

NEWS REPORTING & WRITING

Tuesday & Thursday, 11 am to 12:20 pm, Room #2953 (Truman College, SPRING 2009)

Instructor: Benjamin Ortiz, Assistant Professor (<http://www.benortiz.com>)
Office/Hours: #2737 — Tues. & Thurs. 8:30 to 9:30 am / Tues. 1 to 3 pm / Thurs. 5 to 6 pm
(...also by appointment, per your request and teacher availability...)
Phone/E-mail/Box: 773.907-4376, bortiz@ccc.edu, "Ortiz" in Room 2915

→ Course Description and Objectives

English 151 teaches the fundamentals of reporting and writing the news, emphasizing print and on-line journalism. Before pursuing stories, students begin with philosophical discussion of the principles and ethics of journalism as a profession and kind of writing.

Case studies rooted in the actual practice of journalism illustrate ethics and standards in action. Class exercises and writing assignments start with the basics of news briefs and then progress to more detailed reporting, ultimately toward a final in-depth feature-length news story. The course also helps students develop the tools for media critique, throughout the history of journalism and into the present. Finally, student journalists craft local stories relevant to the Truman College and Uptown community. In-class copy (story) workshops and a final portfolio challenge students to construct and collect stories worth telling, publishing, and reading.

REQUIRED TEXT (AT BECK'S OR ONLINE)

- The Missouri Group. News Reporting and Writing. 9th ed. NY: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005.
+ **In-class guest speakers, readings, hand-outs, and screenings (keep a handout folder)**

→ Method

Using traditional texts and assignments, the course functions much like any other class at Truman, but we will also connect instructional experience, guest speakers, workshop-style assignments, case studies, and real-world approach to learning a profession that usually trains new journalists through on-the-job deadlines and practical problem-solving situations.

→ Educational Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, the successful student will be proficient in the following areas:

- (1) **PRINCIPLES** — The journalist-in-training will have a reasoned respect for the principles and ethics of journalism as a profession grounded in truth, rigorous verification, loyalty to readership, independence from interest, and the responsible exercise of conscience per Constitutional rights. The writer will recognize the unique features of journalism as a crucial piece of democracy and a kind of writing distinct from others.
- (2) **REPORTING** — Student journalists will possess basic reporting skills and proficiency at communicating facts, researching, and fact-checking in the development of a news piece.
- (3) **WRITING** — The successful student will have assembled a portfolio of works to showcase for academic, career, and creative advancement.
- (4) **EDITING** — The writer will also have a grasp of workshopping, copyediting, and arranging pieces of journalism to craft the best writing possible.
- (5) **CAREER EXPERIENCE** — A successful student will be able to pursue advanced training with a sense of options for a future in journalism or related careers.

→ City Colleges General Education Goals

English 153 feeds the following General Education Goals: *GOAL 1 (...communicate effectively in written and oral forms)*, *GOAL 2 (...demonstrate the ability to gather, interpret, and analyze data)*, *GOAL 3 (...demonstrate the ability to think critically, abstractly, and logically)*, *GOAL 4 (...demonstrate the ability to perform effectively in the workplace)*, *GOAL 5 (...exhibit ethical and social responsibility in a global community)*, and *GOAL 6 (...learn independently)*.

→ Attendance and Preparedness Policies

Success in a writing class depends on consistent preparation, attendance, and participation. Simply put: You did NOT sign up for a web class, and so you MUST arrive on time and ready. (Truman will have parking problems this semester, and therefore it's up to YOU to travel earlier, so you can arrive on time with your homework complete.) Lateness and absence also disrupt your teacher and classmates, who have a right to a classroom free from distraction.

So please come to class every time on time. (For record-keeping purposes, more than 10 minutes late or missing will constitute a full and unexcused absence.) You are allowed two absences for whatever comes up (sickness, personal business, etc.), but you will start losing 10 points from your Contributions grade for every absence thereafter – *six absences means an automatic zero for your Contributions grade*. The teacher can also subtract for repeated tardiness, so please carefully manage your own time.

