bayou Building, Room B1239
(may run later on production nights if students fall behind schedule)

Prerequisites: COMM. 3231 – Writing for the Media (or a similar class at another university)
Must successfully have passed the GSP test

Textbooks:

- The Associated Press Stylebook (required)
- The Newspaper Designer's Handbook (recommended)
- The Signal Handbook (available for free on coursesite)

Supplies:

- One File Folder with two inside pockets.
- One Flashdrive

Course description:

This course is designed to introduce you to the various phases of media production, including fact gathering, journalistic writing, broadcast reporting, copy editing, outline writing, headline writing, photography, videography, design, Web design, social media, advertising sales and circulation. A series of lectures on these topics held early in the semester will help you with the basic techniques. For the purpose of this class, the transferable skills learned will be put to use producing print and online editions of the UHCL student newspaper, The Signal. The real learning takes place on the job as you produce six issues of the university paper, The Signal.

This semester, you will be responsible for all phases of The Signal's production. You will select the stories to be covered, write the articles, copy edit the content, take the photographs, shoot and edit the videos, design the paper and its cover, send the camera-ready proofs to the printer, circulate the issues when they return from the printer, and sell advertising to support the publication. I will serve as your teacher and adviser, helping you however and whenever needed, but the overall quality and content of The Signal now belongs to you.

Each person in the class will be assigned staff positions, according to skill and preference. All students will split their skills between writing and visual/social media/advertising. Positions available include: editor, assistant editor, design editor, assistant design editor, reporter, broadcast reporter, photographer, videographer, social media coordinator and advertising representative. Your assignments for the classes will depend largely on your position on the paper's staff.

Objectives:

It is my hope that by the end of the semester you will gain a solid understanding of media production as it pertains to newspaper publication. All of the skills learned in this class are used in the field of communication. The expertise you acquire in this class should enhance your professional potential in the media industry. You will find that the class also serves as a source of creative work for your portfolio.

Publication Assignments/Grading Policies:

The Signal will be published six times this semester. This means you will have six "assignments" during the semester that will count for 60 percent of your grade. An assignment consists of all the work you do for one issue. Depending on your position, your contribution may be in writing, photography, video, illustration, copy editing, advertising or design, or some combination thereof. But you will make a contribution to each issue, and your grade will depend on the quality of your original submission, its timeliness and, in the case of written work, the quality of your re-write, as well as your overall class participation on that issue. With that in mind, please note that deadlines are sacred in the field of communication. Assignments not submitted in time for publication will receive a grade of "F." Missing a production night will cost you a grade for every production night missed. So if an absence on production night is absolutely unavoidable, to avoid a grade penalty absent student must: 1) make sure work is still submitted on time; and 2) make up missed production night hours (arrange in advance with instructor).

Everyone on staff will have to write at least two articles for the paper. To count for a grade, your work must be suitable for publication. Minor revision is to be expected, but stories that require major rewriting on the part of the editors will not be given a grade or byline – if it runs at all. In the event your work is acceptable but not used because of space limitations, you will still earn credit. Major mistakes found after publication, such as significant inaccuracies due to lazy reporting habits – including misspelled names/titles – will automatically result in the loss of one letter grade from the grade previously received for each occurrence.

Note: Assignment grades are subject to change after publication if significant errors are found.

Beat Reports/Style Quizzes/Class Participation:

The remaining 40 percent of your grade will be based on class participation (10 percent), style quizzes (20 percent), and beat reports (10 percent). You will be expected to maintain a weekly beat and turn in beat reports to your editor. Beat sheets are due every week by noon on Mondays. Occasionally, you may find that there is nothing happening on your beat. If this is the case say so in your beat report, but you are still responsible for submitting a story idea that would be suitable for the news or feature section. Include enough information to help the editor make a story assignment, i.e., pertinent dates, background info., names/sources of information, etc.

