

COMM 2311 Syllabus

Class Information

News Writing

Room: CM 156 | Levelland

Mondays & Wednesdays: 1 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Instructor Information

Kati Moody | CM 158

kmood@southplainscollege.edu

The best way to reach me will be via email. You can also set up a time to meet with me in person during my office hours. Please send me an email to set up an appointment to ensure I am in my office. For all emails, please allow 24 hours for a response. If you email me on the weekend, I might not return your email until Monday morning.

Office Hours

MW: 11 a.m. - noon

T/Th: 10 a.m. - noon

Friday: 10 a.m. - noon

Objectives

- Define News & Journalism
- Newsworthiness
- AP Style
- Inverted Pyramid
- Identifying Sources
- Conducting Interviews
- Transcribing Interviews
- Objectivity, Transparency & Credibility
- Fact Checking
- News Distribution

Class Description: In this course, students will learn the difference between news and information, how to report news, how journalism ethics apply to news, the differences between hard news and soft news, as well as how news is distributed among traditional and digital mediums.

Attendance: This is an in-person class and attendance is mandatory. The participation grade in this class will come from student attendance and participation in class discussions.

Access: Students will be required to access Blackboard weekly to complete discussions and journal entries; thus, students should ensure they have adequate access to internet and/or a computer or smartphone to complete the assignments.

Grades

AP Style Quizzes: (10 x 10 points each) 100 points

Discussion Boards: (4 x 25 points/each) 100 points

Writing Assignments: 300 points

Mid-Term Exam: 100 points

Final Project: 200 points

Attendance & Participation: 200 points

Course Calendar

Phase 1: What is Journalism?

Dates: Aug. 25 – Sept. 14

Topics:

- Defining journalism and news
- Elements of newsworthiness
- Inverted pyramid structure
- 5Ws and H
- Intro to AP Style
- Interviewing basics

Assignments:

- **Discussion Board – What is News? (Due Aug. 31 on Blackboard)**
- **Transcript & Quotes (Due Sept. 10 by EOC)**
- **Group Interview Story (Due Sept. 14)**

Phase 2: Pitching & Interviewing

Dates: Sept. 15 – Oct. 8

Topics:

- Finding the angle
- Identifying your audience
- Humanizing the story
- Planning & conducting interviews

Assignments:

- **News Pitch (Due Sept. 21)**
- **Discussion Board (Due Sept. 21)**
- **Interview Scheduling (Due Wednesday, Sept. 24, by EOC)**
- **Interview Transcription + Quotes (Due Wed. Oct. 1, by EOC)**
- **Rough Draft (Due Sun. Oct. 5 on Blackboard)**
- **Final Draft (Due Wed. Oct. 8, by EOC)**

Phase 3: Feature Writing

Dates: Oct. 13 – Nov. 5

Topics:

- What makes a feature story different?
- Finding human interest angles
- Descriptive writing and narrative flow
- Interviewing for emotion and story depth

Assignments: (Pitch & Discussion Board dates moved because of Fall Break)

- **Feature Story Pitch (Due Monday, Oct. 20 by EOC)**
- **Interview Scheduling (Due Wed. Oct. 22, by EOC)**
- **Discussion Board (Due Sunday, Oct. 26)**
- **Interview Transcription + Quotes (Due Wed. Oct. 29, by EOC)**
- **Rough Draft (Due Nov. 2) Final Draft (Due Nov. 5)**

Phase 4: Editorial Writing

Dates: Nov. 10 – Nov. 25

Topics:

- Persuasive writing strategies
- Developing a strong point of view
- Supporting opinions with credible facts and data
- Structuring editorials for impact

Assignments

- **Editorial Pitch (Due Wed. Nov. 12 by EOC)**
- **Discussion Board (Due Nov. 16)**
- **Rough Draft (Due Mon. Nov. 17 by EOC)**
- **Final Draft (Due Wed. Nov. 19 by EOC)**

Phase 5: Final Exam/Final Story

Introduce: Nov. 17

Due: Dec. 10

Focus:

- Independently produce a polished, publishable news story
- Apply all core journalism principles: newsworthiness, structure, AP style, ethical sourcing, and clarity

Requirements:

- Must include at least two original interviews
- Quotes must be transcribed and attributed accurately
- Story must follow inverted pyramid or appropriate feature format
- Submission will count as the final exam

Assignment: Final News Story (200 pts)

- **Pitch & Interview Plans: Due Nov. 17 by EOC**
- **Interview Scheduled: Due Nov. 19 by EOC**
- **Submit Interview Transcript & Rough Draft: Monday, Dec. 1 by EOC**
- **Rough Draft Workshop: Wednesday, Dec. 3 (meet with me one-on-one)**
- **Final Submission: Wed. Dec. 10 (Blackboard)**

Disclaimer: This course schedule is fluid and subject to change. Any changes will be communicated with students.

