

COM 285-01: News Writing & Reporting **Shippensburg University, Fall 2020**

Weekly class meetings on Zoom, Mondays at 3:30 p.m.

All course materials posted to the course D2L site (<http://d2l.ship.edu>)

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Email: krheim@ship.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., via Zoom

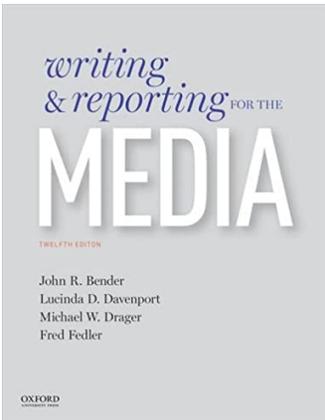
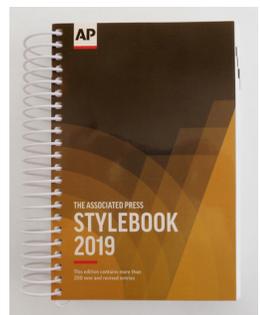
You are always welcome to meet with me during office hours via Zoom. The Zoom link and password are posted to the course D2L site in a Content folder labeled “Office Hours.” When you click the Zoom link and enter the password, you will be placed in a virtual “waiting room.” Please be patient. I will bring you into the Zoom chat room when I am ready to meet with you.

If you are having troubles with the Zoom connection, you may reach me via my office phone number, (717) 477-1152. It is set up to automatically forward calls to my cell phone. Usually, this works fine, but sometimes there are glitches. You may get a busy signal, or your call might go straight to voicemail.

If the Wednesday and Thursday times don’t work for you, please email me, and we can set up an appointment at a different, mutually agreed-upon time.

Course description

COM 285 focuses on the journalistic style of writing and is intended for students who plan to become professional writers or editors. It teaches the basic journalistic formats and strategies used in print and online media such as the summary lead, delayed lead and conventional news-story format. COM 285 teaches students to write with economy and clarity.

	<p><u>Required materials</u></p> <p>Textbook: <i>Writing & Reporting for the Media</i>, 12th edition, Bender, Davenport, Drager and Fedler (2018). ISBN: 978-0190649425. NOTE: You do NOT need the version bundled with the workbook.</p> <p>Style guide: <i>Associated Press (AP) Stylebook</i> (2018, 2019 or 2020 edition in any format).</p> <p><u>Recommended</u></p> <p><i>Webster’s New World Dictionary</i> (pocket-sized edition)</p>	
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Course objectives

COM 285 explores the fundamentals of journalism. During the semester, students will learn to:

- develop news judgment
- understand and apply Associated Press style
- recognize the essential elements of news and develop story ideas
- develop the central point of a story and organize information
- write news leads that encompass major elements of the story and emphasize the strongest angle of the news
- understand story structure and how to write the body of the story clearly and concisely
- write accurately by gathering credible source material and verifying information
- develop strong interviewing skills and note-taking techniques
- use attribution and quotations effectively
- cover speeches and meetings
- write obituaries
- edit and rewrite stories effectively under deadline pressure
- incorporate digital media and social media in the reporting process

Special note about COM 285

COM 285 is the first course in the Print and Online Media sequence and will prepare Print and Online Media students for future courses in the sequence. I understand that most of you are Public Relations or Electronic Media students taking the course as an elective. COM 285 will help you develop the ability to gather, analyze and report information accurately and concisely, which is just as valuable in public relations and broadcasting as it is in journalism. If you are taking the course as an elective, you are still required to follow the principles and practices of print and online journalism in this course.

Professional values and competencies for C/J majors and minors

The Communication/Journalism Department faculty sets the goal of developing within each student several core professional values and competencies as defined by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC). This course addresses the following competencies:

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communication.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Conduct research and gather information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Course format and weekly assignments

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, this section of COM 285 is **100% online** this semester, using the university's course management system, Desire2Learn (D2L) Brightspace (<http://d2l.ship.edu>), and Zoom online meeting software (<http://ship.zoom.us>). More information about using D2L and Zoom, including "how-to" videos, is available at <http://www.ship.edu/technology/student/resources/>.

Although the course is online, it will cover all of the same material as if it were face to face. Do not assume that online means "easy" or "less important." **This course will occupy a significant amount of**

your time. Plan your schedule and budget your time accordingly.

