

MASSCOMM 241: Section 1402

Online Journalism

Spring 2016 – 3 credits – McCormick 1146 – TuTh – 5:00 to 6:15 p.m.

Instructor: Dennis Owen Frohlich, Ph.D.
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Office Hours

Tuesday: 1:45 to 3:15 p.m.
Wednesday: 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Thursday: 1:45 to 3:15 p.m.

If these times do not work, please email me three (3) possible times that work better for you.

Catalog Description

Prepares students to write stories and publish them with diverse online media tools, including blogs and social media. This course also explains how to promote and manage news content disseminated through new forms of digital media. This course builds upon MASSCOMM 230, which focuses on news writing. This is an elective for students majoring in Mass Communications. MASSCOMM 230 is a prerequisite for taking this course.

Required Texts

Briggs, M. (2015). *Journalism Next, third edition*.

Fink, C. C. (2004). *Writing Opinion for Impact, second edition*.

The Associated Press Stylebook 2015.

Some weeks short, free, electronic courses from Poynter News University will be assigned in lieu of readings. Online readings may also be assigned.

Course Objectives

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the fundamental concepts and structures of online journalism.
- Write effective stories for online media.
- Develop skills in photography, graphics, maps, and illustrations for online news content.

- Create multimedia stories adhering to the fundamental journalism standards of fairness, accuracy, and quality.
- Produce effective online news content for a news audience.

Class Meetings

Class will meet two times a week in McCormick, room 1146. Some of the readings for that week will be discussed in lecture, but not every part of the reading will be discussed. You are still responsible for completing your readings, even if we don't have time to discuss them. Class sessions will include lecture, discussions, and hands-on activities. You are expected to attend class and to participate.

Lecture slides will be available on BOLT after class concludes. During class, do not focus on trying to write down everything that's on the slides: you can get this information after class. Instead, take notes on what's NOT mentioned on the slides, such as discussions we have, questions that other students ask, videos, or other media presented during the lecture.

Assignments

Your grade will be based on the following assignments. Assignment descriptions are included in this syllabus, and more descriptive assignment sheets—plus grading rubrics—are available on BOLT.

Attendance:	100 points
Social Media Set-Up and Introduction:	40 points
Digital News Analysis:	30 points
Google Map:	60 points
Hard News Story:	100 points
Infographic:	60 points
Feature Story:	100 points
Review Analysis:	30 points
Product Review:	100 points
Op-Ed Analysis:	30 points
Op-Ed:	100 points
<u>Final Exam:</u>	<u>250 points</u>
Total:	1,000 points

Grading

Grades are calculated by totaling all points from graded work. Grading will be based on the following scale:

A	920-1,000
A-	900-919
B+	880-899
B	820-879

B-	800-819
C+	780-799
C	720-779
C-	700-719
D+	680-699
D	600-679
F	0-599

The grading scale is non-negotiable. A final grade of 879, for instance, is a B. All grades are final unless questions about grades are addressed in writing within **2 weeks** after the grade is posted. If you have concerns about your grades check with me *sooner* in the semester rather than *later*.

The reason I do not round up grades is to remain fair for all students. If I round up a grade for a student who is one point below the cut-off, what do I do for the student who is 2 points below the cut-off? Three points? Five? At some point, there has to be a cut-off to ensure fairness.

Attendance

Attendance is required. If you leave class early without speaking to me, or arrive late, that does not count as attendance. Attendance will be taken via a sign-in sheet. If you miss the sign-in sheet as it is passed around, it is your responsibility to sign in before you leave.

Attendance will be taken 20 times throughout the semester, worth 5 points each time it is taken. You are allowed **2 unexcused absences** during the semester. If you miss class due to illness, school activities, military service, or other university-approved reasons, please email me before class time, if possible, so that I don't mark you absent.

Assignment Descriptions

The following are brief descriptions of your assignments this semester. More detailed directions will be given in class. Grading rubrics can be found on BOLT so you understand what I am looking for.

Social Media Set-Up and Introduction (40 points)

Today's journalist is heavily connected with social media. You will create a blog, which is where you will post all of your assignments (as well as other work you wish to promote). You will also link to professional social media accounts, or create them if you haven't already. You will create your blog on WordPress, then create an introductory post and About page.

