Instructor: Amy Merrick
Class Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:10-4:40 p.m, Daley 1130.
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5-6 p.m., Daley 1139.
Telephone: 773-580-5781 (cell)
Email: amerric1@depaul.edu
Twitter: @amyjmerrick. I use my Twitter feed mainly for journalism industry news, internship and job opportunities, and links to great stories.
Class Tumblr: http://jour278depaul.tumblr.com

Course Description:

News reporters today face new challenges—around-the-clock deadline pressures, demand for a multimedia skill set that is constantly evolving—as well as unprecedented opportunities to gather and analyze information and to engage readers. Building on the fundamental skills taught in Introduction to Journalism, this course will give students a deep understanding of and substantial practice in reporting, writing and editing news stories. Students will learn how to develop timely story ideas, to collect and interpret information from research and interviews, to supplement reporting with social-media tools, and to write memorable news stories. The course also will provide the foundation of AP Style and grammar that is necessary for professional journalism.

Course Objectives:

By completing this course, you will learn to:

--Gather and critically evaluate information during the reporting process
--Improve your interview techniques and use quotes to enliven stories
--Use databases and websites for reporting
--Use social media to enrich your reporting
--Write clear, compelling leads and structure stories to keep readers engaged
--Write with a solid understanding of grammar and AP Style
--Develop routines for accuracy and fact-checking
--Recognize when a news or feature approach is the best way to cover a story
--Understand how stories are placed on a website or newspaper page and why; how pictures and headlines influence what users or viewers think about a story
--Revise your own work
--Think visually about how to illustrate stories
--Report and write: a breaking news story on deadline; a crime/legal story using correct terminology and avoiding potential libel dangers; a feature story using at least three interviews
--Understand the ethical responsibilities of reporters
**Required Texts:**

*News Reporting and Writing*, The Missouri Group (Bedford/St. Martin’s).

*The Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law 2014* (Basic Books) or AP Style app.

**Class Guidelines:**

All class participants are expected to treat one another with respect.

**Late work will not be accepted under any circumstances.** Working journalists do not have the flexibility to turn stories in late. If you have a written medical excuse, I will excuse an in-class assignment. If you miss a class meeting (with a verifiable excuse) on a day when assignments are due, you still must turn them in on time by e-mailing them to me.

**Academic integrity:** Cheating will not be tolerated. Fabricating information, making up sources and plagiarism are cheating. These offenses have ended the careers of professional reporters. Anyone caught cheating will be assigned a failing grade for the class, no questions asked.

If you are required to interview an outside source for this course, you must make it clear that you are a DePaul student. You must supply contact information (name, phone, e-mail) for everyone you interview for a story.

**Accommodations:** Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will be confidential. To ensure that you receive the most reasonable accommodation based on your needs, contact me as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first week or two). Also, be sure to contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) for support and additional services: #370, Student Center, Lincoln Park Campus, 773-325-1677.

**Sexual harassment:** This class will faithfully follow university guidelines on sexual harassment. Such behavior will not be tolerated and may lead to dismissal from the university.

**Please turn off cell phones and mobile devices during class.** No calls, texting, emailing or Web surfing during class. Doing these things will hurt your grade.

**Food and drink are permitted during class.** Please keep it away from computers and keep the lab room neat.

**Course evaluations:** One of your responsibilities in this course will be to complete an online teaching evaluation. This course will be available for you to review during the 9th and 10th weeks of the quarter. Around that time, you’ll receive an email reminder. The course evaluations provide valuable feedback to help me continue to improve the class.
Grade Components:

10%: Attendance/participation.

10%: Current-events quizzes.

15%: Midterm exam on AP Style and grammar.

15%: In-class assignments.

25%: Major news stories.

25%: Final project.

Grading criteria:

Journalism is a hands-on activity. We learn as we go, improving our reporting and writing skills with each new story. I’ll give more weight to assignments later in the quarter in assessing your final grade.

An “A” means the student has mastered the key objectives of the assignment and could do this work successfully in an entry-level market. No factual errors. An “A” for the quarter means the student has mastered the basic skills of news reporting and is ready for professional work.

A “B” indicates substantial progress in understanding the assignment, but the student has additional, basic work to do before mastering the techniques being assessed. A grade of “B” for the quarter means the student is competent in the basic skills of news reporting and has more work to do to be qualified for an entry-level position.

A “C” means there are several important issues the student needs to work on to successfully complete the assignment. A grade of “C” for the quarter means the student has more work to do to demonstrate the basic skills required for news reporting.

A “D” indicates substantial problems with the assignment. Students who receive a “D” are strongly encouraged to make an appointment to discuss the assignment. A grade of “D” for the quarter typically indicates missed assignments have heavily impacted a grade and may mean that a significant number of assignments had substantial problems.