ALSO: All assignments are due on the day specified on your syllabus or by the instructor. ***Late work will not be accepted for any reason, and you are required to turn in work on due dates, at the beginning of class, even if you are absent.***

→ Course Requirements

(1) Preparation for class through careful time management, advance planning, thorough reading, complete research, vigilant reporting and proofing, etc. (2) Prompt arrival at class, consistent attendance, and full participation. (3) Completion of all assignments, readings, exercises, and projects. (4) Attention and courtesy to classmates, guest speakers, and instructor.

→ Fundamentals for Success

(1) START PAYING ATTENTION TO THE NEWS — If you aren't already media savvy, start reading, watching, listening, and talking about the news. *TODAY*. In every medium you can access. (2) READ AS MUCH AS YOU CAN IN ADDITION TO CLASS TEXTS: journalism, literature, etc. (3) CREATE THE CLASS — Bring thoughts, readings, or other texts relevant to class. Share them during a session. Contact the teacher ahead of time or right before start-time if you want to bring up an item, issue, or topic for class consideration. Is there a writer, text, story, or development we should know about? The class is yours to shape and complete.

→ Professional and Academic Etiquette

(1) Absolutely no cell phones or other forms of electronic interruption. (2) Act with courtesy when class is underway; for example, ask classmates *AFTER* the session for an update on what you missed, if you are late. (3) Civil discussion: No name-calling or any such viciousness over disagreements. (4) Food and drink are OK only if you are badly in need of a snack, but don't go overboard or disrupt with eating noises. (5) Dig into the class. Be enthusiastic if possible, or at least offer questions, comments, and even relevantly provocative statements when you have the floor to speak. (6) Please come to class every time on time.

→ Academic Integrity

All of the usual rules about plagiarism apply (refer to *Chronicle* article), as well as the principles unique to the practice of journalism, including rules about truth and rigorous fact checking. The teacher will expand on fabrication, conflict of interest, misinformation, dishonesty, reckless writing, and related ethical breaches. Violation of professional principles means that you are not only transgressing academic values but also the basic ethical considerations of journalism, on par with medical malpractice or attorney breach of ethics. Of course, the consequences can include failure of the course and expulsion from our community of student professionals.

→ Assignments/Grades

ON-LINE WRITING

Instructions: Log onto <http://www.benortiz.com/classes/>, under ARCHIVES BY CLASS click "SPRING 2009: News Reporting & Writing," and submit your piece in the comments section of the appropriate post, per deadline listed on the Course Calendar below.

MEDIA JOURNAL/COMMENTARY (4 PIECES) = 5% EACH

Note: Try to formulate each set of comments as an on-line piece for the general public to read. At a minimum, include a basic summary of and response to the assigned texts. Feel free to read your classmates' posts and start a conversation for others to respond.

JOURNALISM

For workshop comments, bring enough copies for everyone to class. Submit these pieces for teacher-evaluation via hardcopy with all prior drafts stapled behind the latest revision. Print only on one side of each 8½-by-11-inch sheet of paper. In the upper left-hand corner of page one, type: (1) your name followed by (2) the date, (3) a headline and sub-headline, (4) "Piece #" ID, (5) word count, and finally (6) story text organized with clear paragraph indents and breaks, in double-spaced, 12-point TIMES NEW ROMAN font.

1. *Pyramid-style news brief (TRUMAN focus, 100-200 words)* = 5%
2. *Pyramid-style news brief (TRUMAN focus, 200-300 words)* = 10%
3. *Pyramid or alt-pyramid-style news (300-500 words)* = 15%
4. *Focus-LEDE news story (500-700 words)* = 20%

Note: Scrupulous fact-checking, beating deadlines, and producing clean copy are standards for professional journalism. This class requires you to develop your own professional habits while meeting typical journalism expectations. Accordingly, student work that misses the professional mark will be subject to point-penalty, per the instructor's judgment. Your own textbook puts it best: There is no good excuse for a mistake. Of course, we all make mistakes, but try to keep the best habits possible. Winning praise for good work starts with taking personal responsibility.

