

JMC 301 – Intermediate Reporting Spring 2016

Instructor: Maureen West, Arizona State University

Location: Cronkite 354

Prerequisites and expectations: This class is limited to journalism majors who have successfully completed JMC 201. It is required of all students interested in pursuing print, online and public relations. The expectation is that incoming students are proficient in the fundamentals of journalism (newsworthiness, accuracy, objectivity, fairness and ability to work on deadline). Students also are expected to know basic news writing skills, including AP style, attribution and the inverted pyramid structure, as well as basic reporting techniques, including rudimentary interviewing and research skills.

About the course: This course will train you in news reporting and writing under deadline. It is fast-paced and demanding. Students will be expected to report and write professional-level, clear, well-reported, accurate stories about interesting people, places and things that are newsworthy in the Valley and to produce these stories under deadline pressure. Specifically, students will learn the following:

- Reporting techniques – how to conduct an effective interview, how to research stories and how to use federal and local freedom-of-information and open-meeting laws
- Beat and story development – how to cover city hall, courts, cops and other stories basic to beat coverage, how to develop sources and how come up with solid story ideas
- Writing techniques – how to craft enterprise and features stories as well as longer and more sophisticated spot news stories
- Journalism fundamentals – a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of newsworthiness, journalism ethics and law and news diversity

Text and materials:

- *Field Guide to Covering Local News* by Fred Bayles
- *The Associated Press Stylebook* and Libel Manual. Bring it to class every day. You are required to use AP style for all your stories.
- *The Elements of Style*, by Strunk and White
- The front pages of The Arizona Republic and The New York Times. Other newspapers, such as The Washington Post and The Wall Street Journal, are recommended.
- Access to a computer, Microsoft Word and your ASU email account
- Online databases offered by the ASU library, particularly Lexis/Nexis. You must be able to navigate the library's online newspaper archives as other online databases.
- Reporter's notebooks or steno pads and at least two pens or pencils every time you go on an interview. Tape recorders or digital recorders are optional.
- A dictionary (Recommended: Webster's New World Collegiate Edition)
- A sturdy folder to house all returned stories, your story ideas, and a planning calendar to help you remember your deadlines.

Transportation: You will need access to a car or public transportation as this course requires you to spend time away from the university doing reporting. If this is a problem, please let your instructor know right away.

Assignments: You will write both in and outside of class. Assignments consist of the following:

- Five in-class exercises and five quizzes. The exercises will help you hone skills and practice writing on deadline; the quizzes will help you master AP style and grammar and test your knowledge of the textbook readings. Together, they count for **15 percent of your grade**. The lowest grade will be dropped. **The dropped grade policy is designed to account for missed assignments due to illness and emergencies.**
- Beat stories. You will be responsible for **12 beat stories** of 500-800 words each. They count for **65 percent of your grade**. Your lowest grade will be dropped, but this doesn't mean that you can skip an assignment. All beat stories must be completed.
- Final enterprise story: **20 percent of your grade**. This story must be 1,500-1,800 words. This grade cannot be dropped.

Publication requirement: You are required to get at least six stories published by the last day of class. It is your responsibility to form a relationship with a news organization early in the semester so that you have an outlet for your work. Students should anticipate that some stories will be held or killed by the editor and submit more than the required number of stories for publication. If you are a reporter for The State Press, The Downtown Devil or an intern at another publication, stories that you write for those publications can count toward your publication requirement as long as they mirror the topics covered in this class. Check with your instructor ahead of time to make sure a story qualifies. However, you will not be excused from doing an assignment along with the rest of the class. Failure to meet the publication requirement will affect your grade. **Your final grade will drop by one letter for every story not published.** For example, a student who publishes five stories and has a B in the class will receive a final grade of C.

