

## WRITING, RESEARCH & EVIDENCE

American University-Central Asia, Fall 2011

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Wednesdays and Fridays 12.45pm

Room 321

### Course Objectives

This course will prepare you to write news analysis and features, to do research for articles, to find interesting stories and pitch them to your future editors.

The course will immerse you into atmosphere of a fast-paced newsroom, which will require you to follow news and events in Kyrgyzstan and in the world on a regular basis, select story ideas, pitch them at the classroom briefings, write compelling interesting and publishable stories and provide constrictive criticism to the articles written by your peers. You will learn about the basic article structure, interviewing techniques and essential ethical aspects of journalism.

It is expected that as a result of the course each of you will have at least one published article, which you will be able to use when applying for jobs in journalism.

### Assignments

- **Articles** (60 percent): Every student will be required to develop ideas for news articles, features, business stories, gather the necessary information, and write them. In total, we will have six (6) articles during the course. Late articles are not accepted.
- **Rewriting.** If you did not get the highest score for you article, you have to rewrite and polish it. Please, follow the syllabus to find out deadlines for polished articles. You will be allowed to rewrite an article only once. The score for the polished article is the final one. Be sure to attach the original story (and the copy edited by your peers) to the rewritten one or the latter will be unacceptable.
- **Critiques** (10 percent): During the course, every student will read two newspaper articles and write a 250-word critique of each one of them.
- **Peer editing** (9 percent): You will edit the work of your peers in class. Your editing skills will be graded on a pass/fall basis.
- **Class Participation and Quizzes** (21 percent)

### Grading

A = 91-100%	High competence
B = 82-90.99%	Competence
C = 71-81.99%	Minimum competence
D = 62-70.99%	Limited or incomplete competence
F = Below 62%	Inadequate competence for credit

### Reading

Reporting for the Media, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, John Bender, Lucinda Davenport, Oxford University Press

News Writing and Reporting for Today's Media, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Bruce Itule, Douglas Anderson

Reporting for Journalists, Chris Frost

The Associated Press Stylebook, Ed. Norm Goldstein,

Stay tuned with local, regional and international news. Here are some recommended websites:

[www.news.bbc.co.uk](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk)  
[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)  
[www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org)

[www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)  
[www.ferghana.ru](http://www.ferghana.ru)  
[www.stan.tv](http://www.stan.tv)

[www.24.kg](http://www.24.kg)  
[www.centrasia.ru](http://www.centrasia.ru)  
[www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net)

## Class detail

- Your classroom is your newsroom. Always be on time.
- Stories are due at the beginning of the class in **two hard copies**. Be clear about your deadline and be sure to give yourself enough time to pull your story together.
- All assignments must be completed and every deadline must be met. Late stories will NOT be edited. So always turn in something. If time runs out, go with what you've got. Give us your best shot. Only stories can be published, not excuses.
- Your stories will be critiqued by the instructor. Sometimes, your work will be edited by fellow class members. You will sharpen your editing skills and develop a keener sense of newsroom life and of writing for an audience.
- From time to time, I will spot check stories for accuracy – names, facts, quotes. Accuracy is at the heart of credibility.
- In seminars, we share experiences and explore techniques, tactics, ideas, problems. Sometimes we'll have guest speakers. Your participation is essential and will be evaluated.
- Desktop computers and laptops shall not be used during the class. They distract. And you should practice note-taking. During the lab drills, however, it is preferable if you submit your work in print format.
- This syllabus is our flexible road map. Use it to plan your work. We'll follow the schedule but everything is subject to change because of news developments, shifted assignments and other factors.

## Format for stories

When submitting a hard copy, double-space your stories. Please, submit **two hard copies** of each assignment printed out in A4 format, font in Times New Roman, size 12. The entire text should be justified to the left. Each story should have a title.

Remember to include a word count and to list significant sources (including phone numbers). At the end of your story, always list one additional story idea. Otherwise, your assignment is incomplete.

Please have all your works saved on a portable flash drive to make sure you can access your work in class anytime.

### Length of stories

Length will vary with assignment. Clarity, focus and graceful expression are more important than bulk. Most stories will be 200 to 1,000 words. Major pieces will run up to 1,500 words. You must honor the assigned length. When a story is too long, the excess portion will not be edited. This is an important part of your training.

### AP style

Mastery of AP style is very important (and a sign of professionalism).

### Integrity

Honesty is crucial. Anyone plagiarizing, cheating on quizzes or during the exam will risk dismissal from the course.

### Absences

Attendance is mandatory for all class sessions. Any absence requires notification and a valid explanation.