Digital News Analysis (30 points)

You will analyze two (2) online news stories to see how stories are adapted to the web, and how they make use of multimedia. This will help you prepare for your Hard News Story. Examining the diversity of storytelling forms in the online area will help you become a more adaptable journalist.

Google Map (60 points)

You will create a public Google map of Bloomsburg related to a common theme. The map should include descriptions, pictures, and hyperlinks for the areas of interest.

Hard News Story (100 points)

For your first major writing assignment, you will cover a hard news story of interest to the local community. The story should be no more than 500 words long, and include at least 3 photos you've taken and edited yourself, and 2 external links. You are encouraged to add other multimedia as relevant.

Infographic (60 points)

Infographics are very popular in online journalism, as they can quickly convey a lot of information in an attractive format. For this assignment, you will create an infographic using public record data. The infographic should focus on a newsworthy theme, like demographic data of Pennsylvania, or spending patterns in the 2016 Presidential election.

Feature Story (100 points)

For this project, you will write a feature story of 700-900 words. You will heavily augment the story with multimedia: images, audio, video, hyperlinks, Google Maps, or anything else that fits the story.

Review Analysis (30 points)

You will analyze two (2) online reviews (of products, media, services, etc.). These reviews should be similar to the review you plan on writing. You should examine how these reviews are adapted to the web, and how they make use of multimedia.

Product Review (100 points)

You will write a review of 500-700 words. You can review anything, from media to products to services and more. The review should incorporate multimedia that helps you convey the significance of certain features of the product or media.

Op-Ed Analysis (30 points)

For your final analysis, you will evaluate two (2) online opinion pieces. These op-eds should be similar in topic to the op-ed you plan on writing. You should examine how these op-eds are adapted to the web, and how they make use of multimedia. You will also examine the logic and argumentation used to prove the writer's point.

Op-Ed (100 points)

For your final writing assignment, you will craft a 600-800 word opinion column on a topic of your choice. You will be evaluated on the creativeness of your writing, the merits of your argument, and the strength of your evidence. At the very least, the op-ed column should include links to other sources, such as hard news stories, government websites, and primary

sources. Because you are writing in a digital realm, as before, you are encouraged to experiment with the form, taking full advantage of the multimedia options available to you.

Final Exam (250 points)

The final exam will be comprehensive, covering content from Weeks 1-15. Because this class covers a variety of topics related to online journalism, no one writing assignment can assess everything you've learned, hence a final exam. The exam will consist of a series of essay questions, administered online in our normal classroom. More details on the test, and what to study, will be reviewed the week before the exam. Sample questions will also be provided ahead of time.

Late Work

Please read the syllabus carefully to know how to turn in assignments and when they are due. Most assignments will be posted to your blog, but occasionally on BOLT. When submitting assignments electronically, you will have a 10-minute grace period to account for possible issues when uploading your assignment, after which time the assignment will be considered late. Please do not wait until the last minute to submit assignments.

Assignments turned in late will receive a 25% penalty. Late work will **only** be accepted for **24 hours** after the due date. Work turned in later than 24 hours will not be accepted.

If you are going to miss class or a due date, please notify me **BEFORE THE DUE DATE** if at all possible. If you have an excused absence, I will still accept your assignment.

Academic Honesty

All work completed for this course must respect the intellectual property of others. When using somebody else's copyrighted material, whether words, images, media, or ideas, proper credit must be given. If direct quotations are used, they must be enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited. If copyrighted material is used indirectly, it must still be properly cited!

If in doubt, include a citation. If you have any questions at all, ask your instructor *before* the assignment is submitted. *Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse!*

The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. Bloomsburg's PRP 3512: Academic Integrity Policy applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, either determined by the instructor or the Provost, depending on the seriousness of the offense. Informational resources about academic honesty for students can be found at http://www.bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3512

Self-Plagiarism

In the university setting, you are not allowed to reuse assignments from one class for another class. All work done for each class **must be original**. Reusing assignments constitutes **self-plagiarism**. Students often take multiple writing classes at the same time, and in mass communication assignments are often similar between classes. Some students are tempted to turn in the same assignment for two different classes. Even with slight modifications between assignments, this still constitutes self-plagiarism.

If you are caught reusing the same assignment, you may be asked to redo or modify the assignment. There may also be a grade penalty.

Students who write for a publication—whether a student publication or otherwise—may also be tempted to turn in an assignment that they have previously published. This also constitutes self-plagiarism and is not allowed. When you publish an article, you generally don't own the copyright anymore: the publication does. Competition is fierce in the online news industry, so no publication wants their work appearing in more than one place.

For a real-world example on the ethics of self-plagiarism by journalists, [read this story about Jonah Lehrer](#), a science journalist who had a pattern of publishing similar work in different publications at the same time.

Extra Credit

You can earn extra credit by publishing any of the stories written for this class (the hard news story, the feature story, or the review article: as the op-ed article is turned in at the end of the semester, you won't have time to get it published). For each published article, you can earn an additional 40 points: 4% of the final grade. Not only that, but you'll have another clip to add to your portfolio, which is more important than any grade.

After getting a story published, please send me the link (if it is published electronically) or a scan of the newspaper/magazine copy. The clip should include your name and the date of publication.

You are free to submit your stories for publication only **AFTER** they have been graded. If you publish them before you get your grade back, you are not eligible for extra credit.

Note for Student Editors Involved in Campus Media: Student editors involved in campus media like BUNow or The Voice are in a special position compared to students who do not have that power. If you are a section editor, managing editor, editor-in-chief or the like, you have the power to determine if your own story gets published. This is not fair to students who are not editors. If you are an editor, you are allowed to publish your own stories whenever you want **AFTER** the assignment due date, however, you will not earn extra credit. If you publish your story in a section that you are not the editor of, then you can earn extra credit.

Assignment Revisions

Revising is an important part of the writing process. Three of your four major writing assignments (Hard News Story, Feature Story, and Product Review) will be eligible for revision. The final major writing assignment, the Op-Ed, is turned in at the end of the semester, and there will be no time to revise it. Revision due dates are indicated in the course schedule.

You are eligible to submit revisions AFTER you have received your grade back. Revisions are optional. The revision will be graded by the same standards as the original submission; ideally your grade will go up, though it could go down if the revision is worse than the original. You will revise the story that's posted to your blog. Then, you will submit to BOLT a brief summary of what you revised and how you addressed my written suggestions for improvement.

Special Needs

Any students eligible for classroom accommodations are invited to meet with Dr. Frohlich to discuss their concerns and to present their disclosure forms from the Students with Disabilities Center.

Our university provides reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations and are not registered with the Students with Disabilities Center, please contact this office in the Warren Student Services Center, Room 043 as soon as possible to establish your eligibility.

Students with Disabilities Center

<http://www.bloomu.edu/disabilities>

Warren Student Services Center, Room 043

Phone: 570-389-4491

If you become sick during the course of the semester, or have some major personal crisis going on, please let me know as soon as possible so I can help you work around it. When I was an undergraduate, I was very sick one semester and missed a lot of classes, but my professors were willing to work with me. I'm sensitive to these issues and want to work with you, but if you do not tell me there's a problem I cannot help you.

Course Schedule

The current version of the course syllabus will be uploaded to BOLT with the revision date included in the file name

Week	Date	Topics
1	<p>Tuesday, January 19</p> <p>Thursday, January 21</p>	<p>January 19: CLASS BEGINS</p> <p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introduction • The Opportunities and Challenges of Online Journalism • Journalists and Blogging <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briggs, Chapter 1 <p>Assignments</p> <p>No assignment.</p>
2	<p>Tuesday, January 26</p> <p>Thursday, January 28</p>	<p>January 26: ADD/DROP ENDS</p> <p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journalists and Blogging • Telling the Story through Social Media • Hard News Story Ideas <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briggs, Chapter 2 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign-up for blog and social media; post introduction; submit blog link to BOLT. DUE Thursday, January 28 at 11:55 p.m.
3	<p>Tuesday, February 2</p> <p>Thursday, February 4</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Storytelling • Editing Photos for the Web • Designing Google Maps <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briggs, Chapter 5 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital News Analysis posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, February 4 at 11:55 p.m.

