

Loyola University Chicago

Spring 2023

Reporting Basics I

COMM 205

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Class location: SOC Room 100 (Studio)

Professor Patricia Lamberti

Office Hours:

By appointment – in person or virtual

Course description

This course will introduce you to the skills required to work as a journalist, professional writer or content producer.

Perhaps you are not interested in the careers mentioned above. This class is still for you. Remember that all jobs involve writing, research and interviewing. Regardless of where you work, you will likely:

- Write emails, memos or reports
- Post to social media about your industry or job
- Interview current and potential clients and potential new hires
- Ask questions to your coworkers about their lives and jobs
- Have questions asked of you during your initial job interviews and be ask questions about the job you are being considered for

In this course, you will learn the fundamentals of interviewing, researching, concise writing, grammar and brainstorming ideas.

We will also examine how we consume news.

We will discuss and think about the role news consumption plays in becoming a better citizen of the world.

This course is writing intensive.

Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Develop skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals working in journalism and professional writing.
- Develop skills in expressing ideas through writing and storytelling.
- Practice interviewing skills.
- Learn how to write concisely and with proper grammar.
- Learn more how to research, from using library databases to advanced Google options.
- Structure writing in an organized and engaging manner.
- Craft engaging opening paragraphs, a skill that transfers to all types of writing.

Course Materials

- All materials are online.

Many of the readings can be found on XXXXXXXXX

Course Policies

I'm not your parent. I'm a facilitator of your education.

I don't want to waste our time together arguing about behavior. Let's agree to the following ground rules so that we can focus on learning:

Attendance policy:

Regular attendance is expected. But if you are sick, or have another pressing issue, just email me beforehand and let me know.

Regular attendance, and consistent communication about your reasons for not attending class in person, play a role in the participation and professionalism portion of your grade.

That said, life throws roadblocks in our paths at times. If you are truly sick or suspect you are ill (with COVID-19 or any other illness), just email me. Please do not come to class. That said, this does not mean you won't face consequences for missing class on a regular basis.

If you are not attending class just because you aren't in the mood, ask yourself who is really losing. On our first day, we will examine how much each class costs you.

Participation policy:

You can't participate in-class activities, or discussions, if you are not in class.

You are also not participating if you are multi-tasking while you are in the classroom.

The golden rules?

Don't come to class if you are sick or under duress.

Let me know beforehand, but remember that I am a professional too. I don't need to know every detail about your illness or problems.

If you are sick one week, or have another emergency, you will see an "in class activity" listed on the syllabus. Do it when you are better and email it to me.

If you don't attend class regularly, or explain why you are missing class so often (and agree to making up the in-class activities promptly and/or offering some proof if requested), I cannot give you full credit for participation.

Participating doesn't mean talking all the time. While talking matters, so does active listening.

Doing the in-class activities (which often includes writing and small group discussion) is part of your participation grade.

The grading scale for participation is as follows:

A range: Frequent and meaningful contributions to class discussions that show insight and understanding of material.

B range: Frequent and meaningful contribution to class discussion. Reasonable effort during all in-class activities. Demonstrates respects for others by listening, and avoiding multitasking.

C range: Occasional participation to class discussion. Average effort put into class discussions and activities.

D range: Only participates nudged to do so. Poor demonstration of respect for others.

F range: No class participation. Little respect for others demonstrated.

Professionalism policy:

If you don't attend class regularly, email me before missing class, or explain why you are missing class so often (and offer some proof if requested), you are not behaving professionally. I cannot give you full credit for the professionalism portion of your grade if you don't attend class regularly, explain your absences, etc.

Behaving professionally also means that you should arrive on time.

You should be prepared for class and ready to participate in discussions and in-class exercises.

You should listen to others in the room, respect opinions that may differ from your own and focus on the conversation/project at hand.

Although you are used to multitasking in your private lives (I admit that I often check my phone while watching TV), many people (myself included) consider it inappropriate to multitask in a professional setting, like the classroom or a workplace.

I pay close attention to who is checking their phones, who is wearing earbuds, who is checking email or social media, and who is browsing the internet for purposes other than what we're working on in class.

I personally find multitasking rude. But even more importantly, research shows that multitasking has a serious, negative effect on cognitive functioning. I will ask you to analyze this article about multitasking as one of our first in-class exercises. But feel free to read it now.

