

SHAW UNIVERSITY
Mass Communications
Advanced Reporting Practicum MCO 421 (3 credit hours)

Instructor: W. Russell Robinson

Office: Cheek Learning Resources Center

Classroom: MCO Smart Classroom/Field Work

Office Hours:

Mon: 10:00A-11:00A and 12:00-1:00P (2)

Tues: 01:00P-4:00P (1-2:30-available by phone) (3)

Wed: 10:00A-11:00A and 12:00-1:00P (2)

Thur: 01:00P-4:00P (1-2:30-available by phone) (3)

Fri: Faculty Research Day Office Hours By Appointment ONLY

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Mass Communications Mission Statement

The mission of Shaw University’s Department of Mass Communications is to educate students to think and act as responsible professionals and ethical citizens in a global community. We desire to work personally with students to prepare them for career opportunities and leadership in our technical society- with an emphasis in new media and develop effective communicators on paper, on air, and online.

Mass Communications Program Goals

1. Provide students with appropriate training for careers in mass communications.
2. Provide an intellectual climate for students to evaluate, interpret, and analyze issues related to mass media as those issues relate to leadership and professional responsibility.

Course Description:

This course represents an immersive experience the journalism mass communication student to actively participate in writing and reporting at an extensive level. Students will be exposed to investigative reporting techniques, news features, and experimental methods of news gathering.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Student Learning Outcomes	Assessment of Student Learning	Linkage to Program Learning Outcomes <i>(Insert the PLO</i>
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At the completion of this course, students will be able to:	Outcomes (Assessment Tools)	<i>number(s) that corresponds to the stated SLO) Note: The PLOs are not listed on the syllabus.</i>
Demonstrate a mastery in reporting either radio, print, tv on line or multimedia	Field work, final project, final pre production docs if applicable, reporting plan	
Pass an AP style exam	Class participation, Assigned readings	
Pass a media law exam	Class participation, Assigned readings	
Show a completed digital portfolio	Class participation, field work, outside news gathering,	
Produced a polished resume CD or DVD	Class Participation, Field Work, Electronic News Gathering	
Published 4 stories in real world venues	Class Participation, Field Work, Electronic News Gathering, Active Participation in school publications or school broadcasts	
Have three letters of professional reference	Class Participation, Field Work	
Demonstrate a mastery in reporting either radio, print, TV on line or multimedia	Class Participation	

Required Text:

Associated Press Style Manual 2008—(Geared to your specialization)

Supplemental Text

This will come in the course of class handouts to be distributed during class and posted at Blackboard.

Reading Assignments:

It is strongly recommended that each student read all assigned material **prior to class** and fully participate in class discussions and activities. To that avail, by mandate of the department students must purchase prior to January 30th. Individuals who do not fulfill this requirement will be reported to the Chair of MCO. Additionally, reading assignments will be applied to various

class discussions, written exams, major writing assignments and application exercises. Though you may not be asked verbatim to recite what you have read, you will be asked to use your knowledge in any related scenario. It is important to remember that your readings may also be assigned readings from professional journals, academic journals, newspapers, news magazines, trade magazines or internet documents during the course of the semester.

Screening Assignments:

On occasion, you will be asked to screen related video texts outside of class. It is imperative that you treat these viewing assignments just as you would treat any reading assignment. You are encouraged to read supplemental about what you will watch as well as take needed notes for discussion. Linkage to mass communication theory as well as adjacent social theory is encouraged and welcomed.

Course Requirements:

The final grade for this course will be assessed based on the evaluation rubric below: Following there will be a definition of assignments needed to successfully navigate this course.

Class Participation	10%
Extended Investigation/News Feature	40%
Reporting Assignments (4)	10%
Associated Press Exam/ Basic	20%
Media Law Exam	
Final Exam	20%

The following grading scale will be used: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = 59 and below
Note: The minimum passing grade for students with a major in the Department of Mass Communications is C.

1. Class Participation 10%: Students are expected to actively participate in a positive manner in the learning process. Participation includes: demonstrating critical thinking, active learning, development and use of listening and speaking skills needed for career success, and the ability to join a discipline’s conversation.