MOREOVER: WORK FOUND TO BE FABRICATED, PLAGIARIZED, CONFLICTED (WITH SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST), OR RECKLESSLY SLOPPY WILL RESULT IN FAILURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT/CLASS, AT THE TEACHER'S DISCRETION.

ALSO: PLEASE BE SURE TO ATTACH ALL DRAFTS OF EVERY STORY TO EVERY REVISED SUBMISSION.

EDITORIAL WORK

1. *Class contributions (in-class discussion, etc.)* = 10%
2. *Exercises (Quizzes, Freewrites, Worksheets, etc.)* = 10%
3. *Final Portfolio* = 10%

Details: Each piece of Journalism will go through a *Workshop* critique by the class. Attendance at these workshops is crucial and will count toward the final grade. Additionally, students will collect one piece of On-Line Writing, two short pieces of Journalism, and the Final Story in a *Final Portfolio*, whose format (electronic or hardcopy) and arrangement are entirely up to the student. This project will test editorial and design skill and should be considered a public showcase of class work. (ALSO: Include all prior drafts behind each revised portfolio piece.)

FINAL GRADE NOTE: Assignments and course progression make it impossible to pass the class without consistent attendance and engaged contribution. This is NOT a web class. The teacher also reserves the right to apply extra credit for exceptional attendance and participation.

GRADE SCALE:	<u>Excellent</u>	90-100 =	A
	<u>Good</u>	80-89 =	B
	<u>Acceptable</u>	70-79 =	C
		60-69 =	D
		BELOW =	F

DATES to REMEMBER for YOUR OWN Planning

2/16/09 (Monday): President's Day Holiday (NO CLASS)
3/18/09 (Wednesday): Spring 2009 Mid-Term Mark
4/6/09 thru 4/12/09: SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)
4/20/09 (Monday): Last day to withdraw from a course.
5/16/09 (Saturday): Spring 2009 semester ends!
6/1/09 (Monday): Summer 2009 classes begin.

→ City Colleges "Active Pursuit" Policy

In order for students to remain in English 151, they must actively pursue the objectives for this course. At midterm, any student who does not meet the following criteria for active pursuit will display a lack of interest in successfully completing the course and will, therefore, have to be administratively withdrawn from this class.

- A student must complete and turn in all major writing assignments (Media Journals & Journalism Assignments) that are due before midterm.
- A student must have Class Contributions and Exercises grades of 75% or higher.

If any student fails to do the above, then it is his or her responsibility to contact the instructor prior to March 18, 2009, and indicate his or her serious intent to pursue the course by explaining any unusual circumstances. The teacher will then be able to determine whether the student can continue in the course. Being issued an ADW will have consequences on your grades, financial aid, and other aspects of attending Truman. Simply attending classes, but not producing work and/or participating, does not constitute active pursuit.

→ Disclaimer

All assignments, scheduling, and deadlines are subject to changes per class progression and instructor choice. Also, specific readings and exercises might change if alternatives arise.

→ Final Thoughts

Overall, you are strongly urged to consult the teacher during office hours with any questions or requests for assistance that you cannot fit into class time. Moreover, you are encouraged to help set the agenda, content, and style of this class with your own personal interests, experiences, and expectations for career and project-based learning. Consider your teacher a resource for class and career counseling — I'm available to help you get the most out of this semester.