An “F” indicates a missed assignment or evidence that the student has made no effort to meet the basic requirements (e.g. no interview conducted). Students who receive an “F” for reasons other than a missed assignment must make an appointment to discuss the assignment. An “F” for the quarter indicates a failure to meet minimum course requirements and is generally given in cases of chronic absences or missed assignments.
Accuracy: Misspelled names and other factual errors will hurt your grade on assignments.

Sources: Sources must meet the standards of major metro or national websites or newspapers. No family members, significant others or other class members. **Include contact information (phone number or email address) for your sources.** I will be spot-checking this information throughout the quarter by occasionally contacting your sources.

Extra credit: Students who work for Radio DePaul, *The DePaulia*, “Good Day, DePaul,” or DePaul’s Online News Bureau will receive one-half letter grade (5 percentage points) extra credit for the quarter. This is great experience for building portfolios and resumes. Students must begin this work by the third week of the quarter and continue throughout the quarter.

We will follow DePaul’s grading scale to determine all assignment and final course grades.

A = 100 percent to 93 percent

A- = 90 to 92

B+ = 87 to 89

B = 83 to 86

B- = 80 to 82

C+ = 77 to 79

C = 73 to 76

C- = 70 to 72

D+ = 67 to 69
Assignments:

*A NOTE ON THE SYLLABUS* At times we will deviate from the syllabus to report on breaking news that affects the DePaul or larger Chicago community. Learning to write breaking-news stories is a key component of this class. That means we’ll occasionally shift topics to different days. Like working journalists, you’ll learn to be flexible.

AP Stylebook: Bring it to every class. We’ll refer to it often.

Readings: Great writers are great readers, studying the work of others to learn new techniques. As you read, prepare for class discussions by noting what you liked and didn’t like about each story. Think about why the reporter chose a particular structure, or why a certain detail or quote has impact. You will be expected to bring copies of the readings to class for discussion.

Current-events quizzes: These quizzes are designed to get you thinking about the news and to help you develop story ideas. The quizzes will focus on what has been happening in the world during the 48 hours before each Thursday class meeting. Look for major stories from the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Sun-Times and the New York Times.

In-class writing assignments: These assignments will help you hone the skills needed to identify, report, write and revise news stories. These assignments may involve interviewing, shaping ideas, finding information, structuring material and more.

Major news stories: These longer pieces will include several breaking-news stories reported in class, as well as a beat memo, meeting story and two stories on the Chicago mayoral election, one group piece and one individual story.

Final feature story: The final story will be a 1,500-word feature on a newsworthy subject related to the city of Chicago. It will incorporate at least three interviews.
Weekly Topics and Assignments

Week 1

Tuesday, Jan. 6
Guest speaker: Jill Hopke, broadcast/documentary storytelling
Course overview/discussion of syllabus

Assignment for Thursday, Jan. 8:
--Read News Reporting and Writing Ch. 1, “The Nature of News” and Ch. 15, “Speeches, News Conferences and Meetings”

Thursday, Jan. 8
What makes a story newsworthy?
What’s news in Chicago?
Covering CAPS meetings

Assignment for Tuesday, Jan. 13:
--Read News Reporting and Writing Ch. 4, “Interviewing” and Ch. 5, “Handling Quotations and Attributions”

Week 2

Tuesday, Jan. 13
Interview techniques
Roles of the news reporter
--Reporter as observer
--Reporter as analyst

CAPS MEETING OPTIONS:
Beat 1933
Tuesday, Jan. 13, 6:30 p.m.
Illinois Masonic Hospital
836 W. Wellington

Beats 1934 and 1935
Thursday, Jan. 15, 7 p.m.
Inn at Lincoln Park
601 W. Diversey

Call before you go: 312-744-0064
You may choose another meeting before the Jan. 27 deadline. Please confirm with me in advance that your meeting will be appropriate for the assignment.
Assignment for Thursday, Jan. 15:
--Review concepts from Introduction to Journalism on how to write a news story

Assignment for Tuesday, Jan. 20:
--Short observation piece

Assignment for Tuesday, Jan. 27:
--Meeting story

Thursday, Jan. 15
Breaking news stories – skills refresher

Assignments for Tuesday, Jan. 20:
--Short observation piece
--Review AP Stylebook
--Read *News Reporting and Writing* Ch. 9, “The Inverted Pyramid” and Ch. 11, “Alternatives to the Inverted Pyramid”

Week 3

Tuesday, Jan. 20
Perfecting leads and nut graphs
Inverted-pyramid and other structures
Begin AP Style review

Assignment for Thursday, Jan. 22:
--AP Style open-book quiz 1 (on D2L)
--Read *News Reporting and Writing* Ch.14, “Covering a Beat”

