

# Writing in Mass Communications Courses

## For the student:

### 1. What kinds of writing assignments can I expect in upper-division Mass Communications classes?

- Formal writing assignments in upper-division courses in COMM may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Annotated bibliographies
  - Biographical profiles
  - Blogs
  - Journals
  - Legal case briefings/analysis
  - Literature reviews
  - Print, broadcast, and online news stories
  - Project proposals
  - Public relations vehicles (brochures, Web sites, news releases)
  - Radio scripts
  - Reflection/reaction papers
  - Research papers in topics of mass communications, theories, text analyses, etc.
  - Reviews of mass communications texts
  - Television scripts

### 2. How will my assignments be graded?

- Your professors may weigh certain criteria differently depending on the nature of the assignment. For formal, research oriented projects, the following criteria may be taken into account:
  - Accuracy and depth of content
  - Accurate and varied vocabulary
  - Appropriate citation style when necessary
  - Correct grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization
  - Development of writing in successive drafts in response to instructor and peer feedback
  - Organization of essay
  - Specificity and originality of thesis statement
  - Support of thesis statement with appropriate evidence
  - Varied sentence structures
- For formal creative writing projects, the following criteria may be taken into account:
  - Appropriate use of storytelling
  - Clarity of expression
  - Conformation to format guidelines specific to project (radio or television scripts, brochures, Web sites, etc.)
  - Consideration of publication platform
  - Consideration of target audience

- Development of writing in successive drafts in response to instructor and peer feedback
- Originality and thoughtfulness of concepts, etc.

For journalistic writing, the following criteria may be taken into account:

- Accuracy of information
- Appropriate use/selection of writing structure
- Attribution of information when necessary
- Conforming to Associated Press style
- Consideration of target audience
- Consideration of publication platform
- Newsworthiness

### **3. What citation style will I be expected to use for Mass Communications writings?**

- For assignments requiring consultation and incorporation of secondary sources, you are expected to use APA citation style, unless otherwise indicated by your professor.
  - You may consult the *Concise rules of APA style*, available in the library reference section, call number BF76.7 .C66 2005.
  - A description of the style is also available online at <http://www.apastyle.org/>; an abbreviated explanation of the style is also available online at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>.
- For journalistic writing assignments, you will be expected to use Associated Press style.
  - For print, you may consult *The Associated Press stylebook and briefing on media law*, available in the library reference section, call number PN4783 .A83x.
  - For broadcast, you may consult *The Associated Press broadcast news handbook*, available in the library reference section, call number PN4783 .K35 2001.

### **4. Expected Writing Practices for Mass Communications**

- Acknowledge your sources, even in creative work. When in doubt, cite!
- Clearly state your thesis, lead, or argument.
- Follow all format guidelines in respect to length, citation, and attribution of references.
- Proofread carefully!
- Understand copy editing symbols.
- Understand storytelling principles and use them in creative work.
- Use supporting evidence.

### **5. Inappropriate Writing Practices for Mass Communications**

- Assuming that your thesis or conclusion is clear; make sure you clearly define your argument, your evidence, and your conclusions.
- Not allowing time to refine and revise your papers, journalistic writing, and creative projects.
- PLAGIARISM. Plagiarism includes:
  - Failure to cite another source for an idea
  - Copying verbatim text from another source
  - Paraphrasing text from another source
  - Making up sources
  - Double-dipping – turning in work from one course in another

- Failure to cite which edition/version of a play text you are citing  
(Instructors have the right to provide a failing grade in the class for any student found guilty of plagiarism. They may also choose to forward the matter to the University disciplinary review board.)