Beat stories: You will select either a geographic area or a topic from which to develop your beat stories. A geographic area may be a city (Scottsdale or Tempe, for example), or it may be a specific portion of a city (downtown Phoenix or a neighborhood). If you choose a topic area, we suggest selecting from those employed in Cronkite News, which will give you a head start on developing a beat that you may want to pursue in your professional program. These topics are: Borderlands (immigration and Latino issues); Consumer (includes health); Education (K-12 through college); Future (includes technology and innovation); Legal (includes law enforcement and courts); Money (business and economics); and Sustainability (includes environmental coverage).

Be sure that your geographic area or topic will yield the kinds of stories you need to produce (a government meeting story, for example). All beat areas must be approved by your instructor. If you have difficulty developing an assigned story from your beat, you may be allowed to go outside your geographic area or topic to produce a story. Be sure you get approval from your instructor in advance.

The class will move through the beat assignments together. You will get instruction on how to cover each area (courts, cops, business, government, etc.), then you will be expected to come up with a story related to that beat and report it outside of class. You must pitch your story ideas for approval to your instructor in advance. All stories must be generated for the class – not for an outside internship or job (although you may submit stories done for outside internships or jobs for your publication requirement). Part of the class time each week will be spent in a lab setting, during which you can work on your stories, get feedback from the instructor and do revisions to your stories in advance of turning them in.

All beat stories must have multiple sources. **You can't get a grade higher than a B with fewer than three human sources in a story.** Citing a website or quoting from another publication does not count as a human source. This is a reporting class, and face-to-face reporting is an integral part of reporting. You cannot be a successful reporter if you don't get out and interview people in your community. You must also have an arm's-length relationship from your sources. You may not interview your roommate or your family or classmates. In fact, it's better if you don't interview anyone from the Cronkite School at all unless it's critical to the story.

At least two stories must be reported and written on a daily deadline. In other words, if you cover a city council meeting on a Thursday night and turn in the story that night, it will fulfill one of your two deadline assignments. Generally speaking, your story must be turned in no later than two hours after the end of the event. If the council meeting or other event ends at 9 p.m., your story must arrive at my in-box by 11 p.m.

Remember, this is a news reporting class, so opinion pieces, public relations pieces, light features and reviews will not be accepted.

Specific Assignments

Beat memo: This will form the basis of your reporting for the rest of the semester. The memo should explain what geographic or topic area you want to cover and why. "Why" means that you'll have to justify your coverage decision with facts and key sources. Remember: You'll be doing a number of stories out of this area, so you'll want to pick an area or topic that can provide enough interesting stories to sustain your reporting.

Cops and Courts

- **Courts story:** For this story, you'll head down to the Maricopa County Superior Court and report on a court hearing or another court action, such as a lawsuit. You'll have to go to the court records center first and background your story. You'll also need to bring back a document from the case. This is a good candidate for a deadline story.
- **Crime or public safety story:** You will write a story on a specific crime or a public safety trend using a police report as a basis. (This could work as a story toward your breaking news requirement.)

Public Affairs and Politics

- **Speech/Press conference:** You'll attend a speech and report it on deadline. You'll have to do background on the speaker to help the reader understand the story. Or, you'll attend a

press conference and report it on deadline. You'll have to do background on the issue to help the reader understand the story. (This can count as one of your two deadline stories.)

- **Local government story:** You'll attend a government meeting of some kind (school board, city council, planning commission, etc.) and write a story. Be sure to background yourself before the story and conduct interviews after, exploring both sides of the issue. This also could work as a deadline story.
- **Legislative story:** The second session of the 52nd Legislature convened Jan. 11. What are legislators discussing in committee sessions, full sessions? What are issues still facing the 52nd Legislature? You can do a deadline meeting story or an issue story.