The grading scale for professionalism is as follows:

A range: Minimal absences and/or understanding of attendance policy. On time. Focused on discussion and activities. No multitasking.

B range: Demonstrates respect for others by listening, and avoiding multitasking. Some absences and/or understanding of attendance policy. Mostly focused on discussion and activities. Minimal multitasking.

C range: Average focus and noticeable multitasking.

D range: Only professional when nudged to do so. Poor demonstration of respect for others. Apparent multitasking.

F range: Little to no demonstration of professionalism.

Grading:

Grading is a complex issue.

At best, grades motivate you to learn as much as you can.

In the worst-case scenario, grades make you feel bad about yourself, question your life goals and hate school.

When thinking about grades, keep a few things in mind.

Grades don't always indicate how much you're getting out of a class, or school in general.

When you were in elementary school and high school, teachers and parents used grades to help keep you on task and unearth your talents.

But you are now an adult. It is your responsibility to learn as much as you can, keep yourself on task and uncover your passions. Grades may help you do this, but grades aren't your only guide on this road.

As an adult, you need to push yourself to learn – without the reward or punishment of a grade.

Getting As on assignments shouldn't be a reason to tell yourself, "I am a master at this. I don't need to try anymore. I'm checking out." You're not a master yet. An A means you're exceptional for writers at this stage of their careers. You can always improve.

Likewise, getting Cs shouldn't be a reason to give up. In fact, a C makes sense. That's an average grade, and you just started doing this. Writing takes practice. After all, there are no child prodigies when it comes to writing.

I take a lot of time to make my grading policy transparent. You will receive a rubric for each assignment.

I will always evaluate your work and provide you with an explanation of why you've earned your grade.

Your first assignment is worth less than latter ones. After all, as you learn, you should get better.

The in-class exercises are purely for practice. I will look at them. But you either earn an A for putting some degree of effort into it and an F if you don't.

You are expected to read your assignments before class begins during the week they are assigned.

Due Dates:

I will be treating you like professionals, which means deadlines **MUST** be met unless you have a legitimate reason (illness, etc.)

If you are not attending class on the day an assignment is due, you must notify me beforehand via email. You must have a legitimate excuse (with documentation if requested) to miss a deadline.

I won't think you're a bad person if you miss a due date. I'd rather have you learn how to graciously accept consequences to your actions as opposed to practicing fibbing skills.

Grade disputes:

You may not agree with a grade I give you. If you think you deserve a better grade, you must write one to two paragraphs explaining why and visit me to discuss the matter.

Final grade breakdown:

Participation: 100 points

Professionalism: 100 points

In-class exercises:

Assignment one: 100 points

Assignment two: 150 points

Assignment three: 200 points

Final project:

Grading Criteria:

A: Publishable work with a maximum of one spelling, grammatical, or punctuation error and the proper information and sources written in a lively, well-organized manner.

B: Minimal spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Minimal missing information and sources; minimal problems with the lead and organization.

C: Notable number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Noticeable missing information and sources; problems with the lead and organization.

D: Significant number of spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Significant missing information and sources; Significant problems with the lead and organization.

F: Misspelling of proper names. Other major spelling, grammatical, punctuation and/or AP Style errors. Almost total lack of information and sources; Severe problems with the lead and organization.

Individual Assignment Grade Scale:

A: 100-94

A-: 93-90

B+: 89-88

B: 87-83

B-: 82-80

C+ 79-78

C: 77-73

C-: 72-70

D+: 69-68

D: 67-63

D-: 62-60

F: 59-0

Total Semester Grade Point Scale:

A: 1000-940

A-: 939-900

B+: 899-880

B: 879-830

B-: 829-800

C+ 799-780

C: 779-730

C-: 729-700

D+: 699-680

D: 679-630

D-: 629-600

F: 599-0

Fieldwork considerations COVID-19 policy:

Due to COVID-19, you still need to be cautious when it comes to field work (i.e., interviewing people in person). As the COVID-19 pandemic becomes endemic, a persistent part of daily life

that society has learned to live with, we will continue to be attentive to the public health environment with a heightened sense of awareness.

Even as mask requirements are dropped, you should always carry a mask with you to use for close contact when interviewing people. Wearing a mask during interviews, even outdoors, may be encouraged or prudent, depending on each situation.

At the minimum, you must conduct all interviews in a thoughtful and reasonable fashion with the intent of meeting deadlines while respecting the people you are working with.

