

CAP Journalism

Syllabus

COURSE OVERVIEW

This year we will learn basic journalism skills in the following areas: editorial, news and feature writing; gathering and reporting news; photo, video and radio/podcast creation; interviewing and note-taking techniques; and copy editing. Students will study the ethics of reporting and the rights and responsibilities of the press. We will engage with the news, analyzing coverage and thinking critically about the role a free press plays in a democracy.

Students will manage an online news outlet with supervision-- publishing real stories about Montgomery County and the DMV. They will peer-edit, manage social media platforms, utilize SEI (search engine optimization), dabble in web design and gain real hands-on experience in a digital newsroom.

Students will be encouraged to think outside of their political comfort zones and challenge existing mindsets as they learn about free speech within the uniquely varied American media landscape.

ASSIGNMENTS

All work is to be typed, double-spaced using classic fonts (Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, etc) in **AP Style**. In an effort to be as paperless a class as possible, the majority of work will be submitted digitally using Google Classroom or students' personal blogs. Assignments should be free of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors, particularly final drafts. Specific criteria will be outlined on each assignment's rubric.

GRADING

All assignments are important and should be taken seriously, regardless of their point value. Expectations for individual assignments will be explained in class, and all points issued are final. Learning how to handle constructive criticism is an important step in becoming a good writer.

Grading key:

A=publishable quality
B=publishable with editing
C=substantial editing needed
D=marginal quality
E=unacceptable

RULES AND GUIDELINES

Students must meet ALL deadlines. If a deadline is missed, it cannot be accepted for any credit. You are responsible for your success in this class. Computer or printer/ink problems are NOT valid excuses for late work.

In a real newsroom, a missed deadline means you're fired. As this class prepares students for work on one of Blair's distinguished and competitively-staffed publications, emphasis on meeting deadlines begins now.

Any work submitted after deadline will receive a grade of 0.

ATTENDANCE

The most successful students have exemplary attendance records. You should make every effort to be in class every day, on time and ready to learn.

You are responsible for meeting deadlines regardless of absences. If you know you will be absent on a due date or deadline, make plans to have your work submitted in advance.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

My email is helen_lyons@mcpsmd.org. If at any time you don't understand or need help, please ask. The fastest way to reach me outside of school hours is via Twitter DM @lyons_hallie. I'm usually in Room 158 during lunch.

THE FINE PRINT

Journalism is a profession that engenders passion, debate and criticism. Leave your Oxford commas behind but bring your opinions to class and share them openly, and honor your classmates' right to do the same-- regardless of whether or not your beliefs align.

Remember you are here to learn. CAP is hard, but you earned your placement in the program and you are an important part of this community.

Accept that you will make mistakes and hold yourself accountable for them.

Trust, but verify. When a classmate tells you something about an assignment, make sure they are giving you the right information before moving forward.

Keep up with current events from both left-leaning and right-leaning news sources in addition to neutral ones. Understand where people get the information that forms their opinions. Know what that information is.

Do your best and take pride in your work.

Ask questions, no matter how stupid you think they are (they aren't).

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

I've been a journalist since winning the Reporter Award in PreK at the age of three (technically for excessive tattling, but that's beside the point). I started the clip-art-heavy publications at my elementary and middle schools before joining my high school's broadcast station as the weather girl and then an anchor. In college, I studied International Relations and Foreign Languages while writing for the university paper. After graduating, I handled the press lines in English, French and Spanish at the International Monetary Fund/World Bank for the North American Region. I received my Journalism MA at UMD and spent some time in broadcast before moving to print and online media as a freelancer.

I currently work part-time at Blair, teaching this journalism class in the mornings and then working as a regular contributor for both DCist and The Daily Caller in the afternoons. My awards include: Robert F. Kennedy Award for Excellence in Journalism; Society of Professional Journalists' Region 2 Mark of Excellence Award; Scripps Howard Award Finalist.

COURSE OUTLINE

Unit 1. Introduction to Media Bias

Essential Question 1.1: How do institutions like legacy papers strengthen or weaken individual reporting?

Unit 2: The Code of Ethics

Essential Question 1.2: Does a journalist have to be part of a culture in order to provide an authentic perspective of that culture?

Unit 3: Multimedia News and Editorials

Essential Question 1.3: What stylistic techniques are most effective in accomplishing a reporter's goals?

Unit 4: Features

Essential Question 2.1: Why is the human condition significant when reporting the news? Which aspects of the human condition are most impactful?

Unit 5: The MPIO and FOIA (Public Information)

Essential Question 2.2: How does a knowledge of the past provide opportunity for change?

Unit 6: Running an Online News Outlet

Essential Question 2.3: How can skills and processes be combined across disciplines to produce an organized, sophisticated, well-edited final product?