Student Participation Rubric

Criteria	Exemplary 5	Outstanding 4	Satisfactory 3	Adequate 2	Unsatisfactory 1
Interaction/ participation in classroom learning activities	Demonstrates critical thinking skills, evidence that student read assigned material, asks focused and appropriate questions, always interacts, responds regularly to questions; freely volunteers opinions, initiates appropriate questions, does not dominate discussion	Demonstrates beginning critical thinking skills, some evidence that student read assigned material, often interacts in class; responds often to questions, often volunteers opinions, contributions less developed and focused contributions	Occasionally, demonstrates critical thinking skills, occasionally interacts and responds to questions when prompted, contributions not as clearly focused, contributions lack focus, rambling, or tangential, questions sometimes digressive	Rarely demonstrates critical thinking skills, rarely participates or volunteers point-of-view, provides minimal answers when called upon, does show interest in class and discussion, some evidence that material was read	Does not participate or respond to questions; almost never volunteers to contribute or provide information, little or no evidence that read assigned material or completed assignments, may be disruptive to class

Engagement in the electronic/ email learning forum	Demonstrates competency in using electronic/email, including Blackboard learning forum assignment. Completes all tasks for every assignment within allotted time, provides complete written comments related to assignments or tasks, follows directions accurately of assignment or task	Follows directions with minimal difficulty, most of time no difficulty accessing and using electronic learning forum	Misses no more than two assignments, minimal difficulty accessing and using electronic learning forums	Misses more than two assignments. Some difficulty accessing and using electronic learning forums	Never logs onto Blackboard or check email, assignments not completed, no demonstrated competency in using electronic learning forum
Professional attitude and demeanor	No disruptive classroom behavior, no cell phones or electronic devices during class, respectful and courteous to others, recognizes and respects other students' points-of-view, alert in classroom, enthusiastic for work	Rarely disruptive and disrespectful on rare occasions, alert in the classroom on most occasions, enthusiastic most of the time, no cell phones or electronic devices	Minimally disruptive and disrespectful, sometimes lethargic in the classroom	Disruptive and disrespectful, rarely enthusiastic	Not respectful and courteous, alert or enthusiastic in the classroom
Punctuality	0-2 times tardy	3-4 times tardy	5-6 times tardy	7-8 times tardy	9-10 times tardy

2. Extended Investigation/News Feature **40%**: Students are expected to produce an extended work in their representative specialization. This could be either in print, audio, video, or digital media using the blogosphere. The student will be responsible for cultivating multiple sources to tell a complete story from beginning, middle, and end with some type of resolution. In some cases, the student may have to embed themselves within the context of the story so that they are able to completely understand the story's focus. It is imperative that the student understand that a large portion of this particular assignment requires self discipline and an independent entrepreneurial spirit. Once students have arrived at this phase of the course, the student must check in with the instructor on a weekly basis to provide updates and any needed information to help see the story out to its fruition. All projects are subject to being aired or webcast.

Extended Investigation/News Feature Rubric

Criteria	Exemplary 5	Outstanding 4	Satisfactory 3	Adequate 2	Unsatisfactory 1
Attribution and Sourcing	Clearly provides correct names of sources, addresses, cross checks information. Attribution can easily be checked by another reporter. Story is published or aired.	Names are spelled correctly, source may not be the primary source. Other information may be in the form of secondary data. Story could be published or aired.	Minimal errors in attribution of name or addresses. Should be rechecked with more research. Provides skeletal information. Story cannot be published or aired until factual information is verified.	Rudimentary accuracy at best. Misspellings, careless errors regarding sources, story cannot be published or aired.	Failure to provide accurate name, wrong address, major factual error. Story cannot be published or aired.
Spelling and word use	Illustrates a polished presentation of facts. No spelling errors, language represents the audience needs. High concepts are explained to the level of audience. Story is published or aired	The work represents a clear objective. Spelling errors are minimal, 10% or less. Word usage is appropriate for audience yet some concepts may need to be explained. Use of language and grammar have errors that are 5% or less. Story can be published or aired with minor revisions	The piece needs work. Spelling errors create barriers to understanding concepts of the story. Spelling errors are 15% or less. Grammatical mechanics are understandable but still must be tweaked. Story cannot be published or aired until major revisions are made.	Submitted story contains errors which make writing incoherent. Spelling errors are between 15 and 20%. Grammatical mechanics allow for one to read the piece, however, the use of language is not appropriate for the audience. Story may be reassigned or killed.	Submitted stories are littered with spelling errors ranging from 20% and beyond. Language presents major grammatical challenges to the point where the story is unreadable thus not published or aired. Vocabulary is limited. Story is ultimately killed.
Content	Factual information has been checked and rechecked. Story has a clear vision and clear audience. Graphics are tied closely to the story to where the pictures can tell the story alone if need be. Language is professional and story offers all perspectives. No hint libelous or slanderous information.	Information is accurate. Graphics and pictures are suitable to the story. Questions could be raised as to the secondary sources. Language is appropriate for the story.	Information in the story is minimally accurate. Language and story may not match completely. The story needs more to complete the piece. Primary sources questionable. Secondary sources questionable.	Information is sketchy at best. Facts are there but the delivery of information is buried.	Failure to include necessary information, using inappropriate information, basic misinterpretation of information or other content problems

Prior to any production of their extended piece, students are required to submit a proposal in the form of a work plan. The work plan empowers the student to engage in their individual video project with “road map.” This road map allows the student and their instructor to see a clear progression from concept, to storyboard, to script, to production, to post production to finished product. It is expected that this exercise will allow the teacher and student to establish reasonable benchmarks that will mark the student’s progress during the course of this exercise. No student may begin their piece without written endorsement from their instructor.

