***Syllabus COM320 Interviewing and Reporting***

***Fall 2010*** Instructor: Jennifer Fulford, ext. 1419

Office: Marshbanks 303, jfulford@mhc.edu

Class: MWF 1p, Cornwell 222

Welcome to Interviewing and Reporting and the world of news. This class is designed to give you the know-how to collect information, analyze it and write it in a news format for publication. Your work may be published online via the student media website, *The Hilltop,* <http://hilltop.mhc.edu>, soon to be www.hilltopmhc.com. It may also appear in two print editions of *The Hilltop* to be published this fall in Sept. and December.

The news industry is a fascinating, fast-paced world full of curious people. Many journalists have rich backgrounds in many different fields. Learning to synthesize your thoughts and information into clear, concise and interesting prose can enhance almost any career.

**IN-CLASS WORK**

Class time will involve several components:

1. Quizzes covering current events and assigned readings from the text, *Newswriter’s Handbook: An Introduction to Journalism*
2. Discussions about material on quizzes
3. Student presentations about current events
4. Story idea development, status reports of stories in progress and problem solving
5. Lectures about reporting, interviewing and news writing supported with multimedia (films, websites, photography, etc.)
6. Deadline writing
7. Field trips and in-class interviews

Ample time will be provided for you to give feedback about assignments and your news stories.

**HOMEWORK: Reading the Text, Monitoring the News, Conducting Interviews and Writing Stories**

You will be assigned readings from the text **and** you will be assigned to read, watch or listen to news from **one** mainstream media organization, such as the *New York Times* or National Public Radio (NPR).

Everyone will prepare a written “connections” report once a week about the news you read from your media outlet. Twice during the semester, you will be asked at random to share your report with the class.

The main work in this class will be your writing of several news stories for publication. **You will be assigned to prepare eight stories for *The Hilltop*.** This requires you to: 1) arrange interviews with news sources, generally outside of class, 2) collect information from the interviews with handwritten notes or audio/video recordings; 3) write the information in a news format for publication.

Story concepts will come from your instructor or be generated by class discussions and your ideas. The stories will be due at two week intervals. Some stories may be written, edited or rewritten during class time.

**TESTS**

A mid-term exam will be given on Mon., Oct. 11, and final exam will be given on a date TBA. The exams will consist of questions from the reading and an exercise in deadline writing.

**GRADES**

Your final grade will be based on your scores from:

1. 7 story assignments (50 pts each)
2. A final portfolio (50 pts)
3. Weekly news quizzes (15 pts each)
4. Text quizzes (15 pts each)
5. Mid-term and final exams (50 pts each)
6. Class participation/attendance (40 pts)

Grades will not be based on a curve. There is no extra credit. Grades will be calculated on a percentage:

A=95-100%, A-= 90-94%

B+=87-89%, B=83-86%, B-=80-82%

C+=77-79%, C=73-76%, C-=70-72%

D=60-69%, F=<60%

**GRADES FOR NEWS STORIES**

\*Stories will be graded on three criteria:

1. Content (quality of writing and delivery of message), **25/50**
2. Mechanics (accuracy, grammar and spelling), **15/50**
3. Effort (work put forth to produce the story), **10/50**

Photos, when of publishable quality, will count toward Effort.

**DEADLINES AND ATTENDANCE**

Because the news business is deadline driven, meeting your story assignment deadlines is essential. If you miss a story deadline, you risk a zero for the assignment. If you are having trouble with a story, such as difficulty reaching an interviewee or getting enough information to write up, it will be **your responsibility** to contact the instructor with enough time to retool your assignment (**at least 24 hours**; I check email frequently --jfulford@mhc.edu). You may be asked to prepare another assignment for *The Hilltop* if your initial idea does not pan out.

Your participation in class is also essential. If you miss a field trip, you automatically receive a zero for any story assignment associated with the trip. You are allowed **two** unexcused absence from class. Any absences beyond one will require a written doctor’s, coach’s or MHC administrator’s excuse. Excuses from parents or guardians will be considered under very rare circumstances.

If you miss more than one class, your participation grade will be severely diminished (by half or more). No quizzes will be offered for makeup. The college also requires instructors to report students to the Retention Office after two weeks of consecutive absences.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Newswriter’s Handbook: An Introduction to Journalism*, Second Edition, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, by Stein, Paterno, Burnett

A dictionary of your choosing

*Hilltop Writing Guidelines* supplement provided by your instructor

**FYI**

**OUTCOMES**

Writing for media is a combination of skills. Those include listening, thinking and understanding how to communicate. By semester’s end, you should be able to:

∞ Prepare and conduct an interview.

∞ Write a basic news story.

∞ Review your own work for grammar and spelling.

∞ See the connection between world events and how they may affect you and your community.

∞ Clearly recognize legitimate sources of news.

∞ Understand objectivity and bias.

∞ Differentiate between facts and opinions.

**PLAGIARISM**

Mars Hill College considers plagiarism as:

*Presenting someone else’s ideas but not giving credit for it (implying the idea is yours.)*

*Presenting someone else’s words without giving credit.*

*Submitting any work which was done by someone else (including another student) and claiming it is your own.*

Plagiarism is a very serious offense in the media industry. Media workers who commit plagiarism often are fired. Depending on the gravity of any offense in this course, you have the potential of failing the course. DON’T DO IT!

**MARS HILL HONOR CODE**

*We, the students for Mars Hill College, pledge ourselves to uphold integrity, honesty, and academic responsibility in and out of the classroom.*

*Honor Pledge*

*On my honor, I have neither given nor received any academic aid or information that would violate the Honor Code of Mars Hill College.*

**CLASSROOM PROTOCOL**

When classes start, please follow these rules of conduct:

Refrain from emailing or web-browsing unless it is research for your story.

Refrain from using cell phones; turn them off.

No food, drink or gum in the computer lab.

Respect your fellow students and teacher.