

# Writing Strategies

MMC-3104 – Fall '14

**ACII/258 Section B52**

**Monday - Wednesday, 3 – 5 p.m.**

**Professor Neil Reisner**

**Office:** AC2/313

**Office hours:** Monday, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., or by appointment

**Phone:** 305-919-5677

**E-mail:** neil.reisner@fiu.edu

**Website:** www.neilreisner.com

**Prerequisites:** Students must score 70 on the Language Skills Test and submit a writing sample for approval before enrolling in this class.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Writing Strategies teaches clean, effective writing through non-fiction narratives and other storytelling tools

## REQUIRED TEXTS

- The Associated Press Stylebook 2013, The Associated Press, ISBN: 0465082998
- The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need, Adams Media, ISBN: 1580628559

In addition to using these texts, you will receive in-class handouts and other assigned readings. You should also familiarize yourself with the grammar web sites you'll find on the SJMC website's link to "Grammar Exam Support."

## RECOMMENDED TEXT

- Writing Tools – 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer, Roy Peter Clark, Little Brown, 2006, ISBN: 0316014990

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To help students understand that writing is as much skill as it is art, and that good writing can be learned if you work at it.
- To help students develop a passion for reading, and a passion for writing, as well as a passion for their future career, whether in journalism, television, public relations or advertising.
- To help students discover their unique writing talents.
- To encourage critical thinking in narrative, non-fiction writing.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will know how to write clearly and coherently in the manner recommended by Strunk & White, Roy Peter Clark and other teachers and critics.
- Students will know the principles of grammar and how to apply them.
- Students will be fluent in Associated Press style.

## COURSE STRUCTURE

We'll learn by writing, editing and discussing. You can expect to have at least one writing and/or editing assignment every week. We'll start with non-fiction narratives, and move on to such writing styles as journalism articles, business letters and memos, press releases and the like.

We'll also spend time discussing and dissecting one another's work, looking at examples of good writing and ripping apart bad examples. What you'll come to understand is that good writing is good writing, no matter the venue or field.

All assignments should be two pages, double-spaced. Please leave the top half of the first page blank for comments. Graded papers will generally be returned within a week.

You will be given a firm deadline for each assignment. If you cannot attend the class at which a paper is due, that paper must somehow find its way into your instructor's mailbox by the start of the class period. Late papers will not be accepted unless your excuse deserves serious consideration. Papers not turned in by the deadline receive an "F" grade. Fiction is not acceptable, nor is poetry. Plagiarism results in an automatic "F" for the course.

It is your responsibility to keep all assignments as a portfolio, either as hard copy or on a thumb drive. The entire portfolio must be available to your instructor on request.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

You are required to attend class and arrive on time. Late arrivals will be noted and may affect final grades. Anyone with three or more absences will see their grade sharply decline. Some absences may be excused. It is a student's responsibility to contact the instructor within one business day of an absence in order to discuss it. It is also the student's responsibility to get the course notes, handouts or assignments, should you miss class or be late.

**EXAMS**

Students enrolled in this class must sit for the Language Skills Exam at a date and time to be announced. Students will also sit for three Associated Press style exams during the semester.

Except in the most extraordinary circumstances, students who miss a scheduled AP style test will lose the opportunity to take that test.

In instances where the student is incapacitated (e.g., hospitalization) and can prove it through medical documentation, you may be able to make up an exam. If you are incapacitated for longer than a week, you must discuss your situation with your professor.

**NO LATECOMERS WILL BE ALLOWED TO TAKE THE FINAL EXAM.**

No "make-up exams" will be given after the last regularly scheduled administration of the final exam.

**GRADING**

Your final grade in the course will be computed as follows:

Assignments (including papers, quizzes and presentations)	70 percent
Grammar test	20 percent
Attendance/class participation	10 percent

The Grading Scale is as follows:

A	92-100	B	82-86	C	70-76
A-	89-91	B-	79-81	D	66-69
B+	87-88	C+	77-78	F	Below 65

Mass Communication majors must earn a "C" or better in this required course. While the university gives credit for passing grades below "C," the School of Journalism and Mass Communication requires its majors to retake the course if they receive a grade of "C-minus" or less.

Mass communication students who fail to earn a "C" or better in MMC 3104 will not be allowed to register for any course for which MMC 3104 is a prerequisite.

### **Computer Use**

It should go without saying that students are expected to treat all hardware and software in the labs with care. Anyone who intentionally damages the equipment will be ejected from the course. Knowingly infecting a computer with a virus, destroying or tampering with programming, duplicating software, snooping through files other than your own can result in university disciplinary action and criminal prosecution.

### **Academic Honesty**

Florida International University outlines academic misconduct as follows:

*Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.*

*Misconduct includes: Cheating – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. Plagiarism – The use and appropriation of another's work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student's own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.*

Any student who fails to meet these expectations will not only fail the course, but will be reported to the chair of the Department of Journalism & Broadcasting, to the dean of SJMC and to administrators of the University's disciplinary procedures.