

# **Opinion and Column Writing**

JOURN 514

Summer 2008

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 5:45-- 9:00 p.m.  
July 22-August 26, 2008

Professor: Joe Cappo  
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Office Hours: 4:30-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, by appointment.

Required reading:

- 1) "The Art of Column Writing," Suzette Martinez Standring, Marion Street Press, 2007
- 2) "How to Lie with Statistics," Darrell Huff, W.W. Norton, 1993
- 3) Journalism 514 CoursePack (XanEdu)

## **Course description:**

This is an advanced journalism practicum in which students will study various forms of opinion writing: personal columns, editorials, social commentary, critical reviews, letters to the editor and other forms of personal expression. This is as much an exploration of critical thinking as it is of writing, so there will also be emphasis on aspects of philosophy, logic and argumentation. In addition to the expression of opinion in print, we will also explore all traditional and contemporary media including broadcast and online. A class blog will be launched in order to expose the best of the student work during the class.

There will be a considerable amount of writing in this course, including some that will be done on realistic deadlines of today's media. However, there will be no traditional midterm or final exam.

Students should expect to increase their understanding of the role of opinion in journalism, learn the ethical boundaries of opinion writing and start to develop his or her "voice" in writing.

The instructor will invite various professional columnists and opinion writers to share their experiences with the class.

Please visit the "Resources" section of the class blog for links related to the class.

### **Grades:**

Students should be aware that the final grades for this class will be assigned based on the following formula:

Class participation: 20%

Final Writing assignment: 20%

Six Writing assignments: 60%

There may be opportunities to earn extra credit for additional writing exercises.

### **Class standards:**

Students are expected to fulfill all of the academic obligations including: attendance in class, completion of assignments, participation in discussions and fulfillment of reading and writing assignments. Grades will be marked down proportionately for missed classes and assignments. Class discussions and lectures may not be tape-recorded.

### **Written assignments:**

All written work must be original. Although it is appropriate to quote from other sources in written assignments, plagiarism will not be accepted and may result in a failing grade. Sources must be quoted by name and context. Assignments turned in late will be subject to a reduction in grade as determined by the professor. All assignments must be typed, double-spaced and in at least 12-point type. Refrain from using exotic typefaces or large blocks of italics. Assignments must be submitted electronically or on paper at the discretion of the instructor.

### **Submitting work:**

Assignments should be submitted by e-mail as an attachment to [jcappo@ameritech.net](mailto:jcappo@ameritech.net). Assignments should be in Word (.doc) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf). (Documents created in Word 2007/08 must be saved as .doc files or as RTF rather than the default .docx format.) Please use your

last name, first initial and a key word when naming your papers. Include "Journalism 514" and your last name in the subject line of your e-mail. Your paper should be submitted as an attachment.

**Midterm and final exams:**

There will be no traditional midterm or final exam. Instead, a final writing assignment will be given at the time of the 11<sup>th</sup> class (August 26). Completion of this assignment in the time allotted is mandatory. If a student is incapacitated by a medical emergency or other medical condition, it must be documented by a physician, and a makeup assignment will be arranged. There will be no midterm exam.

**Software requirements:**

Students must have access to a computer with an up-to-date browser (i.e. Firefox or Internet Explorer) and an Internet connection. Assignments must be in .doc or .rtf format, so students must have access to Microsoft Word, OpenOffice Writer, or a similar word processor.

If you do not own Microsoft Word, you can purchase it at a discount at E-academy website (<http://elms09.e-academy.com/depaul>) or [www.CampusEstore.com](http://www.CampusEstore.com).

As a part of this class, students will be posting to a collective blog hosted on Edublogs (<http://www.edublogs.org>). Edublogs is an ad-free blogging service specifically designed for teachers, students, administrators, and others in academia.

**Writing Center**

The Center for Writing offers in-person and online assistance for DePaul students, faculty and staff at any stage in the writing process, from initial planning to final revisions. Although writers are encouraged to schedule appointments in advance---either online, in-person, or by phone---walk-in appointments are also available. For more information, visit <http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/index.html>.

**Sexual harassment:**

All members of the academic community should take steps to create an environment where sexual harassment does not occur. DePaul's policy as specified on the Sexual Harassment Policy Office website (<http://condor.depaul.edu/~harass/>) will be enforced.

**Academic integrity:**

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society and to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If an instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

**Disability accommodations:**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.