



J SCHOOL – SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM, COMMUNICATION AND PUBLISHING

DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION AND CREATIVE WRITING
COURSE TITLE: Writing for Digital Media
COURSE CODE: CPJLWM250; LACWWM250
3 semester credits

1. DESCRIPTION

This course looks at a variety of writing practices required of digital journalists and web writers, both in style and in subject matter. Students will gain experience writing diverse types of stories: investigative, news, feature, editorial, sports, entertainment, etc. They will learn how to write effectively for a targeted audience on a variety of digital platforms (such as websites including online versions of established media and wikis, blogs, applications and social media, multi-user communities and spaces, and smart device communication), document sources in a professional way, evaluate and critique their own publications, and about how online writing affects publication and interacts with social and civic participation. This course will also give students a further understanding of the principles, ethics, and practice of journalism in increasingly digitalized formats. This class includes experiential learning with CEMI.

2. OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Explore different digital media writing formats and channels
- Conceptualize, draft, and review different digital media writing formats
- Understand the technical and stylistic features of digital media writings
- Practice writing, exploring a variety of digital media writing genres
- Explore the latest trends of digital media writing
- Analyze and understand legal principles regulating writing for digital media

3. REQUIREMENTS

Foundational writing skills are not covered. Students are expected to apply a strong command of syntax, structure, and style according to the course topic.

4. METHOD

This course consists of lectures, class discussions, projects. Mediums for instruction used will include, but are not limited to, interactive and hands-on activities which challenge thought processes, academic texts and studies, videos, slides, guided problem solving, and experiential and/or field learning activities where applicable.

5. TEXTBOOK – FURTHER READINGS – RESOURCES

TEXTBOOK (Copy available at the university library):

- Carrol, Brian. *Writing for Digital Media*, Routledge, 2010.

The textbook is mandatory for successful completion of the course.
Where applicable, additional materials, handouts and/or notes will be provided by the instructor.

FURTHER READINGS

- Goldstein, Norm. *The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*, Perseus, 2000.

LIBRARIES IN FLORENCE

Please consult the posted schedules for official opening times of the university library. Also note that the library is for consultation only and it is not possible to borrow materials. The library is equipped with a scanner and internet access so that you may save or email a digital copy of the pages needed.

Students may also utilize additional libraries and research centers within the local community:

BIBLIOTECA PALAGIO DI PARTE GUELFA

Located in Piazzetta di Parte Guelfa between Piazza della Repubblica and Ponte Vecchio. Please consult the library website for hours of operation:

http://www.biblioteche.comune.fi.it/biblioteca_palagio_di_parte_guelfa/

BIBLIOTECA DELLE OBLATE

Located in via dell'Oriuolo 26. Please consult the library website for hours of operation:

www.bibliotecadelleoblade.it

THE HAROLD ACTON LIBRARY AT THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF FLORENCE

Located in Lungarno Guicciardini 9. Please consult the library website for hours of operation. This library requires a fee-based student membership. For information: www.britishinstitute.it/en

6. FIELD LEARNING

Please consult your Official Registration for any mandatory field learning dates. Field Learning Activities cited in Official Registrations are an integral part of the course and also include an assignment that counts towards your final grade, details will be provided on the first day of class.

7. COURSE MATERIALS

No additional course materials are necessary.

8. COURSE FEES

Course fees cover course-related field learning activities, visits, and support the instructor's teaching methodologies. Book costs are not included in the course fee. The exact amount will be communicated by the instructor on the first day of class.

9. EVALUATION – GRADING SYSTEM

10% Attendance

20% Participation and Assignments

20% Midterm Exam, Field Learning Project (if applicable), Special/Research Project (if applicable)

30% Final Exam

20% Paper/Project

A = 93-100 %, A- = 90-92%, B+= 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B-=80-82%, C+ = 77-79%, C=73-76%, C- =70-72%, D = 60-69%, F= 0-59%, W = Official Withdrawal, W/F = Failure to withdraw by the designated date.

10. ATTENDANCE – PARTICIPATION

Academic integrity and mutual respect between instructor and student are central to the academic policy and reflected in the attendance regulations. Student presence is mandatory and counts toward the final grade.

Absences are based on academic hours: 1 absence equals 3 lecture hours.

Two absences: 6 lecture hours, attendance and participation grade will be impacted.

Three absences: 9 lecture hours, the final grade may be lowered by one letter grade.