Breakdown of Grades:

Issue Assignments	60%
Beat Reports	10%
Quizzes	20% (Note: handwritten notes allowed except for AP Style Quizzes)
Class Participation	10%

NOTE: A grade of "Incomplete" is given **only** in cases of documented emergency or special circumstances late in the semester, provided that you have been making satisfactory progress. Failure to keep up with the pace of the course does not qualify students for an incomplete.

Why do students need a Pocket Folder and Flash Drive?

Students use the flashdrive to save their work, as well as to transfer work from one computer to another. *TIP: Remember the rule of three when it comes to saving your work – saving to a computer hard drive, flash drive and external hard drive help protect work from being lost.*

Students are required to purchase a paper folder with two inside pockets. The student's name must be easily visible on the outside of the folder. The folder is to be used to submit Final Drafts to the editors on production day. The left side of the inside folder pocket is to be labeled "Copy." Include a hardcopy of your rewrite and final copy (for comparison purposes) and a disk with the final version of your article inside this pocket. The disk should include ONLY the latest version of your article. Also include in the "copy" pocket all accompanying material gathered for the assignment including that week's story assignment sheet.

The right side of the inside folder pocket is to be labeled "Photos & Cutlines." Include the printouts of your photos with the cutlines printed underneath inside this pocket. All photos (except for events that took place after Tuesday) should have been turned in to the designers by class time on Tuesday on a CD. If photos are printed rather than digital, the photographer will be responsible for scanning the photos to turn them into a digital format. Photographers are responsible for weeding out unusable photos so that designers do not have to spend excessive amounts of time wading through submissions. All photos should be shot a resolution of at least 150 dpi. Before submitting the photos to the designers, make copies for yourself.

Extra Credit

Students have the opportunity to earn extra credit by taking on extra assignments such as writing additional news stories, columns or features; submitting photographs/cutlines, slideshow or videos; etc. The assignment has to be published to receive the extra credit. Students also have the opportunity to sell ad space (as well as design the ad) for extra credit. The amount of extra credit awarded is determined by complexity of the assignment.

Lab Time

On production weeks for The Signal, our class time will be used primarily for publication of the newspaper. Tuesdays we will meet briefly as a staff at the beginning of each class period to discuss issues related to the particular week's paper, then the class will break up so individuals can work on story rewrites, design, reporting, photography, etc., depending on his/her position on the paper. Thursdays will be devoted to copy editing, design and publication of the newspaper.

Production Night

On production weeks for The Signal, Thursday is the night we "put the paper to bed." If everyone has stayed on track, the class should end on time. If, however, the work is not suitable for publication, the staff is required to stay until the newspaper is suitable for publication. A grade penalty will be imposed for anyone not meeting this responsibility: one full grade will be deducted from the student's final grade for every missed production night.

Circulation

Each member of the staff will sign up to help with distribution of at least three of the seven issues. It goes quickly with several staff members working together. The paper is usually delivered Monday around noon. If your schedule absolutely prevents you from helping with

distribution on Mondays, I will work with you to distribute another day. Failure to meet distribution assignments will result in loss to participation grade.

Changes in schedule or material

The syllabus is not a binding contract. I reserve the right to make any changes necessary in the class schedule or material in order to make the class flow better. Any such changes will be announced in class. Absence from class on the day such a change is announced is no excuse for ignorance of it. If you must be absent, you are responsible for finding out what you missed.

Accommodations:

If you have a disability and need a special accommodation, consult first the Coordinator of Health Disabilities Services, Bayou 1402, telephone (281) 283-2627, and then discuss the accommodation with me. A disability form should be turned in to me by the second week of class. I will make every effort to see that you are comfortable in the classroom.

New Student Information:

If communication is to be your major and you have not yet declared it as such, please do so at your earliest convenience by visiting Ann Hinojosa or Cruz Flores in room B1539. The phone number for the advising office is (218) 283-3334. Once you declare you major, you will be assigned an adviser who will help you complete a Candidate Plan of Study form, guaranteeing your degree plan. Your adviser will review the communication curriculum with you, help you elect courses that fit your interests, explain the need to save work for your portfolio, and talk with you about coordinating an internship. All communication majors are required to pass the Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation Test, which is offered three to four times a semester. The dates will be posted on the Communication Bulletin Board outside the newsroom. You must pass the test before you can enroll for an internship. Sample GSP tests are available in the Writing Center in room B2304. The phone number for the Writing Center is (281) 283-2910.