Other Beat Stories:

- **Profile:** Fun, but challenging. You'll want to find someone in your community who's interesting and has a good story to tell. But you'll also want them to have some kind of newsworthiness. Your job is to combine the person's story with the news peg. Remember, there has to be a compelling reason for readers to stick with the story. This is a chance to vary from basic news story structures.
- **Business/Economy story:** This story will be a piece that localizes a national economic situation or issue. Whether it's about a high-end jeans store that doesn't have any customers any more or about how apartments in areas with high illegal immigrant populations are more vacant due to new laws, this story will require smart reporting, a sense of numbers and insightful quotes.
- **A problem story:** This is the set-up story for your final enterprise story, which will focus on solutions journalism. Before you write a solutions journalism story, you need to understand the problem. Your story will address: What's the problem? How did we get to this point? What are the latest studies, statistics that apply to the problem? Is the problem widespread – national, regional or local?
- **Diversity story:** You'll find a news story or a feature story with a strong news angle that deals with a diverse community. Diversity is defined broadly as race, ethnicity, disability, age, gender and sexual orientation. Note: Covering the Greek Festival, the Japan Festival or the Mythic Gods of the Norsemen Festival does not count as a diversity story.
- **Sports story:** Sports in America is part competition, part entertainment, part business and, for many, part obsession. Sports writers have to tell more than the score and they have to do it under intense deadline pressure. This could be one of your deadline stories.
- **Localizing a national story (part of the enterprise/solutions journalism final project):** This will be the second part of your reporting for your enterprise/solutions journalism story if the topic you choose is regional or national in scope. After you do your story on the national or regional problem, you will find and report on someone/some group responding to that problem. This will be original reporting. Remember to attribute any information you derive from another publication to that publication (and this should be a very small portion of your story).

- **Data story:** You will write a story that requires you to do some basic data gathering and analysis. This could be about the way a government agency or a non-profit organization budgets and/or spends its money. It could be any story based on numbers – voter registration numbers, population trends, campaign contributions, etc. Your story must include interviews with people as well as the data. Submit your raw data along with the story.

Enterprise/Solutions Journalism story

This assignment will give you a chance to stretch and write something a bit more complex. You will write a story with a **solutions journalism** approach. Solutions journalism is rigorous and compelling reporting about responses to social problems. It investigates and explains, in a critical and clear-eyed way, examples of people working toward solutions. It focuses not just on *what* may be working, but *how* and *why* it appears to be working, or alternatively, why it may be stumbling. Using the best available evidence, it delves deeply into the how-to of problem-solving, often structuring stories as puzzles or mysteries that investigate questions like: What models are having success reducing the dropout rate in public schools? How do they actually work? What are they doing differently than others that is resulting in a better outcome? It's not a hero worship/inspirational story, but it's a well-reported, deep look at how societal problems might be getting solved. You will pitch your story and work either individually or as part of a team of no more than three students with the guidance of your instructor throughout the semester. These will be multi-sourced stories and should be 1,500 to 1,800 words. Enterprise stories should have a minimum of four human sources, though a team project will have more sources.

For the enterprise/solutions journalism story, each student must also produce one multimedia element such as a photo, video, chart or box.

There are four deadlines for the Enterprise/Solutions Journalism story: You will pitch your enterprise story by Feb. 5 and turn in a story about a problem that is being addressed. Deadline for the first draft of the local response to the problem is due March 2. A rewrite is due March 30. Your final story is due no later than 11:59 p.m. on April 29, so work backward from there.

Grades: Each assignment will receive a letter grade ranging from an A+ to an E (failing). An automatic E will be given for any story that contains:

- A major error of fact – a misspelled proper name, an erroneous phone number, an incorrect address, a libelous statement or a misstatement of the major facts of a story (in other words, anything that would require a printed correction if the story were to appear in a newspaper) will result in an E on that assignment.
- Libelous material.
- Fabricated or plagiarized material (see academic integrity policy above)

Stories that meet these standards and that are submitted on time will be evaluated on grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP style as well as structure, conciseness, readability, sourcing, use of quotes, completeness, and quality of the lede and nut graf.

In general, stories that merit an “A” will be, in the instructor’s judgment, capable of being published in a professional publication with little or no revision. “B” stories will be those

deemed publishable with minor revisions; “C” stories involve considerable revisions to bring them up to publication standards; “D” stories are not publishable in their original form.