D2L site: All course materials will be posted to the course D2L site. **It is your responsibility to check the site regularly and make sure you are completing all work and meeting deadlines.** D2L organizes the materials using a horizontal menu bar near the top of the screen. Clicking on a menu bar item (Syllabus, Content, Discussions, Quizzes, Grades, etc.) will take you to that part of the site.

Weekly content modules: Clicking on “Content” in the menu bar will bring up a vertical listing of “modules,” organized by week. (NOTE: You will not see the modules for the whole semester. As the semester progresses, I will make each week’s module available.) Clicking on a weekly module will bring up a listing of all materials for the week.

Zoom meetings: Each module will include a link and the password for the week’s Zoom meeting. **We will meet live (“synchronously”) as a class Mondays at 3:30 p.m.** We may not meet every week, but you should always assume that we are meeting unless I notify you otherwise (via D2L and/or email). The Zoom meetings will be used for announcements, discussions, some writing practice, assignment explanations, and any questions you have. The Zoom meetings will NOT be lectures. Although you are not required to share your video during the meetings, doing so is a good way for all of us to get to know one another, and it makes the meetings feel more personal. Be sure to mute your audio when you are not speaking to the class. **NOTE:** If you need to miss a single Zoom meeting because of illness, emergency, etc., you do not need to notify me. But if a situation arises that causes you to miss several Zoom meetings (or more than a week of course material), please let me know via email so that we can discuss the situation.

Assigned reading: Most weeks will include assigned textbook reading. Please read each chapter thoroughly, paying close attention to the key concepts and terminology and the examples the textbook provides to illustrate those concepts and terms. You are encouraged to take notes as you read.

Lecture videos: After you have completed the assigned reading, watch the lecture videos posted to the week’s module. I have uploaded the videos to YouTube and embedded them within D2L. (Let me know if a video is not playing properly.) These videos will expand on concepts introduced in the reading, provide examples and offer advice for completing assignments. You are encouraged to take notes as you watch. YouTube provides captions for the videos (but the captions may have errors), and you may pause or replay the videos and change the playback speed.

Supplemental materials: In addition to the lecture videos, there may be other materials or links to external sources posted to the week’s module, providing further instruction and guidance.

Quizzes: Each week, beginning in Week 2, you will take a timed quiz on the D2L site. (During the first week, you will take a practice quiz.) Eight of the quizzes will test your mastery of Associated Press (AP) style, and the other five quizzes will test your knowledge of the assigned reading and video lectures for that week. **Each week’s quiz must be completed by the end of the day (11:59 p.m.) Sunday.** Failure to complete the quiz by the end of the day Sunday will result in a score of zero. You must complete each quiz in its entirety the first time you open it. If you leave the quiz to go to another web page, you may be locked out of the quiz. The questions will appear one a time, and you are not allowed to move back and forth between questions. **You may not retake a quiz**, so make sure that you have a reliable Internet connection and are free from interruptions before you begin. You may not work on the quizzes with a classmate; that is a form of academic dishonesty (see “Plagiarism and academic dishonesty” below). Your lowest AP style quiz score and your lowest reading/lecture quiz score will be dropped. I drop the lowest score in each category because I understand that problems such as illness, emergencies, computer glitches, etc., may arise. Because of the possibility that unforeseen problems will arise later in the

semester, you should never skip a quiz. **There will be absolutely no make-up quizzes.**

- **AP Style quizzes:** These quizzes typically will consist of **20 sentences** containing AP style errors. Some weeks, you will be given a list of style entries that the quiz will cover. Other weeks will be “anything goes,” meaning that any stylebook entry is fair game. You will retype each full sentence, fixing the style errors. It is important that you type carefully because the quizzes will be graded automatically. **Any typos, misspelled words, or incorrect or missing punctuation (including a missing period at the end of a sentence) will result in the sentence being marked wrong.** You will have **50 minutes** to complete each AP style quiz. If you exceed the 50-minute time limit, you will receive a score of zero. Your top seven AP style quiz scores will account for 15% of your overall semester grade.
- **Reading/lecture quizzes:** These quizzes typically will consist of **10 multiple-choice, true-or-false, and fill-in-the-blank questions** about the week’s assigned reading, lecture videos, and any supplemental materials. Make sure you have completed all of those tasks before you take the quiz. The quizzes are open-book and open-notes, but you will have only **15 minutes** to complete them. If you exceed the 15-minute time limit, you will receive a score of zero. Your top four reading/lecture quiz scores will account for 10% of your overall semester grade.

