



COMM 2311, Media Writing

Fall 2026

Texas A&M University-San Antonio

Department of Sociology & Communication

MEETING LOCATION AND TIME

MW 12:30 p.m. to 1:45 p.m., Online Synchronous

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Brown James, visiting assistant professor of communication

Phone: (210) 784-2251 **Email:** mjames@tamusa.edu **Office:** 350C of CAB

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Fundamentals of writing for the mass media. Includes instruction in professional methods and techniques for gathering, processing, and delivering content. TSI Restriction(s): Reading, Writing, and Math

Prerequisites: COMM 1307

Restrictions: Graduate level students may not enroll.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES:

- [FREE ONLINE TEXTBOOK](#). Our textbook is "Inside Reporting: A Practical Guide to the Craft of Journalism," 3rd Edition, Tim Harrower, McGraw Hill, ISBN: 978-0073526171. You are not required to buy the print version, but if you want a copy, you can buy one through Amazon or Chegg. Make sure to get the 3rd edition.



- **Free** Associated Press (AP) Stylebook offered by the University Library. If you want a print edition, you can buy one for \$34.95 at the following link. Please get the 58th edition: <https://www.apstylebook.com/>
- You will need a laptop. See me if you need help with this.

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this course, students will have done or be able to do the following:

- 1) Learn the mechanics of news reporting such as the Five W's, interviewing and covering events.
- 2) Develop sound news judgment and recognize news values.
- 3) Learn to fact-check your stories to ensure accuracy.
- 4) Write for media audiences using the conventions of journalistic expression.
- 5) Write with clarity, brevity, precision and power. Write in simple declarative sentences.
- 6) Use AP Style with correct spelling, punctuation and appropriate grammar.
- 7) Understand journalistic ethics including objectivity, fairness, independence and truth seeking.

EVALUATION:

Homework & Class Exercises – 20%
Participation/Discussion – 20%
Quizzes – 20%
News Articles – 20%
Story Competition – 20%

COURSE POLICIES

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE / ChatGPT

Just don't. Writing, analytical and critical thinking skills are the backbone of our communication courses. All writing assignments must be prepared by students in their own words. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Look at it this way: You are learning to be a professional communicator. Writing is the bedrock of this profession, whether it's a news article, photo caption, radio spot,



press release, narrative of a TV story or film script. If you can't write, why should an employer hire you when they can just use ChatGPT? Therefore, submissions generated by ChatGPT or other AI composition software are not permitted in my courses. I reserve the right to ask to see evidence of your original drafts, rewrites, etc.

The bulk of your work in COMM 2311 will comprise news stories that include original interviews and legitimate information from human sources on campus. You will need to provide a source list with the dates and locations of your interviews. You will need to attribute other information to whatever website, news article or other source that you used in your reporting.

COMM 2311 assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity.

ATTENDANCE AND ETIQUETTE

Show up to our class meetings on time and stay the whole period. Punctuality and attendance are crucial in journalism. Those arriving more than 10 minutes late are counted as absent. Those who leave early are counted absent.

I will allow **three** absences for **any** reason. I drop your letter grade by 2 percent for each additional absence.

If you have questions or need help, **contact me** by email or in person. Follow assignment directions to the letter. Journalism is a deadline-driven business. Meeting deadlines is extremely important. I deduct 10 points a day for late assignments.

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

To receive credit, assignments **MUST** be submitted in Blackboard. Grades consider adherence to AP Style, content, word usage, mechanics and spelling. **Proofread** your work with care. Students should maintain copies of all assignments submitted. **Do not submit PDFs**. Do not submit text entries. I prefer Word or Google docs.

CODE OF CONDUCT



Students should read and follow the Student Rights and Responsibilities and Student Code of Conduct available [here](#). I will follow all procedures outlined in the code. Don't plagiarize. Your work shows your character. Make it your own. The instructor **does not allow** students to:

- use cell phones/personal electronics for non-academic use in class
- work on anything other than class material during course time

TENTATIVE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1: Aug. 24 & 26

Day 1 – Course overview and introductions

Day 2 – What is journalism?

Week 2: Aug. 31 & Sep. 2

Day 1 – News Values

Day 2 – Interviewing

Week 3: Sep. 9 (**No class** on the 7th for Labor Day)

Day 2 – Interviewing cont'd

Week 4: Sep. 14 & 16

Day 1 – Gathering information and sources

Day 2 – Gathering information and sources

Week 5: Sep. 21 & 23

Day 1 – Basics of writing news

Day 2 – Basics of writing news

Week 6: Sep. 28 & 30

Day 1 – Quotations and attributions

Day 2 – Quotations and attributions

Week 7: Oct. 5 & 7

Day 1 – Observations and story ideas

Day 2 – Observations and story ideas

Week 8: Oct. 12 & 14

Day 1 – Covering meetings and events

Day 2 – Covering meetings and events



Week 9: Oct. 19 & 21

Day 1 – Multimedia

Day 2 – Multimedia

Week 10: Oct. 26 & 28

Day 1 – Nontraditional leads

Day 2 – Corrections

Week 11: Nov. 2 & 4

Day 1 – social media

Day 2 – Story competition work

Week 12: Nov. 9 & 11

Day 1 – Story competition work

Day 2 – Story competition work

Week 13: Nov. 16 & 18

Day 1 – Story competition work

Day 2 – Story competition work

Week 14: Nov. 23 (The 25th is a “study day” considering Thanksgiving break, so ***no class***)

Day 1 – Story competition work

Week 15: Nov. 30 & Dec. 2

Day 1 – Story competition work

Day 2 – Story competition day

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-SAN ANTONIO IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

University Email Policy and Course Communications

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via university email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans



with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us at the website or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their academic accommodation with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center

Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the Tools section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784- 1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance.

Counseling/Mental Health Resources

As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS student support App.

The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to include 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, an anonymous peer-to-peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.

Emergency Preparedness

JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification system. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit the Jag E Alert System website. You can access



more information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan on our website. Download the SafeZoneApp for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended by the published Census Date (the first week of class). Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend prior to the published Census Date (the first week of class) will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Jaguar Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center (WLDCC)

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as e-portfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects.

The Writing Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center to make your appointment. Students wanting to work in real time with a tutor can schedule an Online Appointment. Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an e-Tutoring appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on the Writing Center's website. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing: writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

Meeting Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE report for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to



direct you to available resources. The General's Store is a food pantry that is available on campus as well.

Military Affairs

Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210) 784-1397.

Religious Observances

Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the wide variety of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided with an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu. Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university. If you have experienced any form of sex discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, know that help and



support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related sex-based misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students

Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide reasonable accommodation for pregnant students as it would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that is related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784- 2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources. Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12-years-old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. For more information, please contact Young Jaguars at youngjaguars@tamusa.edu or call (210) 784-2636.



Students' Rights and Responsibilities

The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights:

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university students' rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities:

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning. 5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.



Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the Student Code of Conduct or visit the resources available in the OSRR website.