3. Reporting Assignments

Students are expected to complete four (4) reporting assignments during the course of this semester. This is stated in the student learning outcomes. There are now a variety of vehicles including but not limited to The Triangle Tribune, The Bear Facts, Shaw U Roundtable, My NC (NBC 17), and 118 East South. Students are expected to report a minimum of 4 stories during the course of the semester. These stories must be published and placed in a digital portfolio which should be presented at the end of this course. Prior to any of these stories being submitted, they must come to the instructor to be measured in accordance to the following.

97.5-100 = A+.....92.5-97.4 = A.....89.5-92.4 = A-
87.5-89.5 = B+.....82.5-87.4 = B.....79.5-82.4 = B-
77.5-79.4 = C+.....72.5-77.4 = C.....69.5-72.4 = C-
67.5-69.4 = D+.....62.5-67.4 = D.....59.5-62.4 = D-

Common Deductions will include the following:

spelling -10
lead -7.5
major grammar -5
minor grammar -2.5
clarity -2.5
attribution -2.5

1. **Name errors and other major fact errors** (wrong address, etc.) receive an **F** on the assignment.
2. **Spelling and word use:** Misuse of *its/it's*, *your/you're*, *their/there/they're*, *our/are* receive an **F** on the assignment. Use of *very*, *really* and *great*, other than in quotes, cost 10 points. All other spelling errors lose 10 points. Capitalization errors are considered minor grammatical errors and lose 2.5 points each. Reward particularly strong active verbs with +2 points!!
3. **Leads:** backing into the lead, lead too long, failure to emphasize the news, beginning with attribution, clarity, etc., cost up to 7.5 points. Really poor leads lose the entire 7.5.
4. **Organization errors**, usually in the first half of the story, cost up to 7.5 points. An organization error is a serious deviation from inverted pyramid style or construction of the story that would lose the reader entirely. Multiple organization errors still cost only 7.5 points.
5. **Editorializing** (injection of author's opinion) costs 5 points.
6. **Grammar:** A major grammar error such as subject-verb, tense, run-on or sentence fragment, etc., costs 5 points each. A minor grammar error such as misplaced modifiers, pronoun case, pronoun-antecedent disagreement, or punctuation errors (other than those responsible for run-ons or fragments) costs 2.5 points each.

7. **Attribution errors** (outside the lead) such as beginning with attribution, loaded attribution, *said he/she* errors, etc., cost 2.5 points each.
8. **Clarity** (huh?) errors cost 2.5 points each. Clarity can be an improper word use to a confusing phrase or sentence.
9. **Quotations:** Say-nothing quotes, lengthy quotes, redundant transitions and set up grafs, etc., cost 2.5 points.
10. **AP Style errors** cost 1 point each, up to 10 points, then only half-point each. Jargon, slang, clichés, wordiness and redundancies cost 1 point each.
11. **Content:** Failure to include necessary information, using inappropriate information, basic misinterpretation of information or other content problems not covered by any of the above categories cost up to 12.5 points. Please write comments on the paper where appropriate, particularly at the end. Comments can be severe, particularly when students make the same mistakes repeatedly, but try to offer some encouragement along with any severity.

4. Associated Press Exam and Basic Media Law Exams 20% each

Students completing this course are required to pass an Associated Press examination and a basic media law examination. The purposes of these examinations are to insure that the student has a full understanding of news style and best legal practices as they relate to the 1st amendment. It is expected that students score 80% or higher to proceed with the course. More information is forthcoming on this exam.

4. Final Exam 20%

A basic measure of student knowledge retention comes in the form of examinations. These are a necessary tool not only for the instructor but also the student to identify areas of strength and improvements. This course will have one exam: a final weighted at 20%. The exams will be an essay exam discussing in lectures and discussions from class, assigned readings, supplemental readings, in class and outside class screenings, and your experiences as a reporter in training. Your objective during the exam is to apply your knowledge base to any given scenario within the context of this course.

