

**Florida International University**  
**MMC 3123 Writing Fundamentals for Communicators**  
**Section: U01 Spring 2018**

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**Department:** Journalism + Media  
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**Course Description:**

Writing Fundamentals for Communicators applies principles of writing for professional communications in advertising, broadcast, digital media, scholarship, journalism and public relations.

**Objectives:**

Students will learn how to:

- apply the principles of good writing to different forms of media through practice and individual coaching;
- use and apply correct Associated Press Style, proper grammar, punctuation, and syntax in all forms of communication used by media professionals;
- develop strong writing that works across interdisciplinary fields of media and communication.

**Learning Outcomes:**

At the completion of this course, students will:

- Identify and use principles and techniques of strong writing
- Illustrate an understanding of the importance of organization, audience, tone, and voice
- Integrate research into a variety of professional writing projects
- Write in a variety of professional writing genres to prepare for their majors
- Apply concepts in a manner that is sensitive to audiences across all media
- Recognize the multiple roles of the writer and editor in the world of digital media

**Required Texts:**

1. Stovall, J. (2016). *Writing for the Mass Media* (9<sup>th</sup> Edition).

This is a mobile version REVEL text. You **MUST PURCHASE AN ACCESS CODE** from the FIU bookstore (amounts listed below are approximate).

REVEL (online text access code) \$56.00

REVEL and Writer (online text and writing resource access codes)\* \$68.00

REVEL Textbook and access code \$87.00

Note: You can purchase the book for an additional \$19.99 through Pearson and it will be delivered to your home.

2. Associated Press & Minthorn, D. The Associated Press. (2017). *The Associated Press Stylebook 2017*, ISBN: 978-0917360619.

**Recommended Supplemental Texts/Materials:**

3. Maggio, R. (2009). *How to Say It Choice Words, Phrases, Sentences, and Paragraphs for Every Situation*.
4. Strunk, W. & White, E.B. (1999). *The Elements of Style*.
5. **\*Pearson Writer** makes it easier to write your papers with writing and research support including Writer’s Guide, Cite a Source, Notebook, and Outline features— whenever, wherever you need it. Pearson Writer makes it easy to stay organized, track tasks, and stay on top of all your writing and research projects.

You can set milestones prior to the due date, set up notifications to prevent procrastinating, and make sure you have enough time to do quality work.

Get the free **mobile app** as a part of your Pearson Writer subscription to manage your writing and research anywhere you go and **The Pearson Writer add-in for Microsoft Word** so you are able to access Pearson Writer features—Writer’s Guide, Cite a Source, Notebook, and Outline—without leaving your Microsoft Word document.

**Website Resource:**

This course uses a Pearson digital product that contains important assignments and resources used throughout the semester. The required link can be found on the navigation section of the course on Blackboard to access assignments and text.

**Academic Misconduct:**

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the *Student Handbook*.

**Disability Resource Center:**

Students with disabilities, as defined by law, have the right to receive needed accommodations if their disabilities make it difficult to perform academic tasks in the usual way or in the allotted time frame. To receive accommodation, students must register with the Disability Resource Center. Email: [drcbbc@fiu.edu](mailto:drcbbc@fiu.edu).

**Classroom Procedures:**

Students are expected to attend each class and participate in discussion. Please turn off your cellular phones at the start of every class. If you are late to class, avoid disrupting the class when you enter. During class discussions, avoid interrupting fellow students and be respectful of other people's views and beliefs. I reserve the right to drop any student from the class who is.

**Course Assistants (Coaches):**

Each student will be assigned to a course assistant who will act as your writing coach. This person will evaluate and grade your written assignments. You will get the name and contact information for your assistant before you begin any writing. This person has absolute power over your grades—do not approach me with complaints or for grade overrides.

**Makeup and Late Work:**

There are NO makeup dates given WITHOUT EXCEPTION unless I or your coach have excused your absence. Requests for makeups are the responsibility of the student and must be sent within *one* business day of the missed assignment; otherwise, all missed work will receive a zero. Don't approach me in April about a missing grade from January even if you're correct.

Excused absences involve true emergencies (i.e. medical emergency or death in the family), or a recognized religious holiday. For the former, you must provide appropriate documentation. In the case of a medical emergency, you need a doctor or hospital note that says you COULD NOT ATTEND class on that date.

Examples of unacceptable absences include family events (wedding, family trip, etc.), conflicts with other classes or school-related activities (such as grammar exams or reviews), car trouble, a work conflict or an internship obligation. If you registered and paid for this course, you must be in your seat at 3 p.m.