Four absences: 12 lecture hours, constitutes automatic failure of the course regardless of when absences are incurred.

Please note:

- The above hours refer to lecture hours. Please note that the contact / credit hour policy in the academic catalog includes additional distribution ratios according to delivery category. Ex: 1 absence equals 6 FL/SL/Lab hours or 9 EL hours.

- Hours may be distributed in different formats according to the academic course schedules.

LATE ARRIVAL AND EARLY DEPARTURE

Arriving late or departing early from class is not acceptable. Two late arrivals or early departures or a combination will result in an unexcused absence. Travel is not an exceptional circumstance.

TRAVEL (OR DELAYS DUE TO TRAVEL) IS NEVER AN EXCUSE FOR ABSENCE FROM CLASS.

It is the student's responsibility to know how many absences are incurred. If in doubt, speak with your instructor!

Participation: Satisfactory participation will be the result of contributing to class discussions by putting forth insightful and constructive questions, comments and observations. Overall effort, cooperation during group work, proper care of work space and tools, responsible behavior, and completion of assignments will be assessed. All of the above criteria also apply to Field Learning and site visits.

11. EXAMS – PAPERS – PROJECTS

Example of how exams, papers, and projects are detailed and graded:

The **Midterm** exam accounts for 20% of the final course grade. For exam time and date consult the course addendum. **The time and date of the exam cannot be changed for any reason.**

Format: the exam is divided into three sections:

Part I: Multiple choice questions for a total of 20 points.

Part II: Short-answer questions (concise explanations, main ideas, key words, names, etc.) for a total 50 points.

Part III: Essay questions (based on content, vocabulary, detail, etc.) for a total of 30 points.

The final **Paper/Project** accounts for 20% of the course grade.

- Format: topic, length, guidelines, and due date will be provided in the course addendum.
- Material for research will be available in the FUA-AUF Library in Corso Tintori 21.

The **Final** exam accounts for 30% of the final course grade. For exam time and date consult the course addendum. **The time and date of the exam cannot be changed for any reason.** Format: the exam is divided into three sections:

- Part I: Multiple choice questions for a total of 20 points.
- Part II: Short-answer questions (concise explanations, main ideas, key words, names, etc.) for a total 50 points.
- Part III: Essay questions (based on content, vocabulary, detail, etc.) for a total of 30 points.

The Final Exam is cumulative.

12. LESSONS

| Lesson 1 | |
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| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | Introduction to the course: syllabus, objectives, course material, assignments, grades Writing for Digital Media: definition, objectives, professional features, and writing On writing well: principles and examples of good writing – theory and practical writing exercises Getting started: putting your ideas in words – stages, strategies, practice Additional key concepts for this lecture: socially conscious; enhanced technology; visualizing information; connected reading |
| Objectives | Use the basic rules of good writing Determine the intended audience and write specifically for that audience Correctly apply the fundamentals of grammar, style, and usage Avoid common writing problems |
| Readings/ Assignments | Read: Carroll, B. <i>Writing for Digital Media</i> , vii-22 Assignment: using the four skills described during lecture (see the Key concepts for this lecture above) |

| Lesson 2 | |
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| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | Digital Media Versus Analog Media – an overview Credibility, bias, identification, transparency, accountability: definition, applications, implications Linking, WWGD, and writing strategies: overview and writing practice Tools & Technology: video, flash movies, photo slideshows, discussion and chat Computer code: the building blocks of web pages Additional key concepts for this lecture: digital news structure and style; data gathering and analysis; online and new websites trends and development |
| Objectives | Understand the similarities and differences in reading styles for Web audiences and print media audiences Evaluate credibility in digital media Write in such a way that facilitates online reading through scanning Encourage and enhance readership through interactive, multimedia pages Explain what XHTML is and how it works |
| Readings/ Assignments | Read: Carroll, B. <i>Writing for Digital Media</i> , 23-54 Read: The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, 314-327 Assignment: Instructor will provide community-based lead for story development. Create a basic web article and prepare photo according to formatting indications. |

| Lesson 3 | |
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| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | Screen writing: online style and techniques – an overview General online style, tone, visual style, simplicity, clarity, and repetition: definitions, functions, applications Screen writings: case studies analysis Planning the pages and usability Additional key concepts for this lecture: the second segment of the digital writing cycle; online creative writing development; non-news online genres – i.e. literary |