Writing assignments: This is a writing-intensive course. You will complete numerous assignments throughout the semester to develop and practice your news writing and reporting skills. Some of the assignments will be workbook exercises (I will upload the exercises to the D2L modules). Other assignments will require you to write complete news stories. You will upload your finished work to the designated Assignment submission folders in D2L. (Do NOT email the assignments to me.) These assignments will account for 60% of your overall semester grade. Unless instructed otherwise, please use the following formatting rules for writing assignments. I may deduct points or reject assignments that are not properly formatted:

- All assignments must be submitted as ***.doc or *.docx (NOT *.pdf or *.pages) files**. If you are using an application other than Microsoft Word (such as Google Docs or Apple Pages), make sure that you change any settings as necessary to save your work in Word format.
- All assignments must be typed in **12-point Times or Times New Roman** font.
- All assignments must be **double-spaced**, and the **first line of each paragraph must be indented**.
- All assignments must contain the following information in the **upper left corner of the first page: your name, the date and a slug** (one to three words describing the assignment or the topic of the story).

Final exam

You will take a comprehensive exam covering grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP style; lead writing; and story writing. You will take the exam on D2L during our designated final exam period after Thanksgiving break. The date and time will be announced later.

Email communication

- In addition to checking the D2L site, please check your Ship email account regularly. I frequently use email to communicate important class information to students. I will contact you at your Ship email address (not your Gmail, Yahoo or other account).
- When corresponding with me by email, please **use your Ship account and include a subject line. I am teaching three other courses this semester, so always mention that the email is regarding COM 285.** Please allow 24 hours for a response or up to 48 hours on a weekend. I am always happy to answer a question, but check the syllabus and the D2L site to see if it can be answered there first.

Deadlines, course progress

It is your responsibility to make sure that you are completing all work and meeting deadlines. In an online-only course, it is easy to fall behind or become “invisible.” **If you run into problems that are affecting your progress in the course or your ability to meet deadlines, let’s chat. Please email me or meet with me on Zoom during office hours so that we can address the situation.**

All quizzes must be completed by the set deadlines. Failure to meet the deadline will result in a score of zero. Only in the most extreme of situations will I reopen a quiz after the deadline has passed, and my definition of “extreme situation” is probably much narrower than yours.

All assignments must be completed by the due dates. Late assignments will be penalized a full letter grade (e.g., from B+ to a C+) for each day past the deadline, unless appropriate arrangements were made in advance. Extensions are granted at my discretion and may require documentation of extreme circumstances, such as illness or an emergency. All extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.

Grading

Final semester grades will be determined by a weighted system, averaging grades as follows

Writing Assignments	60%
AP Style Quizzes	15%
Reading/Lecture Quizzes	10%
Final Exam	15%

A point system will be used to grade individual assignments. Mechanical errors (spelling, grammar, AP style, typos, biased language, etc.) will result in points being deducted. Accuracy is a key element of journalism because people rely on the media for complete and accurate information to help them in their daily lives. Therefore, **a major factual error in a story (such as misspelling someone’s name or giving them the wrong title), will result in a 10% point deduction (a full letter grade) for the story. Two or more major factual errors will result in a grade of zero.**

All stories will be evaluated and graded as follows:

- **A/A- = Publishable as is.** The story has no errors. It shows a superior command of facts, news judgment, organization and writing.
- **B+/B/B- = Could be published with some revision.**
- **C+/C = Satisfactory work.** Not a story that someone would stop and read unless he or she really needs the information. Some basic organizational or writing problems.
- **D = A poor piece.** The story lacks fundamental judgmental and or writing skills. May have a minor fact error or major spelling or grammatical errors. Omission of two or more important facts (story is not complete). Contains major problems in organization and language usage. Fails to meet basic writing standards. Needs substantial editing, rewriting and reorganization.
- **F = Unacceptable work.** Story has too many fundamental problems or contains two or more major factual errors.

Final semester grades will be determined using the following **percentage-based** scale:

Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade
93.0% – 100%	A	83.0% – 86.9%	B	70.0% – 74.9%	C
90.0% – 92.9%	A-	80.0% – 82.9%	B-	60.0% – 69.9%	D
87.0% – 89.9%	B+	75.0% – 79.9%	C+	0% – 59.9%	F

NO incompletes will be issued for this course, except in emergency situations as defined by the University catalog.