**Writing Assignments:**

There will be five media related assignments. Each assignment should be written/completed within the parameters outlined in each set of requirements. Each assignment will be graded using a rubric and students are expected to: (1) use standard English correct and proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation (2) use paragraphs with Times New Roman typeface (ONLY) in 12 pts and double-spaced. All assignments must be uploaded to Blackboard for grading. Assignments will ONLY be graded in Blackboard. Please make sure you adjust your setting on BB to see corrections.

**Grading Policy:**

It is imperative to remember that writing assignments in this course are graded subjectively. *Subjective means that your grade will be determined by how the instructor believes you have satisfied all assignment requirements.* Simply completing the

assignment will not automatically earn you a good grade; it is **how** you complete the assignment that will determine your grade. The instructor will assign grades based on a rubric. You will be provided with feedback (when available) and suggestions for your writing assignments.

**Grading Scale:**

A	=	92 – 100
A-	=	91 – 89
B+	=	87 – 88
B	=	82 – 86
B-	=	79 – 81
C+	=	77 – 78
C	=	70 – 76
D	=	60 – 69
F	=	59 and below

**Evaluation and Assessments:**

1. Quarterly Reviews (4)	20%
2. Chapter Quizzes via Pearson Revel	10%
3. (1) Writing Assignment: Personality Profile	15%
4. (2) Writing Assignment: On the Spot Feature	15%
5. (3) Writing/Photojournalism Assignment: Off Campus News Feature	15%
6. (4) Writing Assignment: PR Press Release	15%
7. (5) Writing/Design Assignment: Ad	10%

Total----100%

**Quarterly Reviews (20 percent)**

- Students will take four 100-point tests covering grammar, spelling, AP Style, and chapter reviews. These tests will be timed and open during specific windows during the semester.

**Pearson Text Chapter Quizzes (10 percent)**

- **DUE THE SATURDAY OF THE WEEK EACH CHAPTER IS ASSIGNED BEFORE 11 p.m.** The system will not allow you access after the due date.
- Exams are available **ONLINE ONLY** and will be available **ONE WEEK BEFORE THE DUE DATE.**
- **You must also complete the Shared Writing Prompts.** These prompts are located on Pearson’s Website and have a limited amount of characters. They will also be assigned with a time limit to complete. Please use correct grammar and punctuation in your responses.
- **PLEASE NOTE: TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES WILL NOT BE AN ACCEPTABLE EXCUSE FOR NOT COMPLETING ANY AND ALL ASSESSMENTS ON TIME.**

**(1) Personality Profile (15 percent)**

- Each student will interview a fellow student and turn in a Personality Profile on a fellow student. You should make sure that you are making your fellow student sound as interesting as possible.
- Your goal is to write a comprehensive article highlighting something special and unique about this individual. *The Personality Profile Organizer* is available on Blackboard. The organizer should be downloaded and brought to class on the day of the interviews. This assignment should be typed and uploaded to Blackboard on the due date.
- The assignment should be two to two-and-a-half typed pages.

**(2) On the Spot Feature (15 percent)**

- There will be a guest speaker in class that day. I will provide you with some introductory materials for you to do some research, formulate questions, and select a focus for your article. On the day of the interview, please arrive **ON TIME**. It is very rude to be late when there is a guest speaker. You will have the schedule listed in Blackboard and on the whiteboard in class.
- You will have to have the story completed and uploaded by the assigned time.
- Page limit and presentation schedule will be posted on Blackboard.

**(3) Off Campus News Feature (15 percent)**

- Each student will select an off-campus event to attend and report on by writing a story and provide up to three (3) images to accompany the story.
- The story can either be written for the Web or print. The assignment including pictures/images will be uploaded to Blackboard and the pictures/images will be presented in class also. Each student will give a brief presentation on why they selected this topic and the angle they chose to report on the event.
- You must upload two (2) things: a Word document containing your 2-page long story AND a PDF containing your three (3) images. There will be a separate rubric used for this assignment that contains a category for evaluating the images.

**(4) Public Relations Press Release (15 percent)**

- Your assignment is to (1) identify and research a nonprofit organization of your choice (Girl Scouts, Big Brother Big Sister, United Way, etc.).
- This nonprofit organization must have an (2) upcoming event that will take place in the next **three months**.
- Once you have identified the organization's event, you will (3) write a news release for the event. There is an example of a news release on page 198 in your book. Use this news release as a guideline.
- Next, (4) you need to identify an actual contact person within the organization (it should not be you) and write an email to the contact person with your press release as an attachment. Let them know that you have written the press release as an assignment in this class and invite them to use the press release if they so desire.
- Lastly, (5) you must make a PDF of the email that you sent to the person and

upload it as part of your assignment. FYI, there is a news release checklist on the bottom of Page 201 in your textbook that I will be using as a rubric for this assignment. Your news release should look just like the example.