### Course schedule

<b>Week 1: Reporting Standards, Story Ideas</b>		
Wednesday, Aug. 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal introductions, expectations</li> <li>- Ingredients of news</li> <li>- How to find stories: different kinds of news stories</li> </ul>	Reading assignment
Friday, Aug. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Principles of good, clear writing</li> </ul>	Assignment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write critique to newspaper article</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2: Newswriting, Story Structure</b>		
Wednesday, Aug. 31	<b>No class</b>	
Friday, Sept. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Newswriting style</li> <li>- Looking at a basic story skeleton</li> <li>- Inverted pyramid</li> <li>- Examples of good news stories</li> </ul>	Due: Newspaper article critique  Assignment: Bring in leads

<b>Week 3: Leads, copyediting</b>		
Wednesday, Sept. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leads for news stories – and leads for analysis stories</li> <li>- Leads: main leads and additional leads</li> <li>- In class practice: analyzing different types of leads</li> <li>- Headline and titles: why you should not leave them up to the editor</li> </ul>	<p>Due: Leads samples</p> <p>Assignment: Read about copyediting, think of story ideas</p>
Friday, Sept. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Editing and grammar</li> <li>- Copyediting (practice)</li> <li>- Discussion of news ideas</li> </ul>	<p>Due: Story ideas</p> <p>Assignment: Article #1 – news story</p>
<b>Week 4: Quotations and Attribution</b>		
Wednesday, Sept. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quotes and sources</li> <li>- Gathering information: interviews</li> </ul>	<p>Due: Article #1</p> <p>Assignment: story ideas</p>
Friday, Sept. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peer editing of Article #1</li> <li>- Discussion</li> <li>- Pitching story ideas</li> </ul>	<p>Due: peer-edited version of Article#1</p> <p>Assignment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Polishing Article #1</li> <li>- List sources and interview questions for a selected story</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5: Gathering information</b>		
Wednesday, Sept. 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doing research: why, when and how</li> <li>- Computer assisted research</li> <li>- Background: What to include and where</li> </ul>	<p>Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final Article #1</li> <li>- Sources and questions</li> </ul>
Friday, Sept. 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mock press conference</li> </ul>	<p>Due: Article#2 ( press conference)</p>
<b>Week 6: Editorial and Opinion</b>		
Wednesday, Sept. 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Editorial and Opinion: hooking the audience, refuting the arguments, call to action</li> </ul>	<p>Reading assignment</p>
Friday, Sept. 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In-class writing Article # 3 (editorial)</li> </ul>	<p>Assignment: Finish Article#3 (editorial )</p>

<b>Week 7: Covering elections and politics</b>		
Wednesday, Oct. 5	- Reporting about the government and politics	Due: Article#3 (editorial)
Friday, Oct. 7	- Covering elections	Assignment: Article#4 – Election story
<b>Week 8: Profile and feature writing</b>		
Wednesday, Oct. 12	- Discussion of parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan and news coverage - Peer editing of Article #4	Due: Article#4 (election story) Due: Peer edited versions of Article #4
Friday, Oct. 14	- Feature writing - Selecting feature stories	Due: Polished Article # 3 (editorial) and Article #4(elections)  Assignment: Feature Article #5
<b>Week 9:</b> Oct. 17 - Oct. 21	<b>Fall Break</b>	
<b>Week 10:</b>	<b><u>No classes</u></b>	
<b>Week 11: Covering Race and Ethnicity</b>		
Wednesday, Nov. 2	- Covering Elections	Due: Article#5 (feature)
Friday, Nov. 4	- Peer editing of Article #5 - Polishing Article #5	Due: Peer edited versions of Article #5 Assignment: Polish Article#5
<b>Week 12: Covering government, statistics</b>		
Wednesday, Nov. 9	- Covering government	Due: Polished Article #5(Feature)
Friday, Nov. 11	- Statistics, numbers	Reading assignment, prepare questions to a guest speaker
<b>Week 13: Enterprise reporting</b>		
Wednesday, Nov. 16	- Business stories, guest speaker	Reading assignment
Friday, Nov. 18	- Covering race and ethnicity	Assignment: Article #6 – Chose to cover ethnicity, government, elections, or business

<b>Week 14: Covering courts</b>		
Wednesday, Nov. 23	- Covering courts and police	Reading assignment
Friday, Nov.25	<b>Thanksgiving, no classes</b>	
<b>Week 15: Media Law and Ethics</b>		
Wednesday, Nov. 29	- Investigative reporting	
Friday, Dec. 2	- Media law - Media ethics	Due: Final Article #6(business, elections, ethnicity or government story)  Assignment: Critique to a newspaper article
<b>Week 16: Wrap up:</b>		
Wednesday, Dec. 7	- Freelancing: Finding Markets, Pitching Stories - Working as a Journalist in Central Asia	Due: Critique to a newspaper article
Friday, Dec. 9	- Wrap up, course evaluation	