Grades will be recorded on the course D2L site. It is your responsibility to monitor your grades. Questions regarding grades should be raised when an assignment or exam is returned, not at the end of the semester.

Extra credit

You may earn **10 extra-credit bonus points** (which will count toward the “Writing Assignments” portion of your semester grade) if you have an article published with your byline in the student newspaper, The Slate, or its website, theslateonline.com, or in a local newspaper/website during the semester (no later than Nov. 22). The article must include original reporting and information from one or more human sources (not a “brief” or a press release rewrite). It must be a news story, not an opinion piece or a review of a movie, TV show, concert, etc. Sports or arts/entertainment stories that are factual in nature and require interviewing and reporting are fine. **After the story has been published, email me a web link to the article or a scan or photocopy of the article as it appeared in print or online. Put “COM 285 Extra Credit” in the subject line. You may earn these points only ONCE during the semester.** (You are encouraged to write as many articles as you would like, but only one will count as extra credit.)

Keeping copies of assignments and emails

Keep an electronic copy of all assignments and course-related email messages. Do not delete any course-related files or emails until you receive your final grade at the end of the semester. If there are questions about assignments, you may be asked to produce the original emails and files.

Technology help

I am happy to answer any questions regarding course content and assignments, but technical questions should be addressed to people who are much more knowledgeable about the technology:

Computer and Internet access: If you need access to a laptop or the Internet, please fill out the [University’s Request Access to Equipment form](#).

D2L assistance: If you need technical assistance with the D2L system, please contact the SU Student Helpdesk at (717) 477-HELP (x4357) or helpdesk@ship.edu. After hours, you may contact D2L Technical Support at helpdesk@d2l.com or (866) 832-2319. An [instructional video](#) provides details on using D2L as a student.

Zoom assistance: Information is available on [how to download and set up the Zoom application](#) and [how to join a Zoom meeting](#). An [instructional video](#) provides details on using Zoom as a student, and additional information is available through the [Zoom Help Center](#).

General information: More information about Fall 2020 technology at Ship is available [at this site](#).

Withdrawing from the course

A student may drop a course within the drop/add period without ramifications to the student's transcript, but after that time frame, a withdrawal from the course will result in a W grade on the transcript. **The deadline to withdraw with a W grade is Oct. 26.** More information is available at the [Registrar's site](#).

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty

Students are expected to complete individual and original work for this class. Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be handled according to the university's [Academic Dishonesty Policy](#). All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the department, Dean's Office and Office of Student Affairs. Penalties for violation of the Academic Dishonesty Policy include grade reduction, assignment of a failing grade for the course, suspension and expulsion from the University.

Academic resources

The Learning Center: If you feel you need extra help to improve your academic performance in this course or in any of your other courses, please consider making an appointment with a tutor or learning specialist in the Learning Center. The Learning Center is located in Mowrey Hall and can be reached at (717) 477-1420. Tutoring and most other services will be offered via Zoom. More information is available at the [Learning Center's website](#).

The College of Arts & Sciences Advising Center (CASA): Located in DHC 216, CASA is a walk-in office that offers several types of academic support, from advice and help on time management, test anxiety and study skills to discussions about what major might be right for you. Email casa@ship.edu or call (717) 477-1150 to set up a time to meet with a success coach or faculty adviser.

Student Success: The Elnetta G. Jones University Center for Student Success and Exploratory Studies uniquely supplements and reinforces the university's commitments to serve a more diverse student population and to cultivate a learning-centered environment where students persist to graduation. We enrich the teaching and learning mission of the university by delivering specialized, high-impact academic and student enrichment services that empower students to successfully attain their educational goals. See [the Student Success Center website](#) for more information.

Accessibility resources

Shippensburg University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. The University welcomes all students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs and strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR) to discuss specific needs. OAR is located in Mowery Hall 252 and can be reached by phone at (717) 477-1364 or via email at oar@ship.edu.

Preferred name policy

In an effort to continue building a more inclusive and affirming campus climate, the LGBTQ+ Concerns Committee collaborated with APSCUF's Social Justice Committee to develop a preferred name policy at Shippensburg University. This policy was unanimously approved by President's Cabinet in September, 2017. View specific details about [Shippensburg University's Preferred Name Policy](#). Although a legal name and/or gender marker change is determined by the state in which a student, staff, or faculty resides in, the LGBTQ+ committee has worked to increase access for campus community members to utilize a preferred name in situations where a legal name is not required.