**(5) Ad (10 percent)**

- For your Advertising assignment you will be creating your own ad. You can create your ad in any format that you want. You can draw, cut and paste or use a publishing program (InDesign, Adobe Pagemaker, etc.).
- Make sure that you create your image (no stick figures). Once you have created your ad you should convert it to a PDF document via scan, export, or "print to PDF" command.
- Your ad should have the following elements: (1) Illustration, (2) Headline, (3) Subheads, (4) Body Copy, and (5) Closings. Your book discusses these elements beginning on page 179. Your ad should be letter sized (8 1/2 X 11).
- You MUST also include a **Copy Platform** as a Word document. A copy platform is a way of gathering information about a product and matching it with the advertising situation. Use the example in the book (10.7, page 175) as your guide. You should use bullet points as needed and sentences when needed.
- You must include the following elements:
  1. Ad Subject
  2. Ad Problem
  3. Product Characteristics
  4. Advertising Objective
  5. Target Market
  6. Competition
  7. Statement of benefit or appeal
  8. Creative theme
  9. Supportive selling points

**Schedule of Classes:**

Although we will try our best to stay on schedule with assignments, there will be times when the schedule may need to be adjusted. The following schedule is approximate and subject to additions, deletions and substitutions.

**Week 1:**

**Jan. 8:** Introduction to class. Review syllabus.

**Jan. 10:** Introduction to AP style. Sign contract page and turn in on time. Review REVEL student account instructions. Create REVEL student account.

**Week 2:**

**Jan. 15:** **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY. NO CLASS**

**Jan. 17:** Chapter 1: Sit Down and Write

**Chapter Quiz due by end of week**

Week 3:

**Jan. 22:** Chapter 2: Basic Tools of Writing. Conduct peer interviews. Discuss personality profile.

**Jan. 24:** Verbs and parts of speech.

**Chapter Quiz due by end of week**

Week 4:

**Jan. 29:** NO CLASS. Read Chapter 3: Style and the Stylebook

**Jan. 31:** Style and the Stylebook. WORKSHOP with writing coaches.

**Quarterly Exam #1 (Covers Week 1-4)**

**No Chapter Quiz**

Week 5:

**Feb. 5:** Chapter 4: Writing in the Media Environment

**Feb. 7:** Subject-verb agreement.

**DUE: Personality Profiles (15 percent)**

**Chapter Quiz due by end of week**

Week 6:

**Feb. 12:** Chapter 5: Basic News Writing. Discuss on-the-spot writing assignment.

**Feb. 14:** Phrases and clauses.

**Chapter Quiz due by end of week**

Week 7

**Feb. 20:** Chapter 6: Writing for Print Journalism

**Feb. 22:** WORKSHOP with writing coaches

**DUE: On the Spot Writing (15%)**

**Chapter Quiz due by end of week**

**Week 8**

**Feb. 27:** Chapter 7: Writing for the Web

**March 1:** Pronoun case.

**Quarterly Review #2** (Covers Week 5-8)  
**No Chapter Quiz**

**Week 9**

**March 6:** Chapter 8: Writing for Broadcast Journalism

**March 8:** Punctuation.

**Chapter quiz due by end of week**

**Week 10: March 12 and March 14**  
**SPRING BREAK**

**Week 11**

**March 20:** Chapter 9: Writing and Images. Discuss off-campus news feature assignment.

**March 22:** Off Campus workday (NO CLASS)

**Chapter Quiz due by end of week**

**Week 12:**

**March 27:** Chapter 11: Writing for Public Relations

**March 29:** WORKSHOP with writing coaches

**DUE: Off Campus News Feature (15 percent)**

**Quarterly Review #3** (Covers Week 9-12)

**No chapter quiz**

**Week 13**

**April 2:** Chapter 10: Writing Advertising Copy

**April 4:** WORKSHOP with writing coaches



**Chapter Quiz due by end of week**

**Week 14:**

**April 9:** Chapter 12: The Writer and the Law

**April 11:** TBA

**DUE: Press Release (15 percent )**  
**Chapter Quiz due by end of week**

**Week 15**

**April 17:** Chapter 13: Getting A Job in the Mass Media

**April 19:** FINAL WORKSHOP with writing coaches.

**Chapter Quiz due by end of week**

**Week 16 (Finals Week): April 24 and April 26**

**DUE: Ad (10 percent)**  
**Quarterly Review #4 (Covers Week 13-15)**