Use of Artificial Intelligence & Large Language Models (LLMs)

Students may use AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Grok, Gemini, Canva Magic Write, etc.) only with instructor permission or as directed for brainstorming, outlining, or headline writing exercises.

However:

- All writing assignments, including leads and story structures, must be substantially your own.
- If you use AI to assist with idea generation or initial drafting, you must disclose your use and show how you revised and edited the content.
- Submitting an AI-generated story without adaptation or analysis will be treated as academic dishonesty unless explicitly allowed.

We will explore how AI intersects with journalism this semester, but remember: strong reporting, clarity, and your own editorial judgment matter most.

Attendance Policy

This is a skills-based, participation-heavy course, and attendance is essential. We often conduct live interviews, peer critiques, and in-class writing exercises that cannot be recreated outside class.

- You are allowed 3 unexcused absences without penalty.
- Each additional unexcused absence will result in a deduction from your final grade.
- Excused absences (illness, emergencies, school activities) must be documented.

Classroom Expectations

- **Phones & Devices:**
Keep phones on silent and out of sight unless we're using them for audio recordings or live reporting exercises. Laptops/tablets are allowed for note-taking and writing only.
- **Participation:**
Show up ready to engage. Respectful interaction is non-negotiable.
- **Deadlines:**
News doesn't wait, and neither do deadlines. There will not be any flexibility for deadlines unless explicitly approved or communicated by the instructor. **Late work loses 10% per day, up to 3 days, unless prior arrangements are made.**
- **Professionalism:**
Treat every assignment like it's live. Factual accuracy, fair reporting, and ethical news gathering processes will be of paramount importance—points deducted for these purposes will not be reappropriated following corrections.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, fabrication, or using someone else's work (including AI-generated responses not properly credited or allowed) will result in academic consequences. See the SPC Student Handbook for full policies.

Intellectual Exchange Statement

In South Plains College courses, the instructor will establish and support an environment that values and nurtures individual and group difference and encourages engagement and interaction. Understanding and respecting multiple experiences and perspectives will serve to challenge and stimulate all of us to learn about others, about the larger world and about ourselves. By promoting intellectual exchange, we will not only mirror society as it is, but also model society as it should and can be.

Disabilities Statement

Students with disabilities, including but not limited to physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations should notify the Disability Services Office early in the semester so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodations must provide acceptable documentation of the individual's disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, call or visit the Disability Services Office at Levelland (Student Health & Wellness Office) 806-716-2577, Lubbock Centers (located at the Lubbock Downtown Center) 806-716-4675, or Plainview Center (Main Office) 806-716-4302.

Non-Discrimination Statement

South Plains College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Vice President for Student Affairs, South Plains College, 1401 College Avenue, Box 5, Levelland, TX 79336. Phone number 806-716-2360.

Title IX Pregnancy and Parenting Accommodations Statement (Rev. 6/11/2024)

If you are pregnant or parenting (paternal or maternal) with children under the age of 18 per [Texas Education Code 51.982](#) and Title IX you have a right to reasonable accommodations to help continue your education. To activate accommodations you must submit a [Title IX pregnancy and parenting accommodations request](#), along with specific medical documentation, to the Health and Wellness Center. Once approved, notification will be sent to the student and instructors. It is the student's responsibility to work with the instructor to arrange accommodations. Contact the Health and Wellness Center at 806-716-2529 or email rcanon@southplainscollege.edu for assistance.

CARE (Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation) Team

South Plains College is committed to ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of its students and community. To support its campus community SPC has a CARE Team. This is a dedicated group of campus professionals responsible for assessing and responding to students who could benefit from academic, emotional, or psychological support, as well as those presenting risk to the health or safety of the community. If you see someone experiencing challenges, appearing distressed, posing a threat to their safety or someone else's safety, or causing a significant disruption to the SPC community, please submit a [CARE Team referral](#). You may also submit a referral for yourself if you would like additional support. NOTE: In cases where a person's behavior poses an imminent threat to you or another, contact 911.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Government Code 411.2031, et al. authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in South Plains College buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and South Plains College policy, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations and Frequently Asked Questions, please refer to the Campus Carry page at: <http://www.southplainscollege.edu/campuscarry.php>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all South Plains College campuses. Report violations to the College Police Department at 806-716-2396 or 9-1-1.

