

Journalism 102: Fall 2009 - JOUR-102-M20-200940

Grammar for Journalists

4:30-6:00 p.m., Mondays

August 20-October 9, 2009

Instructor: Vicki Nisbett – Available by appointment

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Purpose: To provide students with the basic understanding of AP Style grammar, punctuation and spelling concepts while preparing them to pass the NMSU Journalism Department Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation (GSP) test with a minimum of 70 percent or higher.

Supplies Needed:

- Three-ring binder (to hold handouts)
- Sample GSP test (bring to each class)
- Two NMSU Test Score Sheets (large blue)
- Pen, pencil and paper for spelling exercises
- English Verbs, laminated charts sold in Bookstore (optional, but very helpful)
- Access to a dictionary either by book or internet (see blackboard)

Books:

Required:

“Woe Is I,” second edition (paperback)

By Conner, Patricia T.,

ISBN: 9781594480065

Optional, but strongly recommended:

“The Associated Press Stylebook”

ISBN: 9780465004898

(You’ll need this book as a Journalism major.)

“A Writer’s Reference”

By Hacker St. Martin (Paperback)

ISBN: 0-312-54993-8

Web sites and additional material:

The following Web Sites are helpful for additional study and some sites have quizzes:

www.dianahacker.com/writersref

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/GRAMMAR/quiz_list.htm

<http://www.jprof.com/editing/gspdguide.html>

I will also hand out additional study material that you should study and memorize.

Comments:

This course should provide you with a comfortable level of knowledge for AP-style grammar, punctuation and spelling and to pass the GSP. This course is also for non-journalism students as anyone can benefit. Be aware that for you to be able to reach these goals depends on your reading, studying the required material, asking questions and actively participating in class. Participation is defined as purposefully engaging in class discussions, asking questions and reading assigned problems orally in class as well as participating in all group activities. If you

don't understand something, please ask me because there's a lot of information to cover. I will take the time after class or we can make an appointment to discuss it.

Attendance and punctuality:

Attendance is absolutely necessary for your understanding of the course as well as points toward your grade. Attendance sheets will be passed out at each class. If you arrive late too often, you will be marked as absent for each subsequent tardy.

If an absence is absolutely necessary, please come talk to me or e-mail me beforehand or afterward so that I can give you your assignments and handouts.

Note: After two unexcused absences, every subsequent unexcused absence will drop your final grade by 5 percent.

GSP Test:

The official Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation test will be offered on October 9, 2009 exclusively for students in this class. A GSP quiz will be given after everything has been covered to see how you're progressing.

Grades:

Attendance 40 percent
Participation 10 percent
Assignments 10 percent
GSP Score 40 percent*

* 20 percent for taking the test, 15 percent for passing the test and 5 percent for scoring 85 percent or better.

Spelling

I will assign spelling words on the board for each class. You'll need to write each word in pen/pencil five times on paper and while doing this, say the word out loud. Research shows that by doing this, you will remember the words better. In addition, write what type of word it is, i.e., noun, adjective, adverb, etc. and also write the first definition from the dictionary. Turn in spelling homework at the next class.

Instructor information:

Working at White Sands Missile Range, I was a technical editor, among other positions, before returning to college. I always wanted to get my degree.

In Summer 2006, I took the GSP test without a seminar and passed the first time (I studied via the Practice GSP test and assorted Web Site GSP tests.) During my college years at NMSU, I took a class called, "Grammar and Punctuation for Teachers" in the English Department.

After graduating with a BA in Journalism and a minor in Professional Communications in 2007, I started my own business, called *Punctilious Publications*. My first assignment was with the TV program *Inside Edition* investigating a serial killer's ex-wife. Two months later, I was asked to freelance for *The Las Cruces Sun-News*, and then I was hired as a *Sun-News* advertorial/features' writer and designer shortly thereafter. I now freelance writing stories and taking photos for the *Sun-News* and *Haussamen on New Mexico Politics'* blog and write stories for *In The Know* magazine. This summer I also proofed an author's second novel.

For my community involvement, I'm a trained La Pinon Sexual Assault Victim Advocate on call at least four times per month. Please feel free to ask me questions in this regard!

Tentative schedule:

- August 24 Introduction/Course overview (syllabus)/Questions
Take Matching Definition Quiz #1 during class, (participation points) and review answers. Discuss basics of grammar.
Assign homework: Matching Definition Quiz #2, read assigned pages in *Woe is I*, answer questions 1-20 in GSP Practice exam, give spelling words and handouts to study.
- August 31 Turn-in Matching Definition Quiz #2 and spelling homework. Discuss grammar. Give subject/verb agreement exercise. Group activities. Discuss punctuation. Assign homework: Read assigned pages in *Woe is I*, answer questions 21-80 in GSP Practice exam, give spelling words to study.
- September 7 Labor Day holiday, no class.
- September 14 Review homework and have group activities. Handout additional study material.
Assign homework: Handout exercises, give spelling words to study.
- September 21 Review homework and discuss GSP. Assign homework: Answer handout questions, give spelling words to study.
- September 28 Review homework and have quiz on grammar, punctuation and spelling **(bring large test sheet and No. 2 pencil)**.
Assign homework: Answer handout questions, give spelling words to study.
- October 5 Review quiz and review for GSP test.
- October 9 Take the GSP test **(bring large test sheet and No. 2 pencil)**.

Note: We may have a spelling quiz on any day except for the first day.