Below is a more detailed guide to what makes up each grade:

A

Style: AP style is strictly followed with few, if any, mistakes.

Grammar, punctuation and spelling: Basic grammar rules are followed. There are no comma splices or agreement problems. There are few problems with modifiers. Nothing is misspelled.

Accuracy: All proper nouns are correct. Locations are correct and specific. Math is done correctly and supports the thesis of the story.

Quotes: Quotations make sense, are properly attributed and logically illustrate the point of the previous paragraph. They reflect the way a person speaks and what he or she is talking about.

Lede: Lede is compelling through drama, statistic or fact. Lede directly supports the main thesis of the story and transitions seamlessly into the nut graf.

Nut graf: Appears in the top 10-15 percent of the story, is strong and presents the central tension and/or the reason for a reader to be interested in the story.

Reporting: Story has a minimum of three appropriate human sources. Research is strong and has depth. Assertions in the story are supported by numbers.

Writing: Is clear, concise, declarative and smooth.

B

Style: Minor AP errors, but the story is mostly free of errors.

Grammar, punctuation and spelling: Basic grammar and punctuation rules are followed. Mistakes have the feel of oversights rather than persistent problems. No spelling mistakes.

Accuracy: All proper nouns are correct. Locations are correct, if not necessarily specific. Math is correct, but may not fit perfectly in context.

Quotes: Quotes make sense within the context of the story; quotes are used to punctuate, rather than illustrate.

Lede: Lede is generally compelling, but may not translate seamlessly into the nut graf. Lede may be slightly “off” the focus of the story.

Nut graf: Appears high in the story, but not in the top 10-15 percent. Is strong, but does not clearly present the central tension of the story.

Reporting: Is generally solid, but could be improved in some places. Assertions in the story may not be fully supported by quotes or numbers.

Writing: Writing is clear but needs some editing for structure, voice and authority.

C

Style: Story has some AP style errors.

Grammar, punctuation and spelling: Basic grammar and punctuation rules are not consistently followed. There may be minor spelling errors.

Accuracy: Proper nouns are correct, but locations are not precise; statistics may lack context or relevance.

Quotes: Quotes are used to punctuate rather than illuminate. Quotes are consistently single-sentence and do not always support the context.

Lede: Lede does not capture the thesis of the story or does not connect logically with the nut graf. Nut graf is weak or missing.

Reporting: Reporting and sourcing are thinner than they should be. Assertions are not fully supported by facts or anecdotes.

Writing: Needs fairly significant editing for word choice, sentence structure, clarity and logic.

D

Style: Story has significant AP style errors.

Grammar, punctuation and spelling: Story has multiple grammar, spelling and punctuation errors.

Accuracy: Proper nouns are correct but locations are not precise or are lacking; statistics lack context or relevance.

Quotes: Quotes are missing, state the obvious or do not illuminate the point being made.

Lede: Lede misses the main point of the story or is difficult to understand. Nut graf is missing.

Reporting: Reporting and sourcing are lacking. Assertions are not supported by facts or anecdotes.

Writing: Needs significant editing for word choice, sentence structure, clarity and logic.

Scale for final course grades: A+ 97-100; A 94-96; A- 90-93; B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83; C+ 76-79; C 70-75; D 60-69; E 59 and below.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Subject to change by your professor. Students will typically have a little more than a week for each assignment. It is advised to try and work ahead at least one week. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the readings listed for that day's class.