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| | journals, news periodical fiction sections |
| Objectives | Understand how writing techniques and style should be informed by the online environments in which the content will be presented Plan, organize, and test content for an interactive audience Help the audience navigate to and through the information Cultivate a sensitivity to the global reach of the Web and the implications of that reach in producing content that can be quickly, readily apprehended |
| Readings/ Assignments | Read: Carroll, B. <i>Writing for Digital Media</i> , 55-72 Assignment: Institutional web assignment |

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| Lesson 4 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | Headlines and hypertext – an overview Hypertext: how to hyperlink, types of links, hyperlinking’s history Headlines and subheads: conceptualization, writing strategies, practice Case studies analysis Additional key concepts for this lecture: the third segment of the digital writing cycle – cultural component; magazine-style feature pieces on culture and cultural storytelling; historic vs. contemporary in art history-saturated cities such as Florence |
| Objectives | Write effectively headlines, deckheads, subheads, and sub-subheads Use hyperlinks correctly to organize information, facilitate navigation, and help users access information Organize information in lists, both ordered and unordered, and better understand what kinds of information lend themselves to lists Understand how essays, long writing and text-intensive stories and articles should be presented online |
| Readings/ Assignments | Read: Carroll, B. <i>Writing for Digital Media</i> , 73-96 Read: <i>The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law</i> , 422-448 Use provided leads to stylize an online history, food, art, or fashion feature piece based on a cultural aspect of Florence |

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| Lesson 5 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | Designing places and spaces – an overview Pre-planning, maximizing content fitness, content development, information architecture, basic of page layout: definition, stages, strategies Creating a style guide: concept, design, development Additional key concepts for this lecture: the fourth segment of the digital writing cycle – businesses, institutions, and organizations presence on websites; digital divulcation policy, product, and services language; corporate writing for online engagement; standards for efficient and effective approaches to technical writing |
| Objectives | Participate in site and page planning Understand audience needs and how to satisfy them Plan how to attract users to a site and keep them coming back for more Create and use style guides Ensure quality control for a site |
| Readings/ Assignments | Read: Carroll, B. <i>Writing for Digital Media</i> , 97-118 Read: <i>The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law</i> , 449-456 Assignment: Analyze an event announced on the official Municipality of Florence |

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| | website and expand into a blog-friendly piece. |
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| Lesson 6 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | <p>Online editing, designing, and publishing – an overview Online editing step-by-step: definition, stages, strategies Case studies analysis Multimedia storytelling: definition, features, practice Content management systems: definition, operations, strategies Additional key concepts for this lecture: online media legal and ethical issues; fact checking and accuracy; data accessibility and public records; intellectual property rights</p> |
| Objectives | <p>Explain the fundamentals of online editing and publishing Understand the responsibilities of the editor Understand the process of publishing online Begin editing online content</p> |
| Readings/ Assignments | <p>Read: Carroll, B. Writing for Digital Media, 119-133 Read: The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, 328-368 Assignment: Analyze an event announced on the official Municipality of Florence website and expand into a blog-friendly piece.</p> |

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| Lesson 7 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | MIDTERM EXAM |

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| Lesson 8 | |
| NA | ACADEMIC BREAK |

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| Lesson 9 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | <p>Trends in personal publishing – overview Weblogging and Webloggers – a brief history The (blog) major leagues: talking points memo, memogate, bloggers as journalists Bloggng: blogging software, blogger v. journalist debate, objectivity as a process goal, corporate blogging, media’s embrace of blogs How to write for blogs: applying the blogging basics, live blogging, corrections Blogging ethics, the ‘tagosphere, RSS Additional key concepts for this lecture: collective writing environments and projects analysis; blogs, wikis, forums and other examples of collective writing.</p> |
| Objectives | <p>Identify the principles of personal publishing Understand the blog format and why it has proliferated Describe blogging’s roles in journalism Harness good blog-writing practices</p> |
| Readings/ Assignments | <p>Read: Carroll, B. Writing for Digital Media, 137-167 Assignment: Institutional web article assignment – group assignment</p> |

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| Lesson 10 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | <p>Citizen journalism – an overview Understanding the ‘We’ media: definition & features</p> |

