



Course Outline

CMN 131
Course Number

3
Credits:

Journalism I
Course Title

3
Lecture Hours

Studio/Lab Hours: None specified; outside class time will be required to work on The College Voice

Catalog Description:

CMN 131 -- Journalism I. An introduction to the news media with an emphasis on newspapers, including news judgment, news writing, and issues facing the press. Participation on the student paper, The College Voice, is an integral part of the course.

Prerequisites: None

Co-requisites: ENG 101

Required texts: News Reporting and Writing, 9th edition, by Melvin Mencher
The Associated Press Stylebook, 2004 edition

Last revised: 2006

Course Coordinator: Professor Monique Simón, simonm@mccc.edu, ext. 3413

Information resources:

In addition to the textbooks, students will read daily newspapers, including The (Trenton) Times and The Trentonian; news Web sites, including nytimes.com, philly.com, nj.com, news.bbc.co.uk, journalism.org and poynter.org; copies of articles from a range of media; and the Nexis database in the college library. Students will also learn through participation on the staff of The College Voice.

Course goals:

Students taking this course will be able to:

1. Gain proficiency in:
 - a. Developing news judgment.
 - b. Writing news stories, including straight news and features.
 - c. Developing reporting techniques, including source interviews and document and Internet research.
 - d. Editing copy.
2. Become familiar with legal controls such as libel and privacy laws.
3. Analyze the significance of a free press and evaluate press criticism.
4. Recognize the influence of mass media on society.

Units of study in detail:

Unit I: News Judgment

- Analyze articles or news items in general media with an eye toward their newsworthiness.
- Develop criteria to determine whether a set of facts constitutes a worthy news story.
- Distinguish news, feature and editorial writing.

Unit II: News Writing

- Structure facts in order of newsworthiness.
- Write appropriate leads.
- Use concise, grammatical sentences and paragraphs.
- Be accurate, brief and clear.
- Improve storytelling techniques.

Unit III: Copy Editing

- Master the A.P. Stylebook.
- Learn to fill holes in stories and answer likely reader questions.

Unit IV: Reporting

- Develop interview techniques.
- Learn to search for public documents.
- Improve use of the Internet, Nexis and other computer tools for reporting purposes.

Unit V: Law and ethics

- Become familiar with libel and privacy laws.
- Confront and analyze journalistic ethical dilemmas.

Unit VI: Press Criticism

- Analyze critiques of the press from a range of perspectives.
- Consider the significance of a free press and limits that should constrain it.

Course-specific General Education goals and objectives:

1. Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.
2. Students will use critical thinking and problem solving skills to analyze information.
3. Students will analyze and assess ethical issues and situations.
4. Students will improve cooperative learning abilities through work on the campus newspaper.

Evaluation of student learning:

Grades will be based largely on student reporting and writing, on both class assignments and articles for The College Voice. Missed deadlines – either stories or classroom quizzes and exams – will be given zeroes and cannot be made up. Participation in The College Voice, from story idea generation to copy editing to layout to distribution, is a course prerequisite and will be evaluated. Classroom participation, including attendance and discussions, will constitute a significant part of the evaluation. Quizzes and exams will test copy editing skills and knowledge of Associated Press style.

Academic Integrity Statement:

Students are expected to comply with the college-wide requirements for academic integrity. Mercer County Community College is committed to Academic Integrity – the honest, fair, and continuing pursuit of knowledge, free from fraud or deception. This implies that students are expected to be responsible for their own work. Presenting another individual's work as one's own and receiving excessive help from another individual will qualify as a violation of Academic Integrity. In this course, for both in-class assignments and pieces for The College Voice, plagiarism or fabrication of information will be grounds for a failing grade. The entire policy on Academic Integrity is located in the Student handbook and is found on the college website (http://www.mccc.edu/admissions_policies_integrity.shtml).