THE "6 DROP" RULE IN TEXAS:

In Texas, you are not allowed to drop more than six classes after the "Census Date" from initial registration. If you started at any Texas public community college, four-year college, or university in the fall of 2007 or later, you can't drop more than six courses during your entire Texas college career. For more information on the "6 Drop" rule, visit:
http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/ADV/6_Drop_Rule.

A few ground rules:

Again, deadlines are sacred. The only exception granted will be when we are covering an event that occurs past deadline. I cannot write this more clearly, so do not ask for leniency on this point. If you encounter difficulty with an assignment, contact the editor immediately.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. Please refer to the UHCL catalog for the Academic Honesty Policy. Plagiarism, that is using research without citations or using a created production without crediting the source, will result in a grade penalty of "F" for the assignment and the possibility of failure for the course.

This is a writing class, you are not allowed to rerun press releases and attach your name to the byline – that's still plagiarism because you did not write the press release. You can use information from a press release, but you must rewrite the information AND include new information AND include new quotes.

We do not take quotes out of other publications. Even though a quote belongs to the speaker, it is unethical to use a direct quote that you were not given permission to use. Besides, it may be wrong or taken out of context.

We do not interview friends and relatives, nor do we include them in our photographs. This is especially tempting for your photo-journal projects – do not yield to this temptation, it will be detrimental to your grade. No convenience interviews. No self-promotion (this includes our children, no matter how adorable they may be).

Attendance and punctuality are essential – especially on production weeks. Please try not to miss class or come in late. You will miss important information and/or part of the publication process. If you do have to miss a class, contact the editor for an update of your assignment. Absences/tardiness will be detrimental to your grade.

Please turn off cell phones and beepers during the lecture portion of the class. It is very disruptive to the other students – and to the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Week 1 January 14 & 16

Tuesday: Introduction to course objectives. Review parts of paper. Discuss syllabus, staff roles and responsibilities, production cycles and copy preparation. Review in The Signal Handbook: AP Style and proofreaders' marks, news writing, script writing, photography techniques, broadcast script writing, videography (filming techniques), etc. **Hand out Student Profile Forms** (students will complete and return for Thursday's class).

Thursday: Discuss beat coverage. **Hand out Beat Preference forms**. Will collect Beat Preference forms after break. **Newspaper Distribution** sheet passed around. Review grading policy. **Handouts: How to Make an "A," Recommended Story Lengths, and 20 Most Common AP Style Mistakes**. Review fact gathering, fact checking, and copy editing. *In class Gathering Information exercise.*

Read: AP Style Section in The Signal Handbook. Study handout of **20 Most Common AP Style Mistakes**.

All students should have current student IDs made by next week so they can get press passes.

Week 2 January 21 & 23

Tuesday: Staff positions and beats assigned (beat reports due weekly beginning next Monday). Review how to do beat reports. Review interviewing techniques and quotations. First issue assignments handed out and discussed in staff meeting. **Handouts: How To Write An Outline For Article; Action Verbs; Prepositions**

Thursday: Check on assignments for issue 1.
Quiz 1 – AP Style Quiz #1 (no notes allowed).

Read: Sections A-G in your AP Stylebook.

Week 3 January 28 & 30

(Send students names and ID numbers to Student Life Office to make press passes.)

Monday: Beat Reports due by noon. Reporters' first drafts due by noon.

Tue/Thurs: Lab (production week for issue 1).

Read: Sections H-M in your AP Stylebook.
 Sections on Interviews, Beats and Submission in The Signal Handbook.
 Section in Signal Handbook appropriate to your individual assignment.

