ADJO 223001: NEWS WRITING    Classroom: Stokes 145N

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Schedule: May 12 - June 18, 2015, Tuesday & Thursday nights, 6 p.m. - 9:15 pm

Boston College Mission Statement
Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description

ADJO 223001  News Writing
Since the art of communication prospers only when we fully realize the power of words, this course is designed to expand your powers of expression, both written and verbal. We will explore what some great communicators (Lincoln, Churchill, William Faulkner, Martin Luther King, Joan Didion, John Updike, others) have to teach us about precise expression. We will also glean lessons from such contemporary sources as journalism (the daily newspaper), narrative nonfiction (magazines and books), arts criticism (movies, music, theater), the advertising industry, and the blogosphere.
Course Objectives

To enhance your powers of expression and your communication skills, both written and verbal

To strengthen your critical-thinking skills and equip you with the analytical tools to evaluate ideas and arguments and, if necessary, to persuasively rebut them

To develop a large and vital vocabulary, and an understanding of usage, that will enable you to write and speak with precision

To develop your creative capacities

Grading
Grades will be based on 9 take-home writing assignments, on several in-class writing exercises, and on your overall participation in class. Since this course is designed to foster expressiveness, you are strongly encouraged to speak up in class. This is designed as an interactive course where every student provides input.

Summer Grading System
The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course. The graduate grading system is A (4.00), A- (3.67), Excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), good; B- (2.67), C (2.00), passing but not for degree credit; F (.00), failure.

Grade Reports. All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their summer grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known, the HELP Desk located in the Campus Technology Resource Center (CTRC) in O’Neill Library will issue a new one. The CTRC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver’s license or passport) to obtain your password.

Text(s)/Readings (Required)
Each student is required to obtain the Coursepack for this course, available at the BC bookstore. In addition, there will be assigned readings that include news articles, feature stories, speeches, poems, literary essays, narrative nonfiction, and advertising copy.
Text(s)/Readings (Recommended)
Because a good newspaper is a kind of daily textbook of the living language, we will occasionally use The Boston Globe and The New York Times for the purposes of classroom discussion.

Important Policies
http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html

Written Work
Graduate and undergraduate students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA, CLA format per instructors decision. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html].

Scholarship and Academic Integrity
It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student’s work.

Request for Accommodations
If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or AHD) or Dean Paulette Durrett, (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for students with disabilities, (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.
http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html.
Attendance
Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student’s obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the Summer Session Office at 617-552-3800 for consultation.

Deadlines
Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly.

Course Assignments (readings, exercises and/or experiences)
Tuesday, May 12
PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Introductions all around, followed by an overview of the course, and then a look at the nuts and bolts of how to organize and structure a news story and a feature story. We will examine how feature leads differ from hard-news leads, how a sturdy nut graph can help you get a fix on your story theme, how to craft a compelling kicker that casts a revealing backward light on the rest of the story, how to create transitions that make readers follow where you want to lead them, and how to use foreshadowing and other devices to give your writing some literary heft.

Thursday, May 14
TELL ME A STORY

The difference between a feature that is inert and a feature that comes fully alive often comes down to this: Does it tell the reader a story? Telling a story is seemingly the most natural thing in the world, yet it is something that even veteran writers struggle with. We will learn how to use narrative techniques to add power to your writing and tap into your inner storyteller. Our focus will be on longform stories such as takeouts, serials and magazine pieces. Readings: From the Coursepack, “Mrs. Kelly’s Monster,” by Jon Franklin; “At Mardi Gras, a Catch and Fleeting Ecstasy,” by Rick Bragg; and “Macabre Reminder: The Corpse on Union Street,” by Dan Barry.

Tuesday, May 19
READY FOR THEIR CLOSE-UP

Sketching a portrait of a person in words, whether that person is famous or obscure, is one of the most challenging but exciting tasks for a writer. We will discuss the art and the craft of the profile. Readings: “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold,” by Gay Talese; “Sinatra,” by Pete Hamill; “Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu,” by John Updike; “The Kid’s Last Game,” by Ed Linn; and “In High Gear,” “He Talks a Good Game,” and “One Woman’s War,” by Don Aucoin.