<i>Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
Week 1: Jan. 11 & Jan. 13	<p>Class 1: Overview of syllabus; class expectations; ethical conduct policies; beat memo; how to pitch a story and get published. Guest speaker: A former 301 student.</p> <p>Review of news writing basics (AP style, nut graphs, summary leads, sourcing, use of quotes)</p> <p>Class 2: Discussion of chapters 1&2 in Bayles book on beat reporting and interviewing.</p> <p>More discussion of beat memos, a graded assignment due Jan. 20.</p> <p>Lecture on covering speeches and press conferences, with in-class writing practice. (First writing assignment –a speech or press conference -- due no later than 11:59 p.m. Jan. 29.</p>	Bayles: Chapters 1&2	
Week 2: Jan. 18 (MLK Day –no class.) Only class is Jan. 20	<p>Class 3: Lecture and discussion on the Enterprise/Solutions Journalism story. You will work all semester on a final story that focuses on a response to a problem. (Be prepared to come to class Jan. 25 to brainstorm enterprise</p>		<p>Beat memo (including three sources) due to Prof. West by beginning of class on Jan. 20. This is a graded assignment.</p>

	<p>ideas.)</p> <p>>> AP Style and Grammar class exercise. (Bring your AP Stylebook to class everyday.)</p> <p>Topic : Pitching story ideas.</p> <p>>> Team pitching exercise</p>		
<p>Week 3: Jan. 25 & 27</p>	<p>Class 4: Guest lecturer: Arizona Republic reporter Jessica Boehm will discuss interviewing techniques and pitching stories</p> <p>Discussion of Chapter 4 of Bayles -- filing a story in the digital age.</p> <p>Review story outlines, structures, traditional and alternative approaches.</p> <p>Topic: Brainstorming your Enterprise/Solutions Journalism ideas with classmates. Come to class with thoughts on sources for your enterprise story. Your second story, due Feb. 5, will report on the problem that your final story will address.</p> <p>Class 5: Covering local government: what to look for at a city council, school board, etc. meeting. How to find local government stories. Guest lecturer Elvia Diaz, editor of La Voz.</p> <p>>> In class exercise: Review a city's budget and write a story in class. (Graded)</p>	<p>Bayles: Chapter 4</p>	<p>Quiz #1 this week covers AP style, grammar, lectures and Bayles chapters 1,2 and 4.</p> <p>Story #1: Deadline speech story or press conference due no later than three hours after the event. Must be turned in by 11:59 p.m. Jan. 29.</p>

<p>Week 4: Feb. 1 & 3</p>	<p>Class 6: Discussion of Bayles, Chapter 8 – Government.</p> <p>Covering the Arizona Legislature. Guest speaker: Mary Jo Pitzl, statehouse reporter for The Arizona Republic, will talk about covering the Arizona Legislature. Where to find legislative story ideas.</p> <p>>> In-class exercise. Review the state legislative website, azleg.gov</p> <p>Class 7: Discussion of “Elements of Style” reading, pages 1-38</p> <p>Guest speaker on backgrounding: William Hermann, author of “Check Them Out! Background Checks, Step-by-Step”</p> <p>>> In-class: backgrounding exercise. (This is a graded exercise.)</p>	<p>Bayles: Chapter 8</p> <p>Elements of Style, pages 1-38</p>	<p>Story #2: Story based on the problem that will be addressed in your enterprise/solutions journalism story. Must be turned in by 11:59 p.m. Feb. 5. This will serve as your story pitch for the final enterprise.</p>
<p>Week 5: Feb. 8 & 10</p>	<p>Class 8: Writing profiles, alternative story structures and first five graphs. Examples of profiles on Blackboard.</p> <p>Class 9: Localizing a national story.</p> <p>>> In-class lab: Writing exercise on localizing a national story. This may be part of your enterprise/solutions</p>		<p>Quiz #2 this week covers AP style, grammar, lectures on covering government, including the legislature, and readings: Elements of Style and Bayles chapter 8.</p> <p>Story #3: Deadline local government story due no later than 11:59 p.m. on Feb. 12. Deadline story must be turned in on day of the meeting.</p>