Your teacher,

Benjamin Ortiz

Journalism Adviser and Assistant Professor of Journalism, Literature, and Writing

→ Calendar: Dates, Topics, and Assignments

WEEK ONE

T 1/20

Questionnaire then Syllabus

Introductions + Q/A

Syllabus + Q/A

Define class terms together: news, reporting, writing, journalism

State of the Profession: (1) Journalism in general ([WSJ](#) e-digest) (2) student press freedoms ([Tribune](#) + SPLC brief) (3) Uptown ([Pioneer Press](#)) and (4) City Colleges and Truman ([Sun-Times](#) story AND *see Truman web site*)

Discussion

WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

Report on something you witnessed in the past few days or week. Imitate a news style of reporting as you know it. Submit no more than 300 words by the next class (via hardcopy). See format specs on page three above, under "JOURNALISM."

RESEARCH HOMEWORK

FOR THE NEXT CLASS:

Skim and write notes about a Truman event from the web site that sounds interesting, and tell us about it.

Th 1/22

Discussion: Deadline experience — introductory writing assignment (+copy specs)
+ BASELINE for WRITING plus MOVING FROM NARRATIVE TO NEWS STYLE...

Discussion: Truman Events research

HANDOUT: What can you do with writing? What are the different kinds of writing?

What is journalism? [Elements](#) reading preview (9 features of journalism)

READING HOMEWORK FOR 1/29: [Elements](#) XEROX HANDOUT

RESEARCH HOMEWORK

FOR THE NEXT CLASS:

Bring copies of your favorite local/national news publications; also, watch broadcast or cable news over the next few days. Be ready to discuss.
+ NEWS ALERT HANDOUT & homework

WEEK TWO

T 1/27

Tutor Visit

FREWRITE ON HOMEWORK

Video 1: "What Is News?"

Publication and broadcast report

News Alert Reports

GROUP WORK: WHAT IS NEWS ON CAMPUS?...IN UPTOWN?...

In pairs, cull two or three items through field reporting, web research, etc., and report back to class with ideas for why the items are newsworthy.

Th 1/29

FREWRITE or QUIZ on ELEMENTS READING HOMEWORK

Discussion of [Elements](#) reading

INSTRUCTION: WHAT TO AVOID...

HANDOUTS: Plagiarism article

+[Sun-Times](#), [New Yorker](#), and [Harper's](#) pieces etc.

Discussion: Plagiarism, fabrication, fictionalization, and evasion

Screening: [60 Minutes](#) on [Shattered Glass](#)

READING HOMEWORK NEXT: [NR&W](#) CHAPTER ONE

WEEK THREE

T 2/3 FREEWRITE or QUIZ on CHAPTER ONE
Team Exercise: What Is News?
Discussion of textbook CHAPTER ONE
Handout/article on Citizen Journalism
Satire of typical news reporting: The Daily Show (+Fenton interview 2004)
Media Concepts (HANDOUT)
HOMEWORK: Start a media journal in a notebook. Follow one story, broadcast, writer, station, or another variation for comparison/contrast. Sketch notes to get the basic info about the medium, story, and details. Put together your notes for three entries in one on-line Media Journal to post on the instructor's web site. In each entry, summarize and respond, with emphasis on journalism ideas and values. Write at least two paragraphs for each entry, and add a few concluding paragraphs with overall observations.
DEADLINE for **Media Journal Part One**: Post it and then bring a copy to class 2/10
READING HOMEWORK: NR&W CHAPTER TWO (by 2/10)
VERY NEXT CLASS: MEET OUTSIDE OF THE LIBRARY FOR ROLL CALL

Th 2/5 Library Orientation: On-line databases focus (meet just outside the library)
Resources HANDOUTS
Group Research exercise: Gathering & Verifying Information HANDOUT (due next)
RESEARCH HOMEWORK FOR NEXT CLASS: Look up two or three of Truman's "web stories" on the internet site and prep questions on our school, its PR, and local coverage of Truman, for our first guest speaker, Clifton Truman Daniel.
+ GUEST SPEAKER PREP HANDOUT...
ALSO: **Media Journal Part One** DUE NEXT CLASS!