Thursday, May 21
LIGHTNING BUGS AND WORD DETECTIVES
Lecture topics: How to build an educated and active vocabulary of both "written English" and "spoken English" that will engage and stimulate your audience. How to master the art of making the right word choice so your vocabulary will have precision, strength and versatility. We will also discuss how to express ourselves with variety and clarity by using such techniques and devices as metaphor, the parallel structure, and the Rule of Three, and how to communicate effectively and descriptively with a vocabulary that is both classical and colloquial. Also: How to create comic or dramatic effects when needed in writing or speaking, and how to construct an artful transition that will build suspense in your audience. Readings: From the Coursepack, “Politics and the English Language,” by George Orwell; “Otherwise,” by Jane Kenyon; “The Red Wheelbarrow,” by William Carlos Williams; “Hungry Heart,” by Bruce Springsteen; and “Hummingbird,” by Jeff Tweedy.

Tuesday, May 26
EAT YOUR SPINACH

We will take a look at the issues of strategic communications and crisis communications. How does a major institution (a university, a hospital, a corporation) craft a communication strategy that will get its message out in an environment that is teeming with competing voices? Also, because grammar is the building block of expression, we will briefly revisit crucial issues of syntax, punctuation, and usage, in the context of using our new vocabulary most effectively.

Thursday, May 28
A MATTER OF STYLE

E.B. White wrote that style is "an expression of self." We will explore how to develop your own style of expression, one that communicates your point of view and your identity, and how to find your own voice as a writer and speaker without shortchanging the substance of your subject. But every writer knows this bleak truth: All writing is rewriting. As we explore the need for revision of what we write and what we say, we will also learn ways to arrange your material so that you minimize the need for revision. Readings: From the Coursepack, “The Crack-Up,” by F. Scott Fitzgerald.
Tuesday, June 2
SPEECH! SPEECH!

In a class on oral presentation, we will examine ways of directly connecting with your audience, and we will look at the pluses and minuses of working with and without a text. We will discover which words and phrases compel a listener's attention and which ones cause him or her to doze off. We will explore issues of articulation, volume, vocal projection, phrasing, and rhythm. Also: When to quote and whom to quote. Readings: From the Coursepack, Horace Greeley’s “The Prayer of the Twenty Millions” and “Lincoln’s Reply to Greeley.”

Thursday, June 4
FIRESIDE CHATS

The techniques of political expression are many, varied, and fascinating. We will examine the strategic word choices, idioms and rhetorical devices that have made political speechmaking a vital communication tool, from the days of Julius Caesar to Thomas Paine to Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama. Also: How op-ed columnists make their points forcefully and persuasively. Readings: From the Coursepack, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address in 1863, Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963, John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address in 1960, and major speeches by Winston Churchill, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and George H.W. Bush.

Tuesday, June 9
THE ART OF PERSUASION

Commercial speech, from the “Mad Men” era to today. Since the advertising industry is in the business of persuasion, we will explore what Madison Avenue and the marketing world have to teach us about techniques of precise expression. When, if ever, is slang appropriate in formal presentations? When does informal English go too far? Where should we draw the line in the war against sloppy language and cliche? As we explore a few answers to these questions, we will learn how to blast through the clutter of useless verbiage to find the words that matter, and how to utilize the power of analogies, synonyms, and figures of speech to build both vocabularies and expressiveness.
Thursday, June 11
THE STORY OF YOUR LIFE

The personal essay or personal narrative, when done well, uses individual experience to illuminate not just the personal experiences and inner life of the writer but also the wider world in which he or she operates. This form has increasingly taken center stage as the number of memoirs climbing the best-seller lists has increased. We will discuss the controversies surrounding some of these memoirs (such as “A Million Little Pieces”), and ask: When is the first-person approach the best way to communicate your message? Finally, we will review the most salient points of the course to ensure that we all have a comprehensive understanding of the techniques of precise expression, in all their forms. Readings: from the Coursepack, “After Life,” by Joan Didion, “A Sudden Illness,” by Laura Hillenbrand, “Do He Have Your Number, Mr. Jeffrey?”, by Gayle Pemberton; William Faulkner’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech; “The War at Home,” by Janet Wondra; and “Blindness,” by Jorge Luis Borges.