	journalism story. (This is a graded assignment.)		
Week 6: Feb. 15 & 17	<p>Class 10: Covering courts and legal issues. Guest speaker: Christia Gibbons.</p> <p>1:1 student progress meeting and individual critiques with Prof. West.</p> <p>Class 11: Discussion on Bayles: Chapter 7 on the courts</p> <p>Lab on Wednesday: reporting and writing time.</p>	Bayles: Chapter 7	Story #4: Profile story due no later than 11:59 p.m. on Feb. 19.
Week 7: Feb. 22 & 24	<p>Class 12: Covering crime/public safety issues and trends.</p> <p>Discussion of Bayles: Chapter 5 on cops and crime</p> <p>Class 13: Lab on Wednesday: reporting and writing time. Review/rewrite first drafts of your solutions-based enterprise story, which is due March 4.</p>	Bayles: Chapter 5	Story #5: Legislative story due no later than 11:59 p.m. on day of the hearing, or no later than 11:59 p.m. Feb. 26 for an issue story.
Week 8: Feb. 29 & March 2	<p>Class 14: Class discussions of how enterprise/solutions journalism projects are going.</p> <p>Topic: Generating better sources for stories</p> <p>Class 15: Lab on Wednesday: reporting and writing time.</p>		<p>Quiz #3 this week covers AP style, grammar, lectures on covering government, and Bayles chapters 5 and 7.</p> <p>Story #6: Draft of your localization of the enterprise story due no later than 11:59 p.m. on March 4.</p>
Week 9	Spring Break (March 7 & 9)		

Week 10: March 14 & 16	<p>Class 16: Covering sports. Guest speaker: Tom Gibbons, former sports editor and current sports blogger.</p> <p>Class 17: Discussion on pitching the enterprise stories.</p> <p>>> Team pitching exercise</p> <p>Lab on Wednesday: reporting and writing time.</p>		<p><u>Story #7:</u> Crime/public safety story due no later than 11:59 p.m. on March 18.</p>
Week 11: March 21 & 23	<p>Class 18: Covering diverse communities, ethics & accuracy.</p> <p>Discussion of “Elements of Style” reading</p> <p>Class 19: Lab on Wednesday: reporting and writing time.</p>	Elements of Style pages 39- 85.	<p><u>Story #8:</u> Sports story due on the day of a game or no later than 11:59 p.m. March 25.</p>
Week 12: March 28 & 30	<p>Class 20: Data story reporting.</p> <p>Class 21: Lab on Wednesday: reporting and writing time.</p>		<p><u>Draft of Final story:</u> Draft rewrite of solutions/enterprise story, including national context, due no later than 11:59 p.m. March 30.</p> <p><u>Story #9:</u> Diversity story due no later than 11:59 p.m. April 1.</p>
Week 13: April 4 & 6	<p>Class 22: Business reporting: What makes a good business story?</p> <p>Class 23: Lab on Wednesday: reporting and writing time.</p>		<p><u>Quiz #4</u> this week covers AP style, grammar, lectures and Elements of Style.</p> <p><u>Story #10:</u> Data-based story due no later than 11:59 p.m. on April 8.</p>

<p>Week 14: April 11 & 13</p>	<p>Class 24: Covering health, science and medicine stories.</p> <p>Guest speaker: Kerry Fehr-Snyder, managing editor of science for KJZZ, will talk about finding health and science stories and provide advice on interviewing scientists and medical professionals.</p> <p>Class 25: Lab on Wednesday: reporting and writing time.</p>		<p>Story #11: Business story due no later than 11:59 p.m. on April 15</p>
<p>Week 15: April 18 & 20</p>	<p>Class 26: Covering news trends.</p> <p>What makes a trend story? How to cover it?</p> <p>In-class exercise: You'll do a weather trend story in class. (This is a graded assignment.)</p> <p>Class 27: Work on enterprise/solutions story in lab</p>		<p>Quiz # 5: Prof. West's final quiz covers AP style, grammar, lectures, Bayles and Elements of Style readings</p> <p>Story #12: Court story due no later than 11:59 p.m. the day of the trial or sentencing. Non-court story would be due by 11:59 p.m. April 22.</p>
<p>Week 16: April 25 & 27</p>	<p>Classes 28 and 29: Work on enterprise/solutions story in lab</p>		<p>Enterprise/solutions journalism final story due by 11:59 p.m. April 29.</p>