Diversity Policy:

We must treat every individual with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status or genetic information. Each of these diverse identities, along with many others not mentioned here, shape the perspectives our students, faculty, and staff bring to our campus. We will work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion not only because diversity fuels excellence and innovation, but because we want to pursue justice. We acknowledge our imperfections while we also fully commit to the work, inside and outside of our classrooms, of building and sustaining a campus community that increasingly embraces these core values.

Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment.

Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional. They contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Please let me know if you experience or observe hostile treatment in this class, or if you feel that I am being unfair. You are also welcome to report any incidents to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Student Accessibility

Loyola University Chicago provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC). Professors will receive an accommodation notification from SAC, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. Please note that in this class, software may be used to audio record class lectures in order to provide equitable access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded

as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester. For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or SAC@luc.edu.

Academic Dishonesty Policy:

Plagiarism of any form, of any kind and of any length will be reported to the Dean of Students and the student will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.

Cheating on in-class assignments or any other work associated with this class will receive a similar punishment. As you know, plagiarism constitutes using another's words or ideas without acknowledgment.

In journalism, it is also considered equally dishonest to invent quotes, facts, scenarios and so on. I will occasionally check to verify that you have indeed interviewed the people you claim to have interviewed.

I also consider it an act of academic dishonesty to turn in work for an assignment in this class that you wrote for another class (any semester, any year). You must turn in original work for all class assignments.

Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners

As an instructor, I am considered a Responsible Campus Partner ("RCP") under Loyola's [**Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation**](#) (located at www.luc.edu/equity). While my goal is for you to be able to share information related to your life experiences through discussion and written work, I want to be transparent that as a RCP, I am required to report certain disclosures of sexual misconduct (such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner and/or domestic violence, and/or stalking) to the University's **Title IX** Coordinator.

As an instructor, I also have a mandatory obligation under Illinois law to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect (<https://www.luc.edu/hr/legal-notices/mandatedreportingofchildabuseandneglect/>).

The purpose of these reporting requirements is for the University to inform students who have experienced sexual/gender-based violence of available resources and support. Such a report **will not generate a report to law enforcement** (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Furthermore, the University's resources and supports are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. Please note that in certain situations, based on the nature of the disclosure, the University may need to take additional action to ensure the safety of the University community. If you have any questions about this policy, you may contact the [**Office for Equity & Compliance**](#) at equity@luc.edu or 773-508-7766.

If you wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call **The Line** at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with additional resources as needed. More information can be found at luc.edu/coalition or luc.edu/wellness.

Use of Appropriate Names and Pronouns

Addressing one another at all times by using appropriate names and gender pronouns honors and affirms individuals of all gender identities and gender expressions. Misgendering and heteronormative language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth.

If you wish, please share your gender pronouns with me and the class when you introduce yourself. If you do not wish to be called by the name that appears on the class roster or attendance sheet, please let me know. My goal is to create an affirming environment for all students with regard to their names and gender pronouns. Please tell me – in person or via email if that’s easier - if I inadvertently misgender you. Please accept my apology in advance of such mistakes.

Schedule

Readings should be completed by the Monday of the week they are listed under. If the links aren’t active, copy and paste them into your browser.

Week 1: Jan 17 and 19

Readings due by Thursday:

Syllabus

Take this [news quiz on the New York Times](#) (You will have to register for access. [Here](#) are the directions).

Week 2: Jan 24 and 26

Readings due by start of week:

Week 3: Jan 31 and Feb 2

Week 4: Feb 7 and 9

Assignment #1 due Feb 9. Turn in via Assignments tab.

Week 5: Feb 14 and 16

Topic: The 5 Ws and One J

Week 6: Feb 21 and 23

Topic: Facts

Week 7: Feb 18 and March 2

Topic: Covering events

Week 8: Spring Break

No class

Week 9: March 14 and 16

Assignment #2 Due Thursday via Sakai

Week 11: March 28 and 20

Assignment #3 due March 30

Week 12: April 4 (No class April 6)

Topics: Journalism as a Career and The Role of writing in other careers

Week 13: April 11 and 13

Topic: Final ideas

Week 14: April 18 and 20

Week 15: April 25 and 27

Topic: Putting it all together

Work on Final project

Final project due during finals time

No in personal final