WEEK FOUR

T 2/10 Chapter 2 & Guest Speaker quiz...
Discuss **Media Journal Part One**
Discuss CHAPTER TWO
GUEST SPEAKER: Clifton Truman Daniel (11:45am)
HOMEWORK FOR NEXT CLASS: NR&W CHAPTER THREE (Interviewing)
RESEARCH HOMEWORK FOR NEXT: Develop an idea for **Story #1** (see specs)

Th 2/12 FREEWRITE or QUIZ on CHAPTER THREE
Duet exercise: Interview a friend in class, take and save notes for future work...
Discussion of Chapter Three
Discussion of **Story #1** idea / Develop idea...
HOMEWORK NEXT: CHAPTER FOUR (Quoting etc.)

WEEK FIVE

T 2/17

FREWRITE or QUIZ on CHAPTER FOUR

MORE ON WHAT TO AVOID...

Opener: Daily Show DVD #3: Ed Helms on "objectivity" and "truth"

Case Studies: Letter regarding advertising and Washington Post piece

Jeff Gannon piece from Harper's

Forbes ad piece from Columbia Journalism Review

Discussion: Conflict of interest, Bad Facts, Poor Reporting, Bad Journalism

Duet Exercise Part II: Refresh your interview, then report back to the class with

(1) a summary of your friend, (2) an exemplary paraphrase, and (3) a compelling direct quote.

The Reporting Plan HANDOUT

HOMEWORK FOR NEXT CLASS: CHAPTER FIVE (Gathering & Verifying Info)

EXERCISES: Interviewing & Quoting (HANDOUT)

STORY WORK: Come to the next class with a complete Reporting Plan for **Story #1**

Th 2/19

TURN IN EXERCISES

FREWRITE or QUIZ on CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of Chapter Five

Review of REPORTING PLANS for **Story #1**

Inverted Pyramid & Basic News Structure (HANDOUT)

HOMEWORK: CHAPTER SEVEN (The Inverted Pyramid) plus EXERCISES

REPORTING/WRITING HOMEWORK: Develop your **Story #1** idea into a LEDE for the next class – bring enough Xerox-copies for your very first copy session.

WEEK SIX

T 2/24

TURN IN EXERCISES

LEDE Exercise (Bush/Cheney)

Leads Handout & HARD NEWS LEDES VIDEO

The Inverted Pyramid: Discussion of Chapter 7 and in-class reading from Sun-Times

COPY SESSION: **Story #1** Lede

READING HOMEWORK NEXT: CHAPTER EIGHT + EXERCISES

REPORTING/WRITING HOMEWORK NEXT: Add to your story and bring a draft.

Th 2/26

Copy Session on **#1**

Review of CHAPTER EIGHT & EXERCISES

REPORTING/WRITING HOMEWORK: **Story #1 ROUGH DRAFT DUE NEXT CLASS**

AND FINAL DRAFT due one week from today...

EXERCISES DUE NEXT CLASS: Grammar/AP/Style

ALSO: PREP FOR GUEST SPEAKER

WEEK SEVEN

T 3/3

Story #1 Copy Session

GUEST SPEAKER

"Beyond the Summary LEDE" VIDEO

READING HOMEWORK NEXT: CHAPTER 9 (Beyond the pyramid...)

WEEK SEVEN (continued...)

- Th 3/5 Hand in **Story #1 Final Draft for grading...**
Duet Exercise #3: Refresh your interview notes and write a lede on your friend...
RESEARCH/WRITING IN CLASS: Pursue an idea for **Story #2** and start a PLAN
READING HOMEWORK NEXT: CHAPTER TEN (Obits & Life Stories)
Media Journal #2 DUE IN A WEEK: Same thing as the first one, but this time try to pick one story and check/compare factual assertions and context between different sources. DUE FOR POSTING AND IN CLASS 10/15.
RESEARCH/WRITING FOR NEXT CLASS: Finish your Reporting Plan and draft a Lede for **Story #2**.
ALSO: READING FOR GUEST SPEAKER

