



UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK IN PRAGUE

Course: News/Media Writing

Semester: Dec. 29 to Jan. 13

Instructor: James Gomez

Contact: +420 602 277 957

Class Time: 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday

Office hours: By appointment

1 Catalogue description:

The purpose of this course is to give students the skills for, and practice in, reporting and writing news articles and features and understanding the different styles across the media landscape. The practical experience of researching and writing about real-life news events will be set in the larger context of the nature, structure, and function of media.

2 Course purpose:

Students will be given an introduction and basic theory about the basic best practices of news writing in its many forms, starting with breaking news style and branching out to features, travel writing, food writing and sports. News and feature stories should be suitable for publication on student blogs with articles that inform about Prague. Students will receive hands-on advice and mentoring at each stage of story development – from generating ideas to researching, reporting, and writing/structuring their articles. The class will also include deadlines and the editing process.

The first week, presented online, will be based on theory of writing style, grammar and story construction, as well as issues of fairness, objectivity and balance. An overview of the different genres of media writing will be included, with a test at the end of the first week on what has been learned so far.

The second and third weeks will focus more on selecting stories, reporting and editing. There will be an emphasis on the “news meeting,” a practice that helps editors and writers sharpen and expand on story ideas. The stories will be based on “field trips” to be announced around the city, where they will be instructed on how to collect facts, quotes and anecdotes and produced in a timely manner. Students’ articles will be assessed based on how well they satisfy basic news elements (such as timeliness, impact/consequence, oddity/rarity, human interest, conflict, prominence) and the target audience (local or global).

Required readings (all are available free of charge in PDF form):

1) Feature writing: a Practical Introduction

<https://www.perlego.com/book/860573/feature-writing-a-practical-introduction?queryID=07c0f6b67e4293c0824ece0ee938a2ce&index=prod BOOKS&gridPosition=1&searchType=title>

2) Newswriting by Anna McKane

https://perlego.com/book/1431488/news-writing-pdf/?utm_medium=share&utm_source=perlego&utm_campaign=share-book

3) Travel, Writing and the Media

Contemporary and Historical Perspectives by

<https://www.perlego.com/book/3225027/travel-writing-and-the-media-contemporary-and-historical-perspectives?queryID=016a2751ad98e11135a42355071e8225&index=prod BOOKS&gridPosition=10&searchType=title>

4. Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to demonstrate:

Specialist knowledge:

- define the different kind of media stories and when to apply them
- demonstrate understanding of differences in styles and when to apply them
- outline basic characteristics of ethical guidelines journalists should apply
- characterize differences in how media organizations produce news

Specialist skills:

- write effective and engaging introductions to stories, such as classic as ledes or anecdotes
- gather information needed to formulate a comprehensive news story
- identify sources for information and use the information accordingly
- produce error-free news stories under tight deadlines
- critically assess the impact of news stories on society

5. Course Schedule (subject to revision. **At the beginning of each class session, students will discuss the top news of the day**)

First Week

- Day 1- a. Introduction/What is a news story/What is the role of the newsroom. (See required reading)
 b. Story Structure/lede writing/sourcing
- Day 2- a Mechanics of News Writing
 b. Identifying breaking news stories and other forms of journalism (See required reading)
 c. Online research
- Day 3- a. Stylebooks and Interviewing techniques
 b. Introduction to travel writing (see required reading)
- Day 4- a. New Year Break
- Day 5- a. Field Reporting, feature writing and **test** on theory and practices
 b. Ledes writing drill

Second Week

- Day 1- Continue lede writing drills and then take part in two press conferences (**for grade**)
- Day 2- a. Visit by Lonely Planet Writer and Prague blogger Mark Baker

- b. Prepare for Tuesday site visit. What's at issue, what to focus on. Practice interviewing
- Day 3- a. Field trip to central Prague/castle to learn/practice reporting skills for travel story
- Day 4- a. Visit to Radio Free Europe for tour
- Day 5- a. Turn in travel story **for grade**
- b. Broadcast newswriting. Assign reels

Third Week

- Day 1- a. Go on Secret Food Tour. Turn in reels (**graded as part of participation segment**)
- Day 2- a. Discussion on what elements make for good food reviewing
- Day 3- Turn in restaurant reviews **for grade** and discuss if they hit the mark. End of Class

6. Course Requirements and Grading:

Evaluation:

- Grading:

Evaluation Task	Value	Due Date
Engagement (reel)	20 %	Per class
Gen Theory test	20%	End of Week 1
Press conferences	20%	Day 1, Week 2
Travel story	20%	End of Week 2
Restaurant review	20%	End of Week 3

Course Requirements:

- Deadlines: Unless otherwise stated, assignments must be submitted as a Microsoft word document (or in a compatible form) via email to jgomez@unyp.cz
- Missed deadlines: Late work will be accepted — but marked down a full grade for each day it is overdue (i.e., if submitted more than 24 hours late, the best possible grade is a “B”; if more than four days late, the grade is an automatic “F.”)
- Costs: Food tour is 79 euros per person. Minimum entry fee to Zlute Lazne

Grading scale

Letter Grade	Percent (%)	Generally Accepted Meaning	Notes
A	95-100	Outstanding work	x
A-	90-94		x
B+	87-89	Good work, distinctly above the average	x
B	83-86		x
B-	80-82		x
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work	x
C	73-76		x
C-	70-72		x
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average	Credits for the course will not transfer to ESC
D	63-66		Credits for the course will not transfer to ESC
D-	60-62		Credits for the course will not transfer to ESC
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course	No credits awarded

Key UNYP Policies

Attendance / Classroom rules:

UNYP policy: ***Absence*** from 4 or more scheduled meetings results in a failing grade (“F”). In the event of illness / extenuating circumstances, appeal to the Registrar’s Office; the lecturer takes attendance but does not collect doctors’ notes. **Unexcused absences result in an “F” for the day’s in-class work.**

Academic Honesty

Automatic failure or discipline in accordance with university rules will also result for 1) cheating (including plagiarism) and 2) falsely representing information, such as sources or interviewees.