

# Reporting Basics I: Writing and Interviewing

COMM 205: Spring 2023; IN PERSON--School of Communication Room 015

Wednesdays 4:15-6:45 p.m.

Instructor: Michael Cullinane

Email: [mcullinane@luc.edu](mailto:mcullinane@luc.edu)

Welcome to COMM 205! I'm so excited to welcome you to this exciting course, which will help you to develop your journalistic skills while offering you the ability to serve as a hyperlocal published reporter.

My name is Michael Cullinane, your instructor. This course is close to my heart, as I have taught a variety of journalism courses to high school students for nine years as well as English classes for another thirteen. I recently graduated from Loyola's Digital Media and Storytelling Masters program, being awarded Graduate Student of the Year. Writing and videography are two of my greatest passions. I'm a fairly seasoned adjunct professor (this is my 6th semester), so I hope my experiences make you feel that you are in good hands.

In this course students will learn the fundamentals of journalistic-style reporting and writing, as well as the basics of working in a newsroom, including newsgathering, sourcing, interviewing, editing and working on a deadline. There will be many writing assignments and style/grammar exercises. Students will be expected to be up on the issues of the day, reading/watching/listening to credible news sources on a daily basis.

**Course Description:** This class will teach essential journalism skills, including news writing, feature writing, interviewing, research, finding stories, editing and rewriting, journalism ethics, and professional journalistic practices. While the course will feature lectures and class discussion, the emphasis will be on practical experience, covering real people and real events in the neighborhood around Loyola as well as national and global issues. Worthy student work will be published at [www.rogersedgereporter.com](http://www.rogersedgereporter.com), a community news website created just for this and other Loyola University classes.

While this is a journalism class, it is important to remember that the essential skills of a good journalist – critical thinking, resourcefulness, relentlessness, clear and careful writing, high ethical standards, and good judgment – are skills that translate into many fields. Every successful story requires patience, tenacity, and resilience on your part.

**Course Text/Materials:** I struggled with this decision, but in the end, there will be no required course text. I will use a great deal of content from *Dynamics of News: Reporting and Writing* by Vincent F. Filiak. You are welcome to purchase or rent this

book; it would surely help you not only with this class but also future pursuits as a journalist.

I'd urge you to have access to trusted and reliable news sources. This might mean getting a digital subscription to the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*. You must keep tabs on your local Chicago neighborhood news as well as what is happening at Loyola. I'll reference Twitter often, as I find it the best way to keep on top of breaking news. I'll frequently share articles and content I find. I hope you will do the same with me!

I will share my lessons on Sakai, which will mostly be in the form of PowerPoint presentations. These, and your notes and recollection, should be all you need to prepare for tests.

**Assignments and Grading:** Total Points = 1,000 (subject to change)

Articles/Projects (550 points), Participation (100), Weekly Assignments (100), Tests/Quizzes (150), Peer Feedback (50) Student News Presentation (50)

*\* Major articles will have separate rubrics distributed with assignment.*

Article 1: Interview (100 points)--Due Feb. 8

Article 2: Person on the Street (100 points)--Due March 1

Article 3: Local News (100 points)--Due March 29

Article 4: Review (100 points)--Due April 12

Final Project (150 points)--Due May 3

**Class objectives and procedures:** This class will meet on Wednesdays from 4:15-6:45 p.m. in person (School of Communications Room 015).

We will follow the same rough schedule every week (with some exceptions, such as quizzes or other variations)

**4:15-4:30 (Critical Thinking)**--Cullinane displays short critical thinking assignment.

Students have 15 minutes to complete

**4:30-4:35**--Cullinane gathers responses, processes them.

**4:35-4:50 (Discussion)**--Discussion of responses as they relate to broader journalistic concepts (class participation expected)

**4:50-5:35 (Lecture)**--PowerPoint lecture on new material (class participation expected)

**5:35-6:15 (Group/Individual Work)** Students will work through a writing task, sharing their work with the class toward the end

**6:15-6:45 (Breaking News Student Presentations)** Students will present a breaking news story in the format explained in class.

## Evaluation/Grading:

As an experienced educator, I value growth in my students. My teaching methods work to help you grow as a journalist and writer while gaining confidence in your abilities and talents. Grades are a necessary part of this process.

- As members of this course, you will not only be writers but also editors of each others' work. You will work with each other prior to submission.
- The best way to improve your writing is through revision. You should ask your classmates and me questions during the writing process. Once you've received a grade on an article, you have one week to submit a final revision. The process of that will be made clear to you.
- Aside from major writing assignments, you will be graded on participation during our class meetings. I respect students who can push themselves outside of their comfort zones in striving to enrich the climate of the course. Students who are not paying attention/participating will see lower participation grades, even if you are completing the work. Treat this class almost as though you are in a job, where your behavior will help determine the outcome of your responsibilities.
- Late work/missed assignments will be accepted and will be graded down by one full grade. All assignments must be completed, but no credit will be given later than two weeks after the original due date.
- In the case of missing a class meeting, it is a student's responsibility to contact the instructor **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**. All assignments build on the last one. Since we only meet once a week, you are required to attend every class. Do not arrive late or plan on leaving early.
- Spelling, grammar and style mistakes will be subtracted from an assignment's grade.