WEEK EIGHT

- T 3/10 QUIZ or FREEWRITE on CHAPTER TEN
Review PLANS/LEDES for **Story #2**
Video: "Good Writing vs. Good Reporting"
GUEST SPEAKER
HOMEWORK: Build on **Story #2** and bring an updated draft to the next class.
- Th 3/12 Discuss **Media Journal Part Two**
Review of **Story #2 drafts**
HOMEWORK: CHAPTER 12 + SPEAKER + **Story #2 due in class in one week...**

WEEK NINE (MID-TERM MARK ON 3/18/09)

- T 3/17 Copy Session on **Story #2**
Review of CHAPTER 12
GUEST SPEAKER
HOMEWORK: CHAPTER 13
- Th 3/19 FREEWRITE or QUIZ ON CHAPTER 13
Turn in **Story #2**
Review of Chapter 13
IN-CLASS PURSUIT OF IDEAS/PLANS/LEDES for **Story #3**
HOMEWORK: Chapter 13 EXERCISES plus pursue a draft of **Story #3**
READING HOMEWORK: CHAPTER FOURTEEN & GUEST SPEAKER PREP

WEEK TEN

- T 3/24 TURN IN CHAPTER 13 EXERCISES
REVIEW OF CHAPTER 14
GUEST SPEAKER
- Th 3/26 COPY SESSION FOR **Story #3** (FINAL DRAFT DUE IN ONE WEEK)
GUEST SPEAKER
HOMEWORK: CHAPTER 18

WEEK ELEVEN

- T 3/31 Review of CHAPTER 18
IN-CLASS PURSUIT OF AN IDEA AND PLAN FOR **STORY #4**
COPY SESSION IF NEEDED for **Story #3**
- Th 4/2 Turn in **Story #3**
IN-CLASS PURSUIT OF AN IDEA AND PLAN FOR **STORY #4**
Media Journal #3 DUE IN ONE WEEK
HOMEWORK: CHAPTER 20 & EXERCISES
WRITING HOMEWORK: LEDE for **Story #4**

***** SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS 4/6/09 through 4/12/09 *****

WEEK TWELVE

- T 4/14 **Journalism Portfolio** (HANDOUT)
Review of Chapter 20 and turn in exercises...
Review of **Story #4** LEDE
HOMEWORK: **Draft Story #4** (DRAFT DUE IN ONE WEEK) & GUEST SPEAKER PREP
- Th 4/16 Discuss **Media Journal #3**
Media Journal #4 DUE IN ONE WEEK
GUEST SPEAKER

WEEK THIRTEEN (LAST DAY FOR STUDENT-INITIATED WITHDRAWAL on 4/20/09)

- T 4/21 Copy Session on **#4**
Final for **#4** due next class
READING HOMEWORK: CHAPTER 23 (Ethics)
- Th 4/23 Turn in **Story #4** THEN discuss **Media Journal #4**
REVIEW CHAPTER 23 & ETHICS VIDEO
OPTIONAL RE-WRITING HOMEWORK: REDO #1, 2 or 3 (Due next class...)
READING HOMEWORK: CHAPTER 22 (Law) + EXERCISES

WEEK FOURTEEN

- T 4/28 QUIZ or FREEWRITE on CHAPTER 22
Review CHAPTER 22 and turn in exercises...
LAW Video & HANDOUTS
- W 4/30 MEET ONE-ON-ONE TO DISCUSS **Final Portfolio / Final Story / etc.**
HOMEWORK: Bring copies this coming week of pieces to workshop for Portfolio
HOMEWORK: Guest Speaker prep

WEEK FIFTEEN

T 5/5 PORTFOLIO COPY SESSION
 GUEST SPEAKER

Th 5/7 PORTFOLIO COPY SESSION
 GUEST SPEAKER

WEEK SIXTEEN

T 5/12 FINAL PORTFOLIO COPY SESSION
 GUEST SPEAKER

Th 5/14 **Final Portfolio Presentation**

END OF CLASS!
ENJOY THE SUMMER!!!