Exam Make Up Policy

In the event a student is unable to take their exam as scheduled it is the student's responsibility to schedule the make up exam with the instructor. In order to sit for a make up exam, the student must provide the instructor with documentation from either a) Student Affairs, b) a medical professional, or c) an entity approved by Student Affairs. This is the only way an exam will be made up. Additionally, if a student foresees an absence that may coincide with an examination, it again is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor prior to their departure so that an exam may be made up. This will only be allowed with the caveats listed previously: documentation from either: a) Student Affairs, b) a medical professional, or c) an entity approved by Student Affairs. Individuals who choose not to adhere to this policy will receive a grade of zero (0) for the examination. Additionally, students who received a qualified documented

excuse and fail to sit for the exam at the agreed upon time by the instructor will receive a grade of zero (0).

Class Attendance: The attendance policy printed in the Shaw University Undergraduate Catalogue will be enforced. When a student is unable to attend class, it is the student's responsibility to call the professor in advance, whenever possible. It is the student's responsibility to obtain the notes, handouts, or other material for the missed class. Students remain responsible for all assignments due during the missed class. An absence does not excuse the student from any work or due dates.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class and students not present at that time will be marked absent. Students who come in late are required to inform the instructor immediately following that class period in order to be counted late rather than absent.

Class attendance is mandated for all Shaw University students. Students are responsible for attending class on time and adhering to the University's Class Attendance Policy. The Attendance Policy is printed in the Shaw University Undergraduate Catalogue and shall be enforced. Each student is allowed as many unexcused absences per semester as the class meets per week.

Time Class Meets Per Week	Unexcused Absences Allowed	Unexcused Absences Used	Unexcused Absence Result
3	3	4	FAIL
2	2	3	FAIL
1	1	2	FAIL

Students who exceed the number of unexcused absences run the risk of failing the course. Students who exhaust the required number of unexcused absences will fail the course. Students who arrive more than 10 minutes late for class will be marked absent for that particular class period. If you foresee your attendance in this course to be a problem it is strongly recommended that you withdraw immediately.

Course Plagiarizing/Cheating:

Plagiarism (using another's work as your own, whether you put it in your own words or keep it in the original words) and cheating are serious offenses and will be treated as such. A student who plagiarizes or cheats – whether giving or receiving information – will receive a grade of zero on that particular exam or paper, and **WILL** receive a grade of F for the course.

If you have questions about the concept of plagiarism please use the Purdue website listed on Blackboard and/or talk with your instructor.

COURSE POLICIES

1. All ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE COMPLETED TO PASS THE COURSE.
2. Maintain a folder of ALL work submitted to your instructor. Accidents DO happen; and it is your responsibility to keep a copy of your work for this class. Without such documentation, I am unable to assign a grade for the work.

3. When submitting assignments, please follow the guidelines specific for the APA style where appropriate. If you are submitting journalistic piece please be sure to follow the Associated Press guidelines for the current year. Research papers will be returned if there is not a citation page included. All research papers should be submitted typed, double spaced, 12 point font (NO COURIER) with one inch margins on all sides of the paper. Papers failing to adhere to these specifications with either be returned to the student ungraded or receive a grade reduction. NO internet sources can be used as source citations, unless approved in advance.
4. All assignments **MUST BE SUBMITTED ON TIME**. Late work will not be accepted. If you miss an assignment due to medical or family emergencies, please notify me within one day with appropriate documentation i.e. medical documents. Excused absences, including those for official school business will be offered extended time to make up the assignment; however you are encouraged to make an effort to submit the assignment early if at all possible.
5. **CELL PHONES, PAGERS, TWO-WAYS, I Pods** and other portable electronic devices are strictly prohibited during class. Students must deactivated these devices prior to class starting unless there is an eminent life changing event that can be documented by a medical personnel or the university. 1st offense you will receive an oral warning and your phone will be collected and answered in class. 2nd offense will result in written warning and may result in phone being collected and turned over to the Vice President of Student Affairs. A 3rd offense will result in the student dropped for the course receiving a final grade of an F. Students are permitted to use laptop computers for the purposes of taking notes, audio visual presentation devices, and internet search tools during academic class instruction.
6. Plagiarism is defined as the appropriation or presentation of someone else's ideas, language, or designs as your own. Specifically according to iParagigms, LCC creators of Turnitin.com they state the following:

What is Plagiarism

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

- 1. to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own*
- 2. to use (another's production) without crediting the source*
- 3. to commit literary theft*
- 4. to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.*

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

You should be aware of the strong sanctions against plagiarism as stated in the university code of conduct. If proven, a charge of plagiarism will result in an automatic “F” in the course and possible expulsion. Please be sure to consult with me if you have any questions about plagiarism or how to properly acknowledge sources within the context of your assignments.