Thursday, Jan. 22
Beat reporting

Assignments for Tuesday, Jan. 27:
--Meeting story
--Read *News Reporting and Writing* Ch. 6, “Gathering and Verifying Information”

Assignment for Thursday, Feb. 5:
--Beat memo
Week 4

Tuesday, Jan. 27
Research and reporting
Introduce group election stories
More AP Style

Assignment for Thursday, Jan. 29:
--AP Style open-book quiz 2 (on D2L)
--Read News Reporting and Writing Ch. 2, “The Changing Media Landscape” and Ch. 3, “The Emerging Media”

Thursday, Jan. 29
Midterm review
What does news reporting look like today?
Jobs in journalism

Assignments for Tuesday, Feb. 3:
--Prepare for midterm

Week 5

Tuesday, Feb. 3
MIDTERM: AP STYLE
Introduce final project

Assignments for Thursday, Feb. 5:
--Beat memo
--Read News Reporting and Writing Ch. 22, “Ethics”
--Watch Adam Ellick, “Class Dismissed: Malala’s Story,”
--Read Alan Cowell, “Malala Yousafzai and Kailash Satyarthi Collect Nobel Peace Prizes,”

Assignment for Tuesday, Feb. 17:
--Final project idea and three sources

Thursday, Feb. 5
Journalism ethics

Assignment for Tuesday, Feb. 10:
--Work on group stories
--Read Neil Steinberg, “And Now for the Further Adventures of Rahm the Impaler,”
http://www.esquire.com/features/rahm-emanuel-interview-0314
Week 6

Tuesday, Feb. 10
Guest speaker: Chloe Rasmas, Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s press office
Continue group Chicago stories

Assignments for Thursday, Feb. 12:
--Group Chicago stories

Thursday, Feb. 12
Present group stories
Using social media for reporting

Assignments for Tuesday, Feb. 17:
--Final project idea and three sources

Week 7

Tuesday, Feb. 17
*Final project idea and three sources due*
Covering the election
Campaign finance

Assignments for Thursday, Feb. 19:
--Read News Reporting and Writing Ch. 18, “Social Science Reporting”

Thursday, Feb. 19
Public-opinion reporting: Interpreting polls

Assignment for Tuesday, Feb. 24:
--Background reporting for mayoral election
Week 8

Tuesday, Feb. 24
MAYORAL ELECTION: Reporting outside of class. No class meeting.

Assignments for Thursday, Feb. 26:
--Election stories due Wednesday, Feb. 25, at midnight via Dropbox
--Read media coverage of the election; come prepared to discuss the implications of the results.

Thursday, Feb. 26
Election wrap-up: What’s next for Chicago?
Accuracy and fact-checking

Assignment for Tuesday, March 3:
--Read News Reporting and Writing Ch. 10, “Writing to Be Read” and Ch. 12, “Writing for the Web”

Week 9

Tuesday, March 3
Editing your own writing: tightening, clarifying, elevating
Writing for the Web

Assignment for Thursday, March 5:
--Continue working on final projects
--Read Joshua Benton, “The Leaked New York Times Innovation Report is One of the Key Documents of This Media Age,” http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/05/the-leaked-new-york-times-innovation-report-is-one-of-the-key-documents-of-this-media-age/

Thursday, March 5
News judgment: Headlines, story placement, graphics
How much do online metrics matter?

Assignments for Tuesday, March 10:
--Continue working on final projects
--Read Patricia Callahan, “Not Until a Boy Died,” http://www.pulitzer.org/archives/7763
Week 10

Tuesday, March 10
Investigative reporting
Writing a FOIA letter

Assignment for Thursday, March 12:
--Work on final projects

Thursday, March 12
Final project wrap-up

Final Project Presentations
Due: Tuesday, March 17, 2:45—5 p.m.
Your final project will be due at the beginning of the exam period. You will not receive time to work on it during this class meeting. Each student will spend five minutes discussing his or her story, including new skills learned, interesting details that emerged during reporting, any particular challenges, and/or story structure. Attendance at this class is mandatory and an absence will result in the final project being marked down one full letter grade.

- 1,200-1,500 words, typed, double-spaced
- The type of news feature you write is up to you: profile, analysis, trend, etc.
- The story must include meaningful quotes from three interviews.
- The story should have a clear theme based on a subject important to the city of Chicago and a lead that engages readers.
- The story should be organized in a logical way, with each paragraph supporting the theme.
- The story should include background/context and supporting information, in the form of data or other research.
- Aim to write in scenes that bring your reporting to life.
- Include contact information for your sources at the end of your story.
- Follow class guidelines for attributing material from other published articles.
- Follow AP Style.
News features may:

- Profile people who make the news
- Explain events that move or shape the news
- Analyze what is happening in the community
- Examine trends