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| | <p>Journalism: what journalists do, jacks of many trades, and story structures</p> <p>Crowd-sourced journalism: partnering with the crowds, the power of folksonomies, making news fun</p> <p>Going mobile, twittering the news, geomapping, and widgets – definition, function(ing), examples</p> <p>Evolving online writing and editing roles: researcher and guide, traffic generator, online community manager, the future of journalism – definition, discussion, examples</p> <p>Additional key concepts for this lecture: digital media global reach; strategies for online organizations; local readership loyalty programs; online presence - in terms of global reach; periodical regional sections</p> |
| Objectives | <p>Recognize the new, communal ethos of social networking, and its implications for news-gathering and publishing</p> <p>Describe what news organizations are doing to leverage participatory journalism</p> <p>Explain the ethics of “citizen” or crowd-sourced journalism</p> <p>Discuss the future of networked information sharing, including the spread of mobile Web access and information delivery and of “cloud-based” software</p> |
| Readings/ Assignments | <p>Read: Carroll, B. Writing for Digital Media, 168-206</p> <p>Assignment: Instructor-provided leads will be utilized to create a global and local spin on the same topic.</p> |

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| Lesson 11 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | <p>News as a conversation – an overview</p> <p>Case studies analysis</p> <p>Web 2.0: fostering online community, socially networking the news, types of internet-enabled interpersonal communication, email, useNet news and newsgroups, bulletin boards, chat, and community forums moderation,</p> <p>Additional key concepts for this lecture: social media and user engagement integration; traditional media and social media platforms; alternative forms of journalism (university research & news sites, news blogs); social media delivery, divulgation (vs. promotion); maintaining and moderating citizen participation</p> |
| Objectives | <p>Analyze case studies to understand how new sites are engaging readers and seeking to include them in online communities</p> <p>Understand how online community is enabled and maintained</p> <p>Explain how the architecture of the Internet and Web sites affects the nature of community, communication and the sharing of content</p> <p>Discuss the potential of social networking for news</p> |
| Readings/ Assignments | <p>Read: Carroll, B. Writing for Digital Media, 207-236</p> <p>Read: The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, 369-398</p> <p>Assignment: Blog assignment and copy for social media posting</p> |

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| Lesson 12 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | <p>Intranets, extranets, portals – an overview</p> <p>Intranet: special requirements of the Intranet writer, the need for style guide, size</p> <p>Extranets: definition, professional use, examples and applications</p> <p>Intra-business communication: newsletters, wikis and cloud computing, virtual networks</p> <p>Additional key concepts for this lecture: various types of visual accompaniment;</p> |

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| | writing adaptation and visual evolution; photo journalism; news design and execution basic; animation; words and visuals |
| Objectives | Determine the appropriate writing styles for online business communication Identify trends in intra-organization communication via the internet Understand how intranets, extranets, and portal function, and how they are different |
| Readings/ Assignments | Read: Carroll, B. Writing for Digital Media, 237-251 Read: The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, 467-479 Assignment: Students will be given a visual story lead to be completed as a photo portfolio for online publications. Photos must be accompanied by texts as per the assignment indications. |

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| Lesson 13 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | Learning the legal landscape: libel and privacy in a digital age – an overview Open records and open meetings: Sunshine Laws – definition, content, discussion Privacy in the Information Age: definition, implications, applications Open architecture and privacy breaches: definition, implications, applications Safeguarding data, trespass and surveillance, legislative protections of privacy – libel, slander, and defamation Copyright and Intellectual Property Issues – International Law and Global Medium – definitions, implications, applications Additional key concepts for this lecture: video and audio material content development and attachment; interviews/musical data integrating; word and sound/moving image relation; editing/package and execution basics for video-based writing |
| Objectives | Understand the legal contexts in which Web writers gather information and in which they publish, including the limits on and freedoms for both activities Discuss how privacy law has changed in and for a digital age Know the basics of intellectual property law as it relates to digital content Analyze the tensions in the laws as competing interests vie for priority Appreciate the implications of international law for publishing on a global medium |
| Readings/ Assignments | Read: Carroll, B. Writing for Digital Media, 252-297 Read: The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, 460-466 Final institutional web assignment - that incorporates available audio-visual material |

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| Lesson 14 | |
| Meet | In class |
| Lecture | Writing for the digital media: changing practices, trends, technological developments Presentation in class General review |
| Objectives | Explore latest trends of digital media writing Understand and analyze the last trends of digital media writing Present in class a personal writing for digital media project |
| Readings/ Assignments | Review the material covered in the course |

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| Lesson 15 | |
| Meet | In class |

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| Lecture | FINAL EXAM |
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