COVID-19 (Rev. 8/17/2024)

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, please do not attend class and either seek medical attention or get tested for COVID-19.

- Fever or chills
- Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Muscles or body aches
- New loss of taste and smell
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Nausea or Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Please also notify DeEtte Edens, FNP-C, Associate Director of Health & Wellness, at dedens@southplainscollege.edu or 806-716-2376

1. SPC will follow the recommended 3-day isolation period for individuals that test positive.
 - a. **Please note that day 0 is the date of positive test. Day 1 begins the first full day after the date of positive result.**
2. COVID reporting
 - a. Please have students and employees notify DeEtte Edens, FNP-C if they have tested positive to verify dates before returning to class or work.
 - b. The home tests are sufficient but students need to submit a photo of the positive result. The date of test must be written on the test result and an ID included in the photo. If tested elsewhere (clinic, pharmacy, etc.), please submit a copy of the doctor's note or email notification. Results may be emailed to DeEtte Edens, FNP-C at dedens@southplainscollege.edu.
 - c. A student is clear to return to class without further assessment if they have completed:
 - The 3-day isolation period, symptoms have improved and
 - they are afebrile for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
 - d. **HEATH SCIENCE PROGRAMS ONLY:** Due to clinical requirements, students in health science programs returning to class or clinical from a positive test will be required to wear a mask in the health sciences areas including offices, hallways, and classrooms, as well as in the clinical setting for a 10-day period from date of positive test.
3. Please instruct students and employees to communicate with DeEtte Edens prior to their return date if still symptomatic at the end of the 3-day isolation.
4. Exposed individuals will not be required to quarantine. If exposed, SPC does request individuals closely monitor themselves. If an individual does become symptomatic, please do not attend class or work and be tested.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

• Purpose of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Applications:

AI applications are advanced language models designed to aid and engage in meaningful conversations, as well as, generate and revise content. AI is intended to supplement learning, stimulate critical thinking, and enhance academic discourse. However, its use comes with certain responsibilities.

• Academic Integrity:

Using AI to generate academic work, including essays, reports, or assignments, without proper attribution is a violation of SPC academic integrity policies. Plagiarism undermines the learning process and is strictly prohibited. Students must ensure that their work reflects their own ideas, research, synthesis, and analysis and appropriately cites all sources, including AI.

• **Collaboration and Consultation:**

While AI can be a valuable resource, it is essential to strike a balance between seeking assistance and maintaining personal responsibility. Collaboration with peers, consulting instructors, and utilizing other approved learning resources should be prioritized. Overreliance on AI for solutions without actively engaging in the learning process is discouraged and can be grounds for academic integrity violations. Utilizing AI as a tool for brainstorming or research is allowed but the writing should be the student's own work and thoughts.

• **Critical Thinking and Originality:**

AI usage can provide suggestions and information, but it is essential to critically evaluate the responses and exercise independent thought. Relying solely on AI for answers deprives students of the opportunity to develop their analytical and problem-solving skills. In assignments where originality, creativity, and independent thinking are valued, AI would be detrimental to the student learning process. Critical thinking and originality emphasize the importance of independent thinking in all academic endeavors as part of the student's learning experience apart from outside influence and offers the student the opportunity to refine their unique, individual voice through academic discourse with other students and faculty.

• **Ethical Use and Bias Awareness:**

AI is trained on large amounts of data from the internet, which may include biased or inaccurate information. Be mindful of the potential for bias and critically evaluate the responses provided by AI. Therefore, when using AI, just like with using any other database, students must verify that the information is from reliable sources, question any potential biases, and ensure that the information and sources used in the paper are neutral, peer-reviewed sources.

• **Responsible Engagement:**

Students should engage with AI in a respectful and responsible manner and avoid using offensive language, discriminatory remarks, or engaging in any form of harassment or inappropriate behavior. Students should also uphold the standards of respectful communication in addressing both AI and fellow classmates.

• **Compliance with South Plains College Policies:**

Policies regarding the appropriate use of AI in South Plains College courses are set by instructional departments and individual instructors. Appropriate use of AI may range from strict prohibition to assignments they may require the use of AI. Misusing or violating the guidelines outlined in this syllabus warning may result in disciplinary action, including academic penalties.

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the specific course policies regarding the use of AI and adhere to them throughout the semester.