Welcome to COMM 230, fall 2008. This course is a study of and practice in the fundamentals of writing for print and electronic media, as well as writing press releases. You will examine the importance of writing for your audience in clear, precise language. You will learn interviewing techniques, as well as how to gather, analyze and organize information. AP style will be adhered to in all writing assignments. You will have in-class and homework writing assignments. One of the primary functions of attaining a higher education is to learn how to think critically. That is one of the goals of this course. You will analyze media writing from numerous sources, as well as examine your own biases and how they might influence your reporting and writing. I want you to come to class prepared to participate. We will have fun, and at the end of the semester we all will have a better idea of the importance of clarity of thought and precision of writing. Please take advantage of my good humor and availability if you have any questions. There is no such thing as a stupid question.

NOTE: THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER


Teaching method. While my lectures are eminently fascinating and illuminating, class discussions that elicit meaningful contributions from everyone are the goal.

Grading policy. Based on the College of Charleston grading scale, grades will be calculated as follows:

A – 92-100 points
A- - 90-91.9999 points
B+ - 88-89.9999 points
B – 82-87.9999 points
B- - 80-81.9999 points
C+ - 78-79.9999 points
C- 72-77.9999 points
C - 70-71.9999 points
D+ - 68-69.9999 points
D – 62-67.9999 points  
D- - 60-61.9999 points  
Below 60 percent is a failing grade

The number of graded assignments and the weight given to each:

**Class participation – 100 points**
Meaningful class participation is expected with comments and insights that contribute to the overall discussion.

**10 Weekly news quizzes – 100 points**
Because this is a course on mass communications, you are expected to be consumers of the media. Quizzes will be based on daily news readings from *The New York Times*, which you can access free of charge at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) after registering; as well as the British Broadcasting Corp., which can be accessed at [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk). On the BBC page, quiz questions will be taken from articles on the United States, which are found under the news link Americas. You are encouraged to read other news pages from other sources, but quiz questions will be based on these two sources only. News quizzes will not be announced in advance. Missed news quizzes cannot be made up and you will forfeit the grade.

**10 Graded Writing assignments – 700 points**
You will have 10 graded writing assignments either in-class or assigned. Each assignment counts 70 points each. They will range in length from a good lede of 25 words or less, to a few paragraphs of no more than 500 words. All writing assignments must be in AP style. I am after quality, not quantity.

**Final exam – 100 points**
The exam will be on AP style.

**Course policies**

**Attendance.** Attendance is expected. Punctuality is essential. Class will begin at the scheduled time. If a class must be missed, I must be notified before class. Roll will be taken at every class. Because participation in class is an integral part of your final grade, and because there will be several in-class assignments and quizzes, it benefits everyone in the class for each of you to attend regularly. If you have more than four absences, 10 points will be deducted from your final course grade for each additional absence.

According to the College of Charleston handbook, you are required to notify me if you are absent because of an athletic competition or school-sponsored event so we can make appropriate arrangements. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for getting your assignments to me before class. Other than athletic competitions or school-sponsored events, I don’t accommodate excused absences.

**Office hours.** 214 RSS. By appointment.
Electronic mail. E-mail communication is via your Edisto e-mail account only. Because many of your assignments will be submitted electronically, it’s imperative you check your account daily.

Assignments and deadlines. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Written assignments are to be typed on a computer, double spaced and if more than one page, stapled in the upper left corner - NO plastic folders, binders or paper clips please. Make sure your name is on your assignment.

If any part of the course work is missed – with the exception of the news quizzes, either excused or unexcused, the missed work must be made up. Make-up assignments must be arranged with me in person. Assignments submitted late for any reason will be marked down at a rate of 10 percent of the total possible points for each day it is tardy.

The news business is governed by deadlines – as is this class. All deadlines are expected to be met.

Academic integrity. Integrity is a fundamental value of the College of Charleston. The College Honor Code forbids lying, cheating, stealing and plagiarism. Students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code. Students who violate this code in Comm 230 will fail the course. NO EXCEPTIONS, NO EXCUSES. Such behavior diminishes credibility as a professional and will not be tolerated. For a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes please see the student academic handbook.

Special needs and accommodations. Students with disabilities will be provided with accommodations as per College policy. Please speak to me privately at the beginning of the semester if you have any questions or concerns.

Class schedule

FIRST WEEK, Wednesday, Aug. 27 – Course introduction

SECOND WEEK, Sept. 1-5 – Gathering information – interviewing, research and observation. Critically analyzing sources and information. Interviewing and writing assignment
Reading: Chapters 3, 4 and 5

THIRD WEEK, Sept. 8-12 – Targeting writing to audiences. News vs. opinion, public relations and misinformation. Writing assignment
Reading: Chapter 7

FOURTH WEEK, Sept. 15-19 – Cultural sensitivity in writing
Reading: Chapters 15 and 16
FIFTH WEEK, Sept. 22-26 – Keeping it simple - avoiding pompous writing and loaded words. *Writing assignment*
Reading: Chapter 8

SIXTH WEEK, Sept. 29-Oct. 3 – The writing process. Give me details, not adjectives and not adverbs.

SEVENTH WEEK, Oct. 6-10 – Story structure and lede writing
*Writing assignment*
Reading: Chapters 8 and 9

**FALL BREAK** – Oct. 13

EIGHTH WEEK, Oct. 15-17 – Media ethics. *Writing assignment*
Reading: Chapters 13 and 14

NINTH WEEK, Oct. 20-24 – Feature writing, *Writing assignment*

TENTH WEEK, Oct. 27-31 – Broadcast writing, *Writing assignment*
Reading: Chapter 11

ELEVENTH WEEK, Nov. 3-7 – Web journalism, *Writing assignment*
Reading: Chapter 12

TWELFTH WEEK, Nov. 10-14 – Public relations writing, *Writing assignment*
Reading: Chapter 10

THIRTEENTH WEEK, Nov. 17-21 – Covering a beat, covering speeches, press conferences, government and using numbers. *Writing assignment*
Reading: Chapters 17, 18 and 19

FOURTEENTH WEEK, Nov. 24 – Language and metaphors
Reading: George Lakoff, The Rockbridge Institute, “Simple Framing,”

Frank Luntz Republican Playbook, Political Cortex, Brainfood for the Body Politic, “The 14 Words Never to Use,”
[http://www.politicalcortex.com/special/Luntz_NAL_Appendix_14_Words](http://www.politicalcortex.com/special/Luntz_NAL_Appendix_14_Words)

**THANKSGIVING** – Nov. 26-28

FIFTEENTH WEEK – Dec. 1-5 – Semester review

LAST DAY OF CLASS – Dec. 8, Final Exam