WRITING FOR MEDIA

GRADO EN COMUNICACIÓN Y MEDIOS DIGITALES

Professor: PAMELA ROLFE
E-mail: prolfe@faculty.ie.edu

Academic year: 18-19
Degree course: FIRST
   Semester: 1º
Category: BASIC
Number of credits: 6.0
Language: English

PREREQUISITES
While this is a first-year class, it is assumed that university level students know the basics of English-language grammar and punctuation.

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION
This course is a cornerstone in a solid communication education, teaching students the writing techniques required to succeed in a professional environment—be it corporate or journalistic. Strong writing skills empower practitioners of any field of communication--journalism, public relations, advertising, corporate communication and marketing. This course introduces students to the basic skill set of writing for a mass audience.

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS
By the end of the class, students will have a solid understanding of what distinguishes journalistic writing from other information. Students should:
- Understand the theories and principles of reporting and writing for the media
- Use creative and critical thinking to identify and interview sources, conduct research and write unbiased media stories
- Identify the hallmarks of strong writing
- Know how to communicate accuracy and fairness
- Apply basic style rules, use correct grammar and punctuation
- Become comfortable with editing stories using journalistic principles
- Be able to produce quality journalistic stories, respecting the ritual of objectivity
- Critically evaluate their work and the work of others

METHODOLOGY
1. I will expect you to hand in out-of-class assignments on time at the beginning of class. You are expected to hand them in AS SPECIFIED BY THE PROFESSOR-- either as a Turnitin Assignment or a hard copy. Unless you are instructed otherwise, I will not accept e-mailed assignments.
2. Writing proficiency counts in this class. Basic grammar, spelling and punctuation are to be correct on all assignments. I will take off points for misspelled names or factual errors. Additionally, grammar, punctuation and repeated style errors will detract from your score EACH TIME they occur in your writing.

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3. Do not wait until class time to print out your story or submit on Turnitin. Computer crashes, printer problems or unavailable computer labs are no excuse for missing a deadline. I expect you to hand in copy at its appointed deadline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching methodology</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>10.0 %</td>
<td>15 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>10.0 %</td>
<td>15 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>46.67 %</td>
<td>70 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>26.67 %</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other individual studying</td>
<td>6.67 %</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>150 hours</td>
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PROGRAM

SESSIONS 1 - 2
Class Introduction
Course Overview- Thinking like a journalist: the difference between information and journalism.

SESSIONS 3 - 4
What is news? Conceive, Collect and Construct news stories. The 5 Ws. The building blocks of news writing.
In-Class Exercise

SESSIONS 5 - 6
The most important paragraph: the lead (hard news vs. features).
In-Class Exercise

SESSIONS 7 - 8
Brainstorming Story Ideas
Structuring hard news: the inverted pyramid, delayed attribution, nut graff

SESSIONS 9 - 10
Press Releases
In-Class Exercise
DUE: Campus newspaper story and Contact List

SESSIONS 11 - 12
Introduce Reaction Stories, Recording the mood of a society
Brainstorm Ideas, Research

SESSIONS 13 - 14
Meet at Aqueduct
In-Class Exercise
SESSIONS 15 - 16
Wikimedia
DUE: Take-home reaction story and Contact List

SESSIONS 17 - 18
Anecdotes
Keep the reader interested: clear, vivid language.
In-Class Exercise

SESSIONS 19 - 20
Wikimedia Presentations

SESSIONS 21 - 22
Travel Writing and Copy Editing
In-Class Travel Story

SESSIONS 23 - 24
Feature writing: Voice, giving detail, bringing the issue home
Brainstorming Features

SESSIONS 25 - 26
Blogging
In-Class Exercise

SESSIONS 27 - 28
Personal Branding and the Query Letter
In-Class Exercise
DUE: Take-home feature story and Contact List

SESSIONS 29 - 30
FINAL EXAM
BIBLIOGRAPHY
There is no text for this course. Due to the dynamic and changing nature of news, readings will depend on current events. Students are expected to read a wide-range of English-language news outlets.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

It is impossible to do well in this course without coming to class. Classes are interconnected and knowledge is acquired incrementally. Taking the final exam alone, will not be sufficient for a passing grade. You must hand in all assignments. I will allow for re-writing certain assignments, but only if the original is handed in punctually. Rewrites will only see the grade improve a maximum of 10 points.

Just coming to class is not enough to get a high participation score. You must actively share in class discussions and come to class prepared with insightful and interesting ideas. Assignments must be handed in punctually. Tardy assignments will see the grade progressively lowered the longer the delay.

Any student who publishes a piece written for this class professionally will receive extra credit. Creating and maintaining a blog during this course will also result in extra credit. Plagarism will result in a failing grade. And I WILL detect it.

Each student can take 4 exams per subject in 2 consecutive courses.

