

COMM 2311 – News Writing

Spring 2026

Class Information

Room: CM 156 | Levelland

Meeting Time: Mondays & Wednesdays, 9 – 10:45 a.m.

Instructor Information

Kati Moody | CM 158

Email: kmood@southplainscollege.edu

The best way to reach me is via email. You may also request an appointment to meet in person or online during office hours. Please email in advance to ensure availability. Allow up to 24 hours for a response. Emails sent over the weekend may be returned the following business day.

Office Hours

- **Tuesday/Thursday:** 9 a.m. – noon
 - **Friday:** 9 a.m. – noon
 - **Also available by appointment**, in person or online
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Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define news and journalism
 - Identify newsworthiness
 - Apply AP Style
 - Write using the inverted pyramid
 - Identify and vet sources
 - Conduct and transcribe interviews
 - Demonstrate objectivity, transparency, and credibility
 - Apply fact-checking techniques
 - Understand news distribution channels
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Class Description

This course teaches the difference between news and information, how to report news, how journalism ethics apply to reporting, the distinction between hard news and soft news, and how news is distributed through traditional and digital platforms.

Attendance

This is an in-person course and attendance is mandatory. Participation grades are based on attendance and active engagement in class discussions and activities.

Access & Technology

Students are required to access Blackboard regularly to complete discussions and assignments. Reliable internet access and a computer or smartphone are necessary.

Grades

- Classwork/Discussions: 250 points
 - Writing Assignments: 400 points
 - Final Project: 200 points
 - Attendance & Participation: 150 points
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Course Schedule

The course is organized by instructional week. News writing is a skill that develops through practice, so concepts introduced early in the semester will continue to be used throughout the course. Students should expect to report, interview, transcribe, write, revise, and edit regularly. Complete assignment instructions, deadlines, and submission links will be posted in Blackboard.

Week	Topic/Concept	Major Work
Week 1	What Is News? Course expectations, the reporting process, verification, accuracy, attribution, quotes, AP Style, and the difference between information and journalism	Begin first class reporting assignment
Week 2	News Values and Types of News How journalists determine what is newsworthy; hard news, soft news, breaking news, features, profiles, and other common story types	Complete first reporting/writing assignment
Week 3	Writing Leads Identifying the most important information, writing summary leads, avoiding unnecessary information, and introducing the inverted pyramid	Reporting and lead-writing practice
Week 4	Building the News Story Inverted pyramid structure, paragraphs, transitions, context, attribution, and organizing information for readers	News writing assignment
Week 5	Interviewing and Asking Better Questions Preparing for interviews, identifying appropriate sources, writing effective questions, listening, follow-up questions, and professional source communication	Interview and transcript assignment
Week 6	Quotes, Attribution, and Paraphrasing Selecting useful quotes, introducing sources, paraphrasing accurately, and deciding when direct quotation adds value	News writing assignment using original interviews
Week 7	Accuracy, Verification, and Fairness Fact-checking, confirming information, correcting mistakes, recognizing assumptions, and representing sources responsibly	Verification and revision exercise

Week	Topic/Concept	Major Work
Week 8	Putting the Basics Together Applying news values, reporting, interviewing, leads, structure, attribution, quotes, AP Style, and verification to a complete news story	Midsemester reporting/writing assignment
Week 9	Covering Events, Speeches, and Meetings Identifying the real story within an event, gathering information efficiently, finding sources beyond the official speaker, and avoiding chronological summaries	Event, meeting, or speech story
Week 10	Finding the Story Behind the Announcement Moving beyond press releases, social media posts, and official statements by asking what changed, who is affected, and what still needs to be verified	Reporting assignment based on an announcement or developing issue
Week 11	Profiles and Feature Writing Using observation, interviews, detail, storytelling, and structure while maintaining journalistic accuracy	Profile or feature assignment
Week 12	Public Information and Records Finding information through public documents, reports, agendas, data, and other records; using documents to strengthen reporting	Public-information reporting exercise
Week 13	Ethics, Bias, and Responsible Reporting Fairness, independence, conflicts of interest, source relationships, misinformation, AI-generated content, and ethical decisions journalists face while reporting	Ethics and reporting application
Week 14	Thanksgiving Week / Reporting and Revision No new major lecture material. Students may use this period to report, revise previous work, and prepare final stories.	Reporting and revision
Week 15	Writing for Today's News Audience Headlines, web presentation, social media, audience needs, updating developing stories, and adapting strong reporting across platforms	Final reporting/writing assignment
Week 16	Revision, Reflection, and Final Assessment Reviewing the semester's reporting process, evaluating growth as a writer, correcting recurring problems, and preparing work for future journalism courses or portfolios	Final assessment and/or final revisions

Schedule Note: This schedule may be adjusted based on class progress, reporting opportunities, campus events, breaking news, or unexpected closures. Because journalism responds to events happening in the real world, some assignments or topics may shift during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and posted in Blackboard.

Required Institutional Syllabus Statements 2025-2026

Intellectual Exchange Statement

In South Plains College courses, the instructor will establish and support an environment that values and nurtures individual and group difference and encourages engagement and interaction. Understanding and respecting multiple experiences and perspectives will serve to challenge and stimulate all of us to learn about others, about the larger world and about ourselves. By promoting intellectual exchange, we will not only mirror society as it is, but also model society as it should and can be.

Disabilities Statement

Students with disabilities, including but not limited to physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations should notify the Disability Services Office early in the semester so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodations must provide acceptable documentation of the individual's disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, call or visit the Disability Services Office at Levelland (Student Health & Wellness Office) 806-716-2577, Lubbock Centers (located at the Lubbock Downtown Center) 806-716-4675, or Plainview Center (Main Office) 806-716-4302.

Non-Discrimination Statement

South Plains College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Vice President for Student Affairs, South Plains College, 1401 College Avenue, Box 5, Levelland, TX 79336. Phone number 806-716-2360.

Title IX Pregnancy and Parenting Accommodations Statement (Rev. 6/11/2024)

If you are pregnant or parenting (paternal or maternal) with children under the age of 18 per [Texas Education Code 51.982](#) and Title IX you have a right to reasonable accommodations to help continue your education. To activate accommodations you must submit a [Title IX pregnancy and parenting accommodations request](#), along with specific medical documentation, to the Health and Wellness Center. Once approved, notification will be sent to the student and instructors. It is the student's responsibility to work with the instructor to arrange accommodations. Contact the Health and Wellness Center at 806-716-2529 or email rcanon@southplainscollege.edu for assistance.

CARE (Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation) Team

South Plains College is committed to ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of its students and community. To support its campus community SPC has a CARE Team. This is a dedicated group of campus professionals responsible for assessing and responding to students who could benefit from academic, emotional, or psychological support, as well as those presenting risk to the health or safety of the community. If you see someone experiencing challenges, appearing distressed, posing a threat to their safety or someone else's safety, or causing a significant disruption to the SPC community, please submit a [CARE Team referral](#). You may also submit a

referral for yourself if you would like additional support. NOTE: In cases where a person's behavior poses an imminent threat to you or another, contact 911.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Government Code 411.2031, et al. authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in South Plains College buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and South Plains College policy, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations and Frequently Asked Questions, please refer to the Campus Carry page

at: <http://www.southplainscollege.edu/campuscarry.php>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all South Plains College campuses. Report violations to the College Police Department at 806-716-2396 or 9-1-1.

COVID-19 (Rev. 9/12/2025)

If you are experiencing any of the following symptoms, please do not attend class and either seek medical attention or get tested for COVID-19.

- Fever or chills
- Cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Muscles or body aches
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Nausea or Vomiting
- Diarrhea

Please also notify DeEtte Edens, FNP-C, Associate Director of Health & Wellness, at dedens@southplainscollege.edu or 806-716-2376

1. SPC will follow the recommended 3-day isolation period for individuals that test positive.
 - a. **Please note that day 0 is the date of positive test. Day 1 begins the first full day after the date of positive result.**
2. COVID reporting
 - a. Please have students and employees notify DeEtte Edens, FNP-C if they have tested positive to verify dates before returning to class or work.
 - b. The home tests are sufficient but students need to submit a photo of the positive result. The date of test must be written on the test result and an ID included in the photo. If tested elsewhere (clinic, pharmacy, etc.), please submit a copy of the doctor's note or email notification. Results may be emailed to DeEtte Edens, FNP-C at dedens@southplainscollege.edu.
 - c. A student is clear to return to class without further assessment if they have completed:
 - The 3-day isolation period, symptoms have improved and

- they are afebrile for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- d. HEATH SCIENCE PROGRAMS ONLY: Due to clinical requirements, students in health science programs returning to class or clinical from a positive test will be required to wear a mask in the health sciences areas including offices, hallways, and classrooms, as well as in the clinical setting for a 10-day period from date of positive test.
- 3. Please instruct students and employees to communicate with DeEtte Edens prior to their return date if still symptomatic at the end of the 3-day isolation.
- 4. Exposed individuals will not be required to quarantine. If exposed, SPC does request individuals closely monitor themselves. If an individual does become symptomatic, please do not attend class or work and be tested.

Student Identification Verification Pictures (added 12/3/2025)

EFFECTIVE SPRING 2026: In order to comply with institutional identity-verification procedures, students enrolled in courses at South Plains College must have a current photo available in the College's student information system. Approved photos are used solely for instructional, advising, and security purposes and are protected under applicable privacy laws. Students without a photo on file must update their record during the first week of class. Pictures may be uploaded using these [instructions](#).

Artificial Intelligence Statement

• Purpose of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Applications:

AI applications are advanced language models designed to aid and engage in meaningful conversations, as well as, generate and revise content. AI is intended to supplement learning, stimulate critical thinking, and enhance academic discourse. However, its use comes with certain responsibilities.

• Academic Integrity:

Using AI to generate academic work, including essays, reports, or assignments, without proper attribution is a violation of SPC academic integrity policies. Plagiarism undermines the learning process and is strictly prohibited. Students must ensure that their work reflects their own ideas, research, synthesis, and analysis and appropriately cites all sources, including AI.

• Collaboration and Consultation:

While AI can be a valuable resource, it is essential to strike a balance between seeking assistance and maintaining personal responsibility. Collaboration with peers, consulting instructors, and utilizing other approved learning resources should be prioritized. Overreliance on AI for solutions without actively engaging in the learning process is discouraged and can be grounds for academic integrity violations. Utilizing AI as a tool for brainstorming or research is allowed but the writing should be the student's own work and thoughts.

• Critical Thinking and Originality:

AI usage can provide suggestions and information, but it is essential to critically evaluate the responses and exercise independent thought. Relying solely on AI for answers deprives students of the opportunity to develop their analytical and problem-solving skills. In assignments where originality, creativity, and independent thinking are valued, AI would be detrimental to the student learning process. Critical thinking and originality emphasize the importance of independent thinking in all academic endeavors as part of the student's learning experience apart

from outside influence and offers the student the opportunity to refine their unique, individual voice through academic discourse with other students and faculty.

• **Ethical Use and Bias Awareness:**

AI is trained on large amounts of data from the internet, which may include biased or inaccurate information. Be mindful of the potential for bias and critically evaluate the responses provided by AI. Therefore, when using AI, just like with using any other database, students must verify that the information is from reliable sources, question any potential biases, and ensure that the information and sources used in the paper are neutral, peer-reviewed sources.

• **Responsible Engagement:**

Students should engage with AI in a respectful and responsible manner and avoid using offensive language, discriminatory remarks, or engaging in any form of harassment or inappropriate behavior. Students should also uphold the standards of respectful communication in addressing both AI and fellow classmates.

• **Compliance with South Plains College Policies:**

Policies regarding the appropriate use of AI in South Plains College courses are set by instructional departments and individual instructors. Appropriate use of AI may range from strict prohibition to assignments they may require the use of AI. Misusing or violating the guidelines outlined in this syllabus warning may result in disciplinary action, including academic penalties. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the specific course policies regarding the use of AI and adhere to them throughout the semester.

Remember, AI can be a tool to support your learning in certain courses and assignments, but it cannot replace the critical thinking, creativity, and independent work that are integral to your overall academic growth.