

# Journalism 310 Intermediate Print Reporting

## Syllabus, Spring 2008

**Section:** 01  
**Instructor:** Frank Thayer  
**Office:** MH 156  
**Telephone:** 646-5048 e-mail: fthayer@nmsu.edu  
**Class Hours:** TTh 10:20–11:35 a.m.  
**Meeting Place:** MH 154A

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:** Associated Press Stylebook  
Subscription To Albuquerque Journal (through j-office)

**PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:** To introduce journalists to the theory and practice of gathering and writing the news. Students will be expected to show competence in writing news stories and in gathering material necessary for complete, understandable news stories suitable for use in today's print media, wire services, and Net news services. Classroom exercises will be supplemented with campus coverage through service with the NMSU student newspaper the Round Up and/or local newspapers. Admission to JOUR 310 requires successful completion of JOUR 210 as a prerequisite.

### NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION

Students in this course are required to subscribe to the *Albuquerque Journal* for the Spring 2008 semester. The subscriptions cost \$15.00 for the semester, payable to the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications by 31 January 2008. Students who have a private subscription to the *Albuquerque Journal* or who are subscribed through another course in the department are excused from this requirement upon presentation of documented evidence of the other subscription.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Satisfactory completion of all writing assignments given in class (see absence and makeup policy).
2. Satisfactory performance on in-class quizzes based on reporting principles and material from class materials and discussions.
3. Submission of Round Up (or other news journal) clippings as proof of performance.
4. Satisfactory completion of a final examination.
5. The use of clear and correct English grammar in all written communication, with the Associated Press Stylebook as the final arbiter of any and all style questions.
6. An understanding of the rudimentary laws of libel as they apply to the reporter, and as discussed in the AP stylebook.

**COMPUTATION OF GRADES:** All assignments will be graded on a 0-100% scale, with final averages leading to the following letter grades:

90 - 100%.....	A
80 - 89.9% .....	B
70 - 79.9% .....	C
60 - 69.9% .....	D
under 60% .....	F

Averages within 2 percentage points of the next higher or lower grade will receive + or -

**COMMENTS ON GRADING:** As a journalist, you will be judged by the stories you gather and write. Each class assignment you submit will be graded for content and for mechanics. In journalism, it is impossible to separate information from clarity of expression. At the discretion of the instructor, you may be allowed to rewrite an assignment in order to improve your grade. If given the rewrite opportunity, you must submit the rewritten copy by a given deadline and the resulting rewrite grade will be averaged with the original grade as your final score on that particular assignment.

The grading guidelines you learned in JOUR 210 will be in effect for JOUR 310:

Factual errors.....	-30% (content)
Misquotation .....	-25% (content)
Libel .....	-25% (content)
AP style errors .....	-5% (mechanics)
Grammar/spelling errors .....	-5% (mechanics)
Missed deadline .....	(see below)

**DEADLINES, ABSENCES AND MAKEUP WORK:** While attendance will be kept, absences will not be a problem if absences conform to the following: Up to three excused absences will be allowed in this course, and excused absences include illnesses excused in writing by a qualified physician (or psychiatrist), university-approved activities cleared with the instructor **in advance of the activity**, and other unforeseen difficulties cleared with the instructor at the time they occur—not after the activity or absence has occurred. Absences beyond the three approved instances will result in grades of zero for assignments missed at that time. All assigned stories and assignments are due on deadline, and the only exceptions are given above, even though your copy should be submitted prior to an anticipated absence. Makeup work is seldom approved, but can be worked out with the instructor in the framework of excused absences or medical circumstances. All other missed work, missed classes, missed quizzes or examinations, will result in grades of zero. The instructor reserves the right to act in the student's interest when consecutive unexcused absences make it unlikely that the student will be able to progress in, or pass JOUR 310. Students who miss three consecutive classes without notifying the instructor or the university are subject to being dropped from the course without notice. **This provision is applicable at the beginning of the semester for students who do not attend the first two consecutive classes and prior to mid semester when a failing average may suggest to the student that a W is preferable to a D or F grade.**

**ROUND UP ASSIGNMENT:** You will be assigned to write news stories for the Round Up, The Merge online magazine, or for area newspapers during the coming semester. While all journalistic work requires effort and talent, no credit will be given for non-news stories. Book and movie reviews, interviews with local or touring bands, opinion pieces, and/or sports stories (game coverage) will not count for the bulk of your news publication requirements. You will be expected to publish no fewer than seven (7) news stories (or 80 column inches, whichever you prefer) in the Round Up or other news journal during the semester. Of these, one story can be a feature article, sports story, review of an entertainment event, etc. (credited for no more than 20 column inches), but the rest must be news coverage of the NMSU campus, or of the Las Cruces area. By news is meant a coverage of events that requires the reporter to do research in secondary sources, conduct interviews with newsmakers and with official agencies, and write a comprehensive account of the event. There will be times when your story will not be published by the intended newspaper, but you may feel that it should "count". Always generate a hard copy of each story you file, and then you may be able to submit your

copy of a good news story that doesn't make it into print. Such stories may, **only at the discretion of the instructor**, be accepted as part of the Round Up requirement.

**PARTICIPATION:** If you come to every class and make scheduled presentations, your participation grade will be 100%. Unexcused absences, or absences beyond the three excused absence policy, will result in a minimum 10% deduction from the participation grade. Failure to attend for your scheduled class presentations such as news briefings and/or book reports will result in a further 10% deduction in the participation grade in each instance of failure to participate on schedule.

### **CALCULATING YOUR GRADE:**

Reporting Assignments, quizzes, exams etc. ....	75%
Newspaper publication .....	15%
Attendance/participation .....	10%

To calculate your grade, average any applicable assignment and rewrite scores where allowed for each reporting assignment, then average the resulting scores by summing all scores and dividing by the number of assignments given during the semester. Missing assignments will count as zero unless specifically excused by the instructor. Multiply the reporting assignment, quiz, and examination scores by .75 =

Multiply your awarded Round Up average by .15 =

Multiply your awarded participation score by .10 =

The sum of the resulting three numbers will give you the semester score from which your letter grade will be determined.

### **TENTATIVE ACTIVITY SCHEDULE**

Course Introduction	17 Jan.
The nature of news/newsroom organization/Copy preparation	22 & 24 Jan.
Preparation of Copy/Finding stories	29 & 31 Jan.
Writing the lead	5 & 7 Feb.
Story Organization	12 & 14 Feb.
Quotes and Attribution	19 & 21 Feb.
Toward Better Newswriting/Avoiding Libel	26 & 28 Feb.
Precision in facts and language	4 & 6 Mar.
Last day to drop with a "W"	10 Mar.
Reporting on race and gender	11 & 13 Mar.
Using tape recorders for interviewing	13 Mar.
Covering Speeches	18 & 20 Mar.
Spring Break	25 & 27 Mar.
Interview Techniques	1 & 3 Apr.
Covering Meetings	8 & 10 Apr.
Writing the Obituary	15 & 17 Apr.
Police and Fire reporting	22 & 24 Apr.
Disasters/Press Conferences/Polls & Survey	29 Apr. & 1 May
Final Examination	8 May 10:30–12:30

**INCOMPLETE GRADES:** Grades of incomplete ("I") are seldom authorized in JOUR 310. To qualify for a grade of "I", the student must have satisfactorily completed the first half of the course ("C" average or better) and be prevented from completing the course as a result of a documented illness or other critical situation made known to the instructor prior to the end of the semester. In the rare case of an "I" award, the student must

complete appropriate news stories in succeeding semesters to clear the “I” grade. See page 19 in the NMSU catalog for specific details.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** The university, and this department, will do everything possible to assist disabled students achieve success in the course, providing access and referral to special assistance where necessary. Students with disabilities are asked to confer with the instructor at the beginning of the course concerning any special arrangements that may be necessary to assist them in achieving course goals. Students who consider themselves to have disabilities are encouraged to get documentation from the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) Office located at Corbett Center, Room 244 [Phone: 646-6840; TTY: 646-1918] (note: this office has no listing in the directory, but the phone numbers MAY still be active)

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT/:** While academic misconduct is an unlikely occurrence, such activities as cheating on examinations, submitting stories written by others, etc. are serious matters. Any student caught in academic misconduct will be referred to the university disciplinary officer as specified in the Student Code of Conduct; further, students caught engaging in academic misconduct will be summarily dropped from the course if the incident is discovered prior to the course drop deadline, and if the incident occurs after that date, a grade of F will be awarded for the course.

**GENERAL COMMENTS:** Because this course requires a certain amount of commitment outside of class, it is suggested that you work out your Round Up schedule with some care. As this course is the primary foundation for a career in news editorial-related fields or in public relations, you are expected to give much more than your time toward becoming a competent, published journalist. It is certainly worth your effort. Reporting is more than transcribing an event you have observed; it is transmitting a clear, understandable account of what actually occurred in crime, government, education, health, business, science, or any of the other highly complex fields you may be covering as a professional in a few short years.

*FINAL EXAMINATION:* 10:30—12:30 Thursday 8 May 2008  
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