7. Unauthorized use of internet will not be tolerated. Unauthorized use is defined as web surfing during class time, use of internet during closed book exams, installing software applications without the written approval of ITS. Individuals proven responsible for such infractions are subject to punitive action by the instructor and the university.
8. Sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Read the university guidelines on sexual harassment.
9. Dress: Business Professional preferred, business casual mandatory. Our class takes place within the hours of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Please dress accordingly as our classes are business meetings. Failure to come to class dressed appropriately will result in an unexcused absence. We are communications majors and how you dress sends a message either of being professional or unprofessional. Fridays are reserved as dress down days but again business casual is key.
10. Without notice, this syllabus is subject to change. In said event, a revised syllabus will be added to blackboard. However, as you should, I consider this document a statement of goals attempted and/or completed by the semester’s end.

Student Classroom Decorum Expectations

To enhance the learning atmosphere of the classroom, students are expected to dress and behave in a fashion conducive to learning in the classroom. More specifically, students will refrain from disruptive classroom behavior (**i. e., talking to classmates, disrespectful responses to teacher instructions; swearing; wearing clothes that impede academic learning such as but not limited to, wearing body-revealing clothing and excessively baggy pants; hats/caps, and/or headdress**). Students will turn off telephones prior to entering the classroom. Students who exhibit the behaviors described above, or similar behaviors will be immediately dismissed from class at the third documented offense. The student will be readmitted to class only following a decision by the department chair. The student may appeal the decision of the department chair to the Dean of the College offering the course, and, subsequently, to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and then to the President of Shaw University. The decision of the President will be final. Failure to follow the procedures herein outlined will result in termination of the appeal, and revert to the decision of the department chair.

Each behavior construed by the teacher/professor as non-contributive to learning will be recorded, properly documented, and appropriately reported to the student and to the chair of the academic department offering the course. The report will be in written form with a copy provided to both the student and the department chair. The faculty member should retain a copy for his/her own records.

Additional student behavior codes may be found in Student Affairs.

**FALL SEMESTER 2008		
January		
15	Thursday	Introduction to the Course/ Distribution of Syllabus/Course Expectations
20	Tuesday (Inauguration)	Assigned Reading: Assigned Reading: Does Journalism Education Matter—handout.. Assigned Reading: North Carolina Open Meetings and Public Records Law at www.ncpress.com/ncpa/openmeetings.htm
22	Thursday	Discuss Assigned Reading: Does Journalism Education Matter Pretest/Diagnostic Test Assigned Reading: Assigned Reading: Legal and Ethical Issues as they relate to online journalism, pg 271-278
27	Tuesday	Pretest Results/Discussion of Assigned Reading NC Public Records Law—Begin to prepare for basic mass communications law exam
29	Thursday	Exam administered on Blackboard.
February		
3	Tuesday	Discuss Results of Mass Comm Law Test: Introduction to AP style—Students by this time should have AP Style Manual
5	Thursday	More in depth information as it relates to AP Style.
10	Tuesday	Review AP Style for AP style exam
12	Thursday	Exams will be administered on Blackboard
17	Tuesday	Finalize first story assignments, including sources, required resources and due date
19	Thursday	Digital Encoding/Digital Manipulation
24	Tuesday	Story 1 must be published or ready for air with proposal for Story 2
26	Thursday	Reporting Types/Types of stories (guest speaker)
March		
3	Tuesday	Midterm Assessments
5	Thursday	Screen the film Control Room and discuss Embedding
10	Tuesday	Story 2 must be published or ready for air with proposal for stories 3 and 4
12	Thursday	Ethics of Journalism (guest speaker)
17	Thursday	Stories 3 and 4 must be published and ready for air with proposals for stories 5 and 6
19	Tuesday	Discuss extended news reporting experience.
24	Thursday	Stories 5 and 6 must be published or ready for air with proposals for stories 7 and 8
26	Tuesday	Lecture on Investigative Reporting
28	Thursday	Stories 7 and 8 must published or ready for air
31	Tuesday	Pitching extended investigative or news feature piece
April		
2	Thursday	Field Day
7	Tuesday	Reporting to Field Director
10-19	Spring Break	
21	Tues	Check in with Instructor
22-26	Broadcasters Education Association Conference	Classes will be online with web meetings and webcast from conference

28	Tuesday	Final Exam
NOTE These are subject to change. In the event of change, a note will be sent in class and on blackboard.		