Week 4 February 4 & 6

Monday: Distribute Issue 1. Beat reports are due by noon.

Tuesday: Staff Meeting – assign stories for Issue 2.

Thursday: Check on assignments for Issue 2.
 Hand back Quiz 1 and review answers.
 Quiz 2 – Signal Handbook: Interviews, Beats and Submission Guidelines.
 (handwritten-only notes allowed during quiz)

Review: Sections M-R in your AP Stylebook.

Week 5 February 11 & 13

Monday: Beat reports due by noon. Reporters' first drafts due by noon.

Tue/Thurs: Lab (production week for issue 2).

Read: Story/Photo/B-cast/Video/Graphic Guidelines sections in Signal Handbook.
 Section in Signal Handbook appropriate to your individual assignment.

Week 6 February 18 & 20

Monday: Distribute Issue 2. Beat reports due by noon.

Tuesday: Staff meeting – assign stories for Issue 3.

Thursday: Check on assignments for Issue 3.
 Hand back Quiz 2 and review answers.
 Quiz 3 – Signal Handbook: Story/Photo/Broadcast/Video/Graphic Guidelines.
 (handwritten-only notes allowed during quiz)

Read: S-Z in your AP Stylebook
 Section in Signal Handbook appropriate to your individual assignment

Week 7 February 25 & 27

Monday: Beat reports due by noon. Reporters' first drafts due by noon.

Tue/Thurs: Lab (production week for issue 3). Note: Publication date is after Spring Break.

Read: How to write headlines/cutlines/leads in Signal Handbook
Glossary of Terms in Signal Handbook

Week 8 March 4 & 6

Monday: Distribute Issue 3. Beat reports due by noon.

Tuesday: Staff meeting – assign stories for Issue 4 (production lab after spring break).

Thursday: Check on assignments for Issue 4.
Hand back Quiz 3 and review answers.
Quiz 4 – Signal Handbook: Headlines/Cutlines/Leads and Glossary of Terms
(handwritten-only notes allowed during quiz)

Read: Section in Signal Handbook section appropriate to your individual assignment.

Week 9 March 11 & 13
Spring Break, no classes

Week 10 March 18 & 20

Monday: Beat reports due by noon. Reporters' first drafts due by noon.

Tue/Thurs: Lab (production week for issue 4)

Read: Review AP Style section in Signal Handbook again.
Review class handout – 20 Most Common AP Style Mistakes again.
Section in Signal Handbook appropriate to your individual assignment.

Week 11 March 25 & 27

Monday: Distribute Issue 4. Beat reports due by noon.

Tuesday: Staff meeting – assign stories for Issue 5.

Thursday: Check on assignments for Issue 5.
Hand back Quiz 4 and review answers.
Quiz 5 – AP Style Quiz #2 (no notes allowed)

Read: Section in Signal Handbook appropriate to your individual assignment.

Week 12 April 1 & 3

Monday: Beat reports due by noon – ALL suggestions should focus on
20th anniversary of Conference for Research and Creative Arts.
Reporters' first drafts for Issue 5 due at noon.

Tue/Thurs: Lab (production week for Issue 5)

Week 13 April 8 & 10

Monday: Distribute Issue 5. Beat reports due by noon – ALL suggestions should focus on 20th anniversary of Conference for Research and Creative Arts.

Tuesday: Staff meeting – assign stories for Issue 6, special edition – cover 20th anniversary of Conference for Research and Creative Arts held on campus next week.

Thursday: TIPA Convention in San Antonio for professor and editors. No class meeting.

Read: Section in Signal Handbook appropriate to your individual assignment.

Week 14 April 15 & 17

Tue/Thurs: Check on assignments for issue 6. Conference ongoing this week – cover assignments live.

Week 15 April 22 & 24

Monday: Reporters' first drafts due by noon.

Tue/Thurs: Lab (production week for issue 6).

Week 16 April 29 & May 1

Monday: Distribute Issue 6

FINAL EXAM WEEK – There will be no final exam for this class. No class meetings.