It is mandatory to attend 70% of the classes. Students who do not comply with this percentage of attendance lose the 1st and second exams and go directly to the 3rd one. However, skimming along so as to make sure you are here for only 70% is frowned up and reflects poorly on your attendance and participation grade. There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences except in extreme cases that will be studied on a case-by-case basis with the tutor.

Grading for the students on make-up exams will be subject to the following rules:

Those students who failed the subject in the first round of exams, pass to the 2nd session, except those who do not comply with the percentage of attendance to class and go directly to the 3rd session.

The maximum grade that a student may obtain in the 2nd or 3rd exam session is 8.

In the case a student receives a failing grade in the class, the student will be able to make-up for the failing grade during “convocatoria extraordinaria.” The make-up exam will consist of handing in any and all outstanding assignments and taking an exam and will only allow a maximum of an 8.

EXTRAORDINARY EVALUATION-- It is impossible to pass this class by simply taking a final exam. In order to be graded in this class--even for the extraordinary evaluation-- you MUST hand in all of the assignments, including the three original writing assignments, in-class exercises, three contact lists and the final exam. If you plan to take the extraordinary finals to be graded, you should hand in all of these assignments at the time of the scheduled exam.

You must also inform the professor in advance of your intention to take the exam.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original Writing</td>
<td>42 %</td>
<td>Three Take-Home Original Stories worth 100 points each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Exercises</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>8 exercises worth 15 points each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>More than just showing up!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikimedia</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>18 %</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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EVALUATION AND WEIGHTING CRITERIA
Students will perform a wide-range of in-class and out-of-class exercises to practice media skills. In-class activities cannot be made up. Absence for an in-class exercise will result in a 0.

Additionally, students will be expected to come to class having read any assigned texts and prepared to discuss energetically.

Three original writing assignments worth 100 points 300
In-class exercises worth 15 points each 120
Final Exam 200
Attendance and Participation in class 100

PROFESSOR BIO

Professor: PAMELA ROLFE
E-mail: prolfe@faculty.ie.edu

PAMELA ROLFE
Pamela Rolfe is an American journalist. Since 1995, she has lived in Madrid, writing for various U.S. and British media. As a foreign correspondent, Professor Rolfe has always strived to go beyond the immediate spot news story to provide the context a distant reader needs to understand a specific news story.

Areas of research
Journalism
Mass Communication

Academic training
-University of Florida, Bachelor of Arts, major in English, minor in Philosophy. Graduated with Honor May 1990.

Teaching and research experience
-Adjunct Professor at Saint Louis University’s Madrid Campus, teaching News Writing and Feature Writing
-Have participated in numerous panel discussions and conferences on subjects such as journalism in the digital age, foreign correspondents in Spain and the needs of a trade journalist

Publications
Has published countless journalistic articles in English-language newspapers, magazines and news agencies.

Professional experience
-Freelance reporter for various U.S. media.

Other information of interest
E-mail: prolfe@faculty.ie.edu

OTHER INFORMATION

CODE OF CONDUCT IN CLASS

1. **Be on time:** Students arriving more than 5 minutes late will be marked as “Absent”.
   Only students that notify in advance in writing that they will be late for a specific session may be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

2. **If applicable, bring your name card and strictly follow the seating chart.** It helps faculty members and fellow students learn your names.

3. **Do not leave the room during the lecture:** Students are not allowed to leave the room during lectures. If a student leaves the room during lectures, he/she will not be allowed to re-enter and, therefore, will be marked as “Absent”.
   Only students that notify that they have a special reason to leave the session early will be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

4. **Do not engage in side conversation.** As a sign of respect toward the person presenting the lecture (the teacher as well as fellow students), side conversations are not allowed. If you have a question, raise your hand and ask it. If you do not want to ask it during the lecture, feel free to approach your teacher after class.
   If a student is disrupting the flow of the lecture, he/she will be asked to leave the classroom and, consequently, will be marked as “Absent”.

5. **Use your laptop for course-related purposes only.** The use of laptops during lectures must be authorized by the professor. The use of Social Media or accessing any type of content not related to the lecture is penalized. The student will be asked to leave the room and, consequently, will be marked as “Absent”.

6. **No cellular phones:** IE University implements a “Phone-free Classroom” policy and, therefore, the use of phones, tablets, etc. is forbidden inside the classroom. Failing to abide by this rule entails expulsion from the room and will be counted as one absence.

7. **Escalation policy: 1/3/5.** Items 4, 5, and 6 above entail expulsion from the classroom and the consequent marking of the student as “Absent.” IE University implements an “escalation policy”: The first time a student is asked to leave the room for disciplinary reasons (as per items 4, 5, and 6 above), the student will incur one absence, the second time it will count as three absences, and from the third time onward, any expulsion from the classroom due to disciplinary issues will entail 5 absences.