Title IX - Commitment to a safe learning environment

Shippensburg University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to meet this commitment and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator.

The only exceptions to faculty member's reporting obligations are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by students during classroom discussions, in writing assignments for class, or as part of University-approved research projects.

Faculty members are obligated to report allegations of sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred. Such reporting must be made to the Shippensburg University Police (717) 477-1444, the Department of Human Services (DHS) at 800-932-0313, and the University's Office of the Vice President of Enrollment Management, Student Affairs and Student Success (717) 477-1235. Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at the following link: [Equity, Inclusion and Compliance](#).

Tentative Course Schedule

The timeline for this course may need to be adjusted due to unforeseen circumstances. Changes will be announced via Zoom, email or D2L.

NOTE: This is an **abbreviated schedule**. Please see each week's module (on the D2L course site under "Content") for due dates and the full list of tasks, assignments, videos and other materials for the week.

Week 1 (Aug. 17-23): Introduction

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 1 (Journalism Today)

Practice AP style quiz on D2L (worth 5 points for successful completion) and ungraded online grammar self-test, both by end of the day Sunday, Aug. 23

Week 2 (Aug. 24-30): Characteristics of news and newswriting style

Zoom meeting

Read Chapters 2 (Selecting and Reporting the News) and 3 (Newswriting Style)

Videos and other materials (on D2L)

Reading/lecture quiz

Writing assignment (Workbook exercises) due end of the day Sunday, Aug. 30

Week 3 (Aug. 31-Sept. 6): The language of news

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 4 (The Language of News)

Videos and other materials

AP style quiz

Writing assignment (Workbook exercises) due end of the day Sunday, Sept. 6

Week 4 (Sept. 7-13): Basic news leads

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 7 (Basic News Leads)

Videos and other materials

AP style quiz

Writing assignment (Workbook exercises) due end of the day Sunday, Sept. 13

Week 5 (Sept. 14-20): Beyond the lead

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 9 (The Body of a News Story)

Videos and other materials

Reading/lecture quiz

Writing assignment (Inverted pyramid) due end of the day Sunday, Sept. 20

Week 6 (Sept. 21-27): Alternative leads

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 8 (Alternative Leads)

Videos and other materials

AP style quiz

Writing assignment (Alternative leads) due end of the day Sunday, Sept. 27

Week 7 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4): Sources and attribution

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 10 (Quotations and Attribution)

Videos and other materials

Reading/lecture quiz

Writing assignment (Focus story) due end of the day Sunday, Oct. 4

Week 8 (Oct. 5-11): Interviewing

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 11 (Interviewing) and review Chapter 9 (Body of a News Story)

Videos and other materials

AP style quiz

Writing assignment (Workbook exercises) due end of the day Sunday, Oct. 11

Week 9 (Oct. 12-18): Covering speeches and meetings

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 15 (Speeches and Meetings)

Videos and other materials

Reading/lecture quiz

Week 10 (Oct. 19-25): Other story types

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 16 (Brights, Follow-ups, Roundups, Sidebars and Obituaries)

Videos and other materials

Reading/lecture quiz

Writing assignment (Speech story) due end of the day Sunday, Oct. 25

Week 11 (Oct. 26-Nov. 1): Other story types (cont.)

Zoom meeting

Videos and other materials

AP style quiz

Writing assignment (Meeting story) due end of the day Sunday, Nov. 1

Week 12 (Nov. 2-8): Feature writing

Zoom meeting

Read Chapter 12 (Feature Stories)

Videos and other materials

AP style quiz

Writing assignment (Obituary) due end of the day Sunday, Nov. 8

Week 13 (Nov. 9-15): Online journalism and social media

Zoom meeting

Reading to be announced

Videos and other materials

AP style quiz

Writing assignment (Social media) due end of the day Sunday, Nov. 15

Week 14 (Nov. 16-22): Course wrap-up

Zoom meeting

Videos and other materials

AP style quiz (must be taken by end of the day FRIDAY, Nov. 20)

Writing assignment (Profile story) due end of the day FRIDAY, Nov. 20

Nov. 23-29: Thanksgiving break

Nov. 30-Dec. 4: Finals week

FINAL EXAM – date and time to be announced