### Grade scale:

100-93 = A

92-90 = A-

89-87 = B+

86-83 = B

82-80 = B-

79-77 = C+

76-73 = C

72-70 = C-

69-67 = D+

66-63 = D

62-60 = D-

59 or below = F

## **Syllabus Statement Regarding Class Video Recording (only if we hold a class on Zoom, which we do not have planned)**

In this class software will be used to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions will be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class, to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class when the Sakai course is unpublished (i.e. shortly after the course ends, per the [Sakai administrative schedule](#)). Students who prefer to participate via audio only will be allowed to disable their video camera so only audio will be captured. Please discuss this option with your instructor.

The use of all video recordings will be in keeping with the University Privacy Statement shown below:

### **Privacy Statement**

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Students will be informed of such recordings by a statement in the syllabus for the course in which they will be recorded. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. Recordings including student activity that have been initiated by the instructor may be retained by the instructor only for individual use.

### **Academic Dishonesty Policy: School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity**

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments.

Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher.
- Providing information to another student during an examination.
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination.
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner that is not authorized by the instructor.
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted.
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments and any other course work that is completed outside of the classroom.
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines.
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts.

Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material.
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit.
- Purchasing, acquiring and using for course credit a pre-written paper.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult

with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at [https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml)

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction.

The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:  
[http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicgrievance.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml)

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver that releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association or to similar organizations.

## **Students with Learning Disabilities**

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

## **Managing Life Crises and Finding Support**

Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral ([LUC.edu/csaa](http://LUC.edu/csaa)) for yourself or a peer in need of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find websites at [LUC.edu/dos](http://LUC.edu/dos) or [LUC.edu/csaa](http://LUC.edu/csaa). Or you may contact directly at 773-508-8840 and at [deanofstudents@luc.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@luc.edu).

## CLASS MEETING SCHEDULE

(Disclaimer: This syllabus will be amended as the course proceeds. You will be notified of all changes via email.)

Week of	Tuesday
1/18	Course Introduction Lecture: Audience-Centric Journalism Presentation Introduce Article #1: Email Aldermanic Candidates HW: "What Kind of News Consumer" Forum Question Due-- <i>Please respond to 3 classmates</i>
1/25	Interviewing and Critical Thinking Interview Tips and Formalities Aldermanic Candidate Research HW: Quiz #1 next week Conduct practice interview
2/1	Discuss Practice Interview Forum Question #2 Backstory, Motivation, Conflict, Resolution Prep for Guest Lecture (If possible) HW: Article #1
2/8	Article #1: Interview Due 4:15 p.m. Guest Lecture: ??? Peer Editing HW: Prep Article #2 Ideas/Pitches Forum Question #3
2/15	Story Structure: Lead Paragraph Writing/Inverted Pyramid Intro Article #2 Pitch HW: Prep for Quiz #2
2/22	Expanded News Writing Quiz #2
3/1	Article #2: Person on the Street Due 4:15 p.m. HW: Practice Article
3/15	Assign Article #3: Groups, Topics, Research, Interview Requests AP Style HW: Article #3 Work AP Style Quiz (#3)
3/22	News That Finds You Formalities: AP Style/Grammar/Etc AP Style Quiz (#3) Group Time HW: Article #3 Work
3/29	Article #3: Local News Due 4:15 p.m. Introduce Review Assignment (Article #4) HW: Article #4
4/5	Review Writing Practice

	HW: Article #4
4/12	Article #4: Review Due 4:15 p.m. Social Media; Responding to Comments
4/19	Final Project Pitches and Approvals
4/26	Final Class Meetings for Final Project
5/3	Article #5: Final Project/Reflection Due

### Assignment Details

Title	Due Date	Requirements	Details
Article 1: Interview (100 points)	Feb. 8	2+ pages, lead paragraph, background, interview transcript selections, clincher	Q&A formatted article with sufficient background and backstory to provide context.
Article 2: Person on the Street (100 points)	Mar. 1	2+ pages, lead paragraph, background, 5+ quotes, attributions, transitions, clincher	Professional journalistic article representing diverse views on issue related to community
Article 3: Local News (100 points)	Mar. 29	3+ pages, lead paragraph, background, 5+ quotes, attributions, transitions clincher	Professional journalistic article reflecting a hot topic in the neighborhood which digs deep into 5Ws.
Article 4: Review (100 points)	Apr. 12	2+ pages, research and background, figurative language, clincher	Opinion-based article reviewing a neighborhood place with persuasion in mind
Article 5: Final Project (150 points)	May 3	5+pages, including reflection (50 points). Requirements will vary depending on student choice.	Students will choose and pitch a format and idea from previous assignments and take it to a higher level.

\*\*\*Student writing will also be graded across 3+ forum post writing assignments which will be graded on depth of thought, organization of claims, and background included. These will total at least 3 pages.