

WRITING FOR MEDIA

IE University

Professor: **PEDRO CIFUENTES HUERTAS**

E-mail: pcifuentes@faculty.ie.edu

Academic year: 22-23

Degree course: FIRST

Semester: 1º

Category: BASIC

Number of credits: 6.0

Language: English

PREREQUISITES

While this is a first-year class, it is assumed that university level students know the basics of English-language grammar and punctuation.

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

This course is a cornerstone in a solid communication education by teaching students the writing techniques required to succeed in a professional environment—be it corporate or journalistic. Strong writing skills empower practitioners of any field of communication: journalism, public relations, advertising, corporate communication and marketing. This course introduces students to the basic skill set of writing for a mass audience.

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

By the end of the class, students will have a solid understanding of what distinguishes journalistic writing from other information. Students should:

- ? Understand the theories and principles of reporting and writing for the media
- ? Use creative and critical thinking to identify and interview sources, conduct research and write unbiased media stories
- ? Identify the hallmarks of strong writing
- ? Know how to communicate accuracy and fairness
- ? Apply basic style rules, use correct grammar and punctuation
- ? Be able to produce quality journalistic stories, respecting the ritual of objectivity

METHODOLOGY

Liquid Learning at IE University is a transformational and interactive educational experience that transcends single methodologies and platforms to blend physical, digital, and natural environments so that students obtain a world-class education no matter their location, profession, or situation.

Students will learn alongside one other and work together in teams. Hybrid brings together the human, digital, and natural worlds into a seamless whole and enables IE University to be – and offer to students and faculty – a truly global campus.

Hybrid programs are flexible, and students can choose to study from the geographical location most convenient for them.

A program section, for example, might have half of the students physically present in Madrid/Segovia and the other half located in a dozen or more locations around the world.

In Synchronous Session all students and professor are “in live” and can interact.

In Asynchronous way, professor does not need to be present, although s/he will be connected all the session and s/he will be available for different purposes.

Teaching methodology	Weighting	Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in
Lectures	10.0 %	15 hours
Discussions	10.0 %	15 hours
Exercises	33.33 %	50 hours
Group work	20.0 %	30 hours
Other individual studying	26.67 %	40 hours
TOTAL	100.0 %	150 hours

PROGRAM

SESSIONS 1 - 2 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Course Overview--

Objective: Thinking like a journalist: understanding the difference between information and journalism.

Pre-work: Reading: Introduction ONLY of David Mindich’s Just the facts: how "objectivity" came to define American journalism (60 min)

Activities: Introductions (15 min) + review of course content, participation styles and evaluation (15 min), +Q+A on course review (10 min) + lecture (40 min)

Critical Discussion about previous reading (40 min) + Group Exercise about real examples in media (40 min)

SESSIONS 3 - 4 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

What is news?

Objective: Learning how to conceive, collect and construct news stories. The 5 Ws. The building blocks of news writing. In-Class Exercise

Pre-work: Select a news story of your interest and bring it to class (30 min).

Activities: Lecture (60 min) + in-class exercise (news story analysis, 40 min)

Critique session with live examples (80 min)

SESSIONS 5 - 6 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Hard news vs. feature stories

Objective: Understanding the most important paragraph (the lead) and the inverted pyramid pattern.

Activities: Lecture (50 min) + In-Class Group Exercise (30 min)

Student group presentations (40 min) + Critique session with live examples (40 min)

SESSIONS 7 - 8 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Structuring hard news. The importance of respecting style

Objective: practicing inverted pyramid, understanding sourcing, delayed attribution and nut graph.

Pre-work: students will have chosen a current topic previously.

Activities: Lecture (30 min) + viewing of videos (20 min) + Q&A about story topic and assignment (30 min)

In-class work (writing a hard news story, 60 min) + explanation of campus story assignment (20 min)

Post-work: readings (60 min) and choice of topic for campus story (30 min)

SESSIONS 9 - 10 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Working with the media. Press releases

Objective: Understanding the different roles within the communication and media landscape.

Pre-work: Students will have read materials previously.

Activities: Group assignment (60 min) + Professor-Student individual Feedback about campus story ideas, approval of topics and Q&A (80 min)

Post-work: Campus newspaper story (180 min)

SESSIONS 11 - 12 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Reaction Stories

Objective: Understanding how to record the mood of a society

Pre-work: Delivery of Campus newspaper story and Contact List

Activities: Lecture about valid sourcing (80 min)

Individual work on selecting possible sources (30 min) + Collective discussion / brainstorming about the assignment (50 min)

SESSIONS 13 - 14 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Interviewing Sources

Objective: Learning how to interact with sources and obtaining valuable information.

Activities: Contacting sources and obtaining proper information from them for the reaction story on an agreed topic (180 min). Professor feedback during that week.

Post-work: Send material to professor in advance of next class.

SESSIONS 15 - 16 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Selecting material and Anecdotes

Objective: Learning how to write a reaction story

Pre-work: Students will have sent their quotes and contact list in advance.

Activities: Lecture with collective feedback from previous work (60 min) + preparation of in-class assignment (20 min)

In-class writing of the reaction story (80 min), with professor's assistance when necessary.

Post-work: Readings (60 min)

SESSIONS 17 - 18 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Multi-platform writing

Objective: differentiating writing styles for diverse genres and platforms.

Activities: Lecture of structure, style and voice (40 min) + Literary Comparison Online Exercise (60 min)

SESSIONS 19 - 20 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Keeping the reader interested

Objective: learning how to write in clear and vivid language.

Pre-work: Students will write a descriptive observation. (30 min)

Activities: Collective analysis of writing (80 min) + peer to peer feedback of reaction stories (80 min)

SESSIONS 21 - 22 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Travel Writing

Objective: Understanding and crafting travel journalism

Pre-work: Students will have read examples of travel writing (30 min)

Activities: Writing a travel piece about home towns (120 min)

Post-work: Readings and peer-to-peer analysis (70 min)

SESSIONS 23 - 24 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Feature writing

Objective: Learning how to give details and bring an issue home.

Pre-work: Students will have read materials handed out during the previous session. They will also bring at least two topic suggestions for their feature story.

Activities: Forum discussion on main characteristics of feature story writing (80 min) + Individual feedback on ideas for Feature Story (with final decision about topic)

Post-work: Feature Story assignment (360 minutes)

SESSIONS 25 - 26 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Blogging

Objective: Finding your own voice as a writer.

Pre-work: Students will have chosen an idea about a first post for a blog and informed the professor. After the professor's approval, they will then have written the post before the beginning of the session (120 min).

Activities: Peer-to-peer extensive feedback exercise about the blogging work done by students (160 min), monitored by the professor, who might address students individually about certain aspects of writing.

SESSIONS 27 - 28 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Personal Branding and the Query Letter In-Class Exercise

DUE: Take-home feature story and Contact List

Objective: Identifying what distinguishes you

Pre-work: Research and identify appropriate media outlets and contacts for story (30 min)

Activities: Video (20 min) + lecture (60 min)

Writing and Sending Query Letter with professor assistance (90 min)

SESSIONS 29 - 30 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Wrap-up

Objective: Giving students individual feedback about their work (especially the feature story) and progression during the semester. Suggestions for future improvement and consolidation of personal voice.

Activities: Individual feedback sessions with every student (160 min)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compulsory

- David Mindich.. *Just the Facts: How Objectivity Came to Define American Journalism..* NYU Press. ISBN 9780814763094 (Digital)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each original writing assignment is an individual effort. Students will write a Campus News Story, Reaction Story and Feature story for 60% of the total grade. The remaining exercises and class participation will compose the remainder of the points. I will supply a rubric to help students understand what is expected of them, but excellence is in the detail-- not just checking all the boxes on an assignment. Students are expected to come to class and participate energetically.

HELPFUL HINTS: HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS CLASS

Courteous behavior: I find punctuality, attention during class and not distracting yourself and others with your social media activity a given.

E-mails: If you have questions that were not answered in class, you are welcome to ask your questions via e-mail. I can be reached at pcifuentes@faculty.ie.edu. Although I will make every effort to respond to your question as quickly and thoroughly as possible, please recognize that I may not be available when you send an email. I will do my best to answer emails sent M-F within 24 hours. If you write me after 5pm on Friday, I reserve the right to respond on Monday morning.

Deadline: I take deadlines very seriously. I do understand that things can happen unexpectedly and it is impossible to prepare in advance for everything life throws at you. For this reason, I will grant each student a 24-hour grace period on ONE assignment during the course of the semester. For all other late assignments, your grade will drop 5% each day that it is late. I encourage you to hand in all assignments.

Assignment format: Submit on time. You are expected to hand them in as specified by the professor- that is to say on Campus. I will not grade e-mailed assignments, unless I explicitly ask for them.

Proofread: Writing proficiency counts in this class. Basic grammar, spelling and punctuation are to be correct on all assignments. I will take off points for careless mistakes, misspelled names or factual errors. Grammar, punctuation and repeated style errors will detract from your score when they occur in your writing.

Style: We will learn style rules in this class. You need to follow them for each of the big three assignments.

Criteria	Percentage	Comments
Original writing	60 %	
Exercises	20 %	
Class Participation	20 %	

PROFESSOR BIO

Professor: **PEDRO CIFUENTES HUERTAS**

E-mail: pcifuentes@faculty.ie.edu

Pedro Cifuentes is a Spanish journalist and editor. After starting his career at the political section of the newspaper El País, he worked for five years as editorial assistant manager of the Encarta digital encyclopedia (Microsoft) in its Spanish and Latin American version. Since 2008 he has combined the practice of journalism with the coordination of online content for several Spanish-speaking countries and university and postgraduate teaching. Contributor for different media outlets on both sides of the Atlantic, he has translated into Spanish, in addition, several books by authors such as Isaiah Berlin, Anthony Giddens or Malcolm Gladwell.

He teaches journalism and 'storytelling' at the IE School of Communication in Spanish and English language since 2010. He lived in Argentina (where he worked as a correspondent for the newspaper La Nación in Mendoza) and Brazil, where he served as correspondent for El País in Rio de Janeiro in 2014 and 2015. From the end of that year until 2018 he wrote chronicles and investigative reports about the world of sport in El Español (Madrid). He works currently as staff reporter for El Confidencial.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/pedrocifuenteshuertas>

OTHER INFORMATION

Technology in the Classroom

It is my preference that all students connect to Zoom during the sessions we meet, including students in the hybrid classroom. This means that I encourage and expect students to bring their laptops and chargers to class. That said, if I catch you using the laptop inappropriately during class, I will give you a warning. If you are caught a second time, you will be kicked out of the classroom and marked as absent for that day. I am very strict about this. The use of mobile phones will not be permitted under any circumstances during this course.

Assignments – I know that things can happen unexpectedly and it is impossible to prepare in advance for everything that life throws at you. For this reason, I will grant each student a 24 hour grace period on ONE assignment (except the group project) during the course of the semester. For all other late assignments, your grade will drop 5% each day that it is late.