Tuesday, June 16
EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC

How to write reviews of film, theater, television, music and art in a way that is both accessible and authoritative. Readings: “Hollywood’s Information Man,” by Amy Wallace; “Space Case: Star Wars: Episode III,” by Anthony Lane; and “The Funniest Man on TV,” by Don Aucoin. Also: reviews by James Agee, Pauline Kael, Ty Burr, Garrison Keillor, and others.

Thursday, June 18
WHAT'S SO NEW ABOUT THE “NEW MEDIA”?

A look at the rise of online journalism, the growth of the blogosphere, and what it means for the craft of reporting. How is the burgeoning world of online journalism different from traditional print journalism? How is it the same? Is the blogosphere just a glorified grapevine, or does its decentralization of news and opinion represent a genuine step toward digital democracy? What skills are necessary to thrive in this brave new world? And finally, is in-depth news writing and feature writing possible in an online environment that seems to over-value clickbait? We will analyze a few of the better-known online publications and blogs, and compare them to the less well-known ones.
ASSIGNMENTS

1) Report and write a Scene Piece. Go somewhere off-campus and observe the activity for at least one hour, then write an 800-word descriptive piece that brings the reader there. It does not have to have a beginning-middle-and-end in narrative terms, but it should have a shape to it and not simply be a recording of disconnected moments. Describe the action, convey a sense of atmosphere and behavioral dynamics, include some dialogue, and be mindful of cause-and-effect. **To be assigned May 12, due May 19.**

2) Write an 800-word piece on the social structure of your high school. Strive for the neutrality of a sociologist. **To be assigned May 19, due May 21.**

3) Report and write a Trend Piece. Identify a social trend, preferably one that is just beginning to take hold rather than universally known, interview 5 or 6 people about it, and write an 800-word story. It can relate to politics, technology, fashion, food, sports, education, music, nightlife, language (a new slang term, for instance), exercise, culture, whatever you like. It can be trivial or serious, but ideally your story would not just describe the trend but would also capture a change in behavior or attitude that stems from the trend you've identified. **To be assigned May 21, due May 26.**

4) Write an 800-word review of a film, play, concert, CD, restaurant, art exhibit, or TV show. It must be new. **To be assigned May 26, due June 2.**

5) Write two opinion columns, 500 words apiece, on either side of a public-policy issue. As you marshal your arguments, strive to be equally persuasive from both viewpoints, so that a reader would not know where you really stand on the issue. **To be assigned June 2, due June 4.**

6) Create and present an advertising campaign for a product or service. The ad campaign should consist of 500 words of ad copy and strong visuals. Present the campaign in class, showing how it follows the precepts of advertising (objective, proposition, rationale, target audience) that were discussed in my lecture. **To be assigned June 4, due June 9.**

7) Write a Narrative about a journey that you took. Make the piece exactly 26 sentences long, and begin each sentence to begin with a letter of the alphabet,
proceeding sequentially through the alphabet. So the first word of your first sentence should start with an "A," the first word of your second sentence should start with a "B," and so on, all the way through to "Z." Two more crucial things: Each sentence must be at least 10 words long. And the piece should be written in the third person. To be assigned June 9, due June 11.

8) Write an 800-word Personal Essay about a relationship that has been significant in your life. It can be a positive or a negative relationship, past or present. It can be a relationship with a parent, a grandparent, a sibling, a romantic partner, a coworker, a coach, a teammate, a roommate, your barber or hairdresser, the counter guy at the local deli, your doctor, your dentist, whomever you like. Explore the relationship in all its dimensions and try to figure out what it means to you. It would be best if it's a relationship of some depth and longevity, one that has had some bearing on your life, one way or another. To be assigned June 11, due June 16.

9) Write and deliver a 600-word speech as if you are a candidate for president of the United States. Fuse biography to policy by explaining what in your background has uniquely prepared you to confront the nation’s problems, focusing on one or two issues in particular. Be as specific as possible in connecting elements of your life history to the issues you wish to tackle, and try to have at least one “soundbite” that is catchy enough for the evening TV news. To be assigned June 16, due June 18.