<p>4</p>	<p>Tuesday, February 9</p> <p>Thursday, February 11</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Captions • Citizen and Participatory Journalism • Mobile Journalism <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briggs, Chapters 3 and 4 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Map posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, February 11 at 11:55 p.m.
<p>5</p>	<p>Tuesday, February 16</p> <p>Thursday, February 18</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Public Records <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briggs, Chapter 8 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard News Story posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, February 18 at 11:55 p.m.
<p>6</p>	<p>Tuesday, February 23</p> <p>Thursday, February 25</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday: Discuss Hard News Story with classmates • Designing Infographics • Data Journalism <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 steps to designing an amazing infographic • The do's and don'ts of infographic design • 10 tips for journalists designing infographics <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infographic posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, February 25 at 11:55 p.m.
<p>7</p>	<p>Tuesday, March 1</p> <p>Thursday, March 3</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Right Multimedia for the Right Story • Telling Stories with Audio <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briggs, Chapter 6 • Poynter News University self-directed course "Five Steps to Multimedia Storytelling". This is a FREE online course that should take an hour to two hours to complete. You should complete the course this week. <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Optional] Revised Hard News Story posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, March 3 at 11:55 p.m. Email me if you revised your story!

SPRING BREAK WEEK: March 7-11. NO ASSIGNMENTS!		
9	<p>Tuesday, March 15</p> <p>Thursday, March 17</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling Stories with Video <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briggs, Chapter 7 <p>Assignments</p> <p>No assignment.</p>
10	<p>Tuesday, March 22</p> <p>Thursday, March 24</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a Digital Audience • Online Media Law <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briggs, Chapter 9 • Fink, Chapter 13 • Poynter News University self-directed course "Online Media Law: The Basics for Bloggers and Other Publishers". This is a FREE online course that should take about an hour to complete. You should complete the course this week. <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feature Story posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, March 24 at 11:55 p.m.
11	<p>Tuesday, March 29</p> <p>Thursday, March 31</p> <p style="color: green;">Friday, April 1</p>	<p style="color: green;">April 1: LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM CLASSES</p> <p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday: Discuss Feature Story with classmates • Writing Reviews <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fink, Chapter 9 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Analysis posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, March 31 at 11:55 p.m.

<p>12</p>	<p>Tuesday, April 5</p> <p>Thursday, April 7</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Purpose and Call of Opinion Writing • Types of Opinion Writing • Opinion Writing on the Web <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fink, Chapters 1-2 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product Review posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, April 7 at 11:55 p.m. • [Optional] Revised Feature Story posted to Personal Blog. DUE Friday, April 8 at 11:55 p.m. Email me if you revised your story!
<p>13</p>	<p>Tuesday, April 12</p> <p>Thursday, April 14</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday: Discuss Product Review with classmates • Research for Opinion Articles • Structuring Your Opinion Article <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fink, Chapters 3-4 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Op-Ed Analysis posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, April 14 at 11:55 p.m.
<p>14</p>	<p>Tuesday, April 19</p> <p>Thursday, April 21</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Logical Fallacies in Opinion Writing <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fink, Chapters 5-6 <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Optional] Revised Product Review posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, April 21 at 11:55 p.m. Email me if you revised your review!

<p>15</p>	<p>Tuesday, April 26 Thursday, April 28</p>	<p>Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday: Discuss DRAFT of op-ed with classmates • Writing About Politics and Social Issues • Writing with Style and Voice <p>Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fink, Chapters 10-12 • (Optional) Fink: Chapters 7-8. If you are interested in writing an entertainment or sports column, read the chapter/s most relevant to you. <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRAFT of Op-Ed (including multimedia) DUE Tuesday, April 26 at the start of class. • Op-Ed posted to Personal Blog. DUE Thursday, April 28 at 11:55 p.m.
<p>16</p>	<p>Monday, May 2 Tuesday, May 3</p>	<p>May 2: LAST DAY OF CLASS</p> <p>May 3-6: FINALS WEEK</p> <p>The final will be held in our normal classroom.</p> <p>Final:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday, May 3 from 2:45 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.
<p>17</p>	<p>Friday, May 13</p>	<p>May 13: GRADES AVAILABLE TO VIEW ON MyHusky</p>