

H/SS Elective Introduction to Journalism and Nonfiction

Course Syllabus

Course Information

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor: Dr Mathew Evans
Email: mathew.evans@scupi.cn
Office: New SCUPI Building, N425
Tel (Main Office): 28-6259-6919
Office Hours:
Thursday – 9:00 am to 12:00 and 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
and by appointment

Room: South Campus
Room S104

Prerequisites: ENGCMP 152

Required Text

All readings will be made available as PDF files in the class's Blackboard website (<https://pibb.scu.edu.cn>) under the "Content" tab.

Course Description

This course is designed to develop your skills as a nonfiction writer. Through a combination of required readings, creative exercises, peer critiques and critical discussions, you will develop an understanding of the fundamentals of journalism as well as an introduction to the wide-ranging possibilities of nonfiction writing as a genre: narrative long form, the personal essay, immersion journalism and forms of creative nonfiction. This class will be divided into two components; gathering information and shaping stories.

Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to perform the following:

- Develop the ability to write clear, concise, accurate and interesting news stories
- Demonstrate basic skills and techniques in news gathering
- Judge the newsworthiness of events and ideas and analyze stories for content, form and style
- employ critical reading and listening strategies in academic situations and provide appropriate responses through oral, written, visual, and electronic communication
- understand and employ rhetorical concepts necessary for sound academic reasoning and argumentation

Assignments and Evaluation

Below is a breakdown of the course's assignments and grading scale. There will be a detailed prompt for each unit's assignments and project with instructions about content, format, and submission procedures. Unless discussed with the instructor previously, late assignments will **not** be accepted, and the failure to complete your work will result in a failing grade.

Each **unexcused** absence will bear a penalty of half a letter grade (e.g., from a B to a B- or from a B- to a C+). For each part of a class period missed, a student will receive a deduction of half the point value of a full absence. More than three absences will result in a failing grade

for the semester. If you are feeling unwell or need to miss a class, inform the instructor ahead of time by email.

The final grade will be greatly affected by students' attendance and participation. Participation will be assessed holistically throughout the semester. Late attendance, use of electronic devices and AI tools without the instructor's permission, non-participation in the online/in-class activities will all be negatively reflected in your grades.

In-class activities include group work, discussions, and Blackboard forum posts (BB)/ blog; Instructions will be provided in class	35%
Foundations of journalism and nonfiction quizzes	10%
Writing Projects 1 – 3 (Each worth 15%)	45%
Attendance and participation	10%
Total	100%

Creative projects and Collaborative Transmedia Storytelling Project

Students will complete three creative projects which include a fan fiction short story, interactive fiction, and roleplay scenario for an existing game system. The Collaborative Transmedia Storytelling Project will be an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned about transmedia storytelling to tell a single story through multiple mediums. This is a group project with each student contributing to the overall work which must be available for use by the public online.

Schedule (subject to change according to the instructor's discretion)

Lesson/ Week	Topic	Due
1 3-13	Introductions - What is journalism and nonfiction?	
2 3-20	Fundamentals of journalism; descriptions	Worksheet 1
3 3-27	Writing news story; inverted pyramid; start writing project 1	Worksheet 2
4 4-3	StoryCorps; background research	Worksheet 3 quiz 1
5 4-10	IP and AI tools; peer editing	rough draft writing project 1
6 4-17	Digital storytelling	Worksheet 4
7 4-24	Presentations	final draft writing project 1
8 5-1	Memoir writing; start writing project 2	

9 5-8	Events and plot	writing project premise and outline
10 5-15	Writing scenes	Worksheet 5
11 5-22	Story flow	rough draft writing project 2 quiz 2
12 5-29	Feature story writing; start writing project 3	final draft writing project 2
13 6-5	Collecting sources and synthesizing information	Worksheet 6
14 6-12	peer editing; special topics	rough draft
15 6-19	Multimedia storytelling	
16 6-26	Presentations	final draft of writing project 3

Use of Machine Translation and Other Online Tools

While students are encouraged to use dictionaries and other language resources, they should not rely on machine translators or other AI tools to generate large sections of text. Papers must be written in English. Any paper that is written in Chinese and then processed through an online translator will be considered unacceptable.

A Note Concerning Plagiarism: The class adopts a zero-tolerance policy towards plagiarism. You should never copy the words of another and present those words as your own work. All sources cited must be acknowledged. You must not get help from any outside sources to do your work without the teacher's permission. The penalty for plagiarism is failing the class.

If an instructor believes that a paper was written using machine translation or other AI tools, the instructor reserves the right to ask the student to re-write (potentially with a different topic) or give an alternative assignment, which may include a timed-writing essay assignment. Until the re-write is submitted the student will have an F for the assignment.

Student Use of Electronic Technology Policy:

Students must use electronic technology (including cell phones, laptops, tablets, and iPads) in appropriate ways during classes. Out of respect, cell phones should generally be turned off or on silent and stored out of sight. They should not be used during classroom activities unless the instructor has given permission. Electronic devices are forbidden during quizzes, tests or other in-class graded assignments, unless the instructor has given permission.

Technology use in this class is meant to improve the learning environment for all students. Please be respectful of your instructor and classmates and use the technology appropriately. If you have questions about what this means, please talk to your individual instructor.

Recording:

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may NOT record classroom lectures, discussions, and/or activities without the advance permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly recorded in advance can be used solely for the student's own private study.

Make-up Policy for Missed Assignments and Tests:

Students are responsible for the assignments in their classes. Assignments include in-class activities, quizzes, tests, homework, and any other work related to classes.

- If you are absent from class, you should try to contact one of the students in your class to find out what work was missed.
- If you cannot find out from another student about what work you have missed, when you return to class you must talk to your instructors about the missed work and if/when you can make up the work. You are responsible for talking to your teacher; your teacher is not responsible for reminding you about missed work.
- If you are absent from class on the due date of an assignment, you must hand in the assignment and be prepared to make up tests the day that you return to class or on a date decided with your teacher.
- If you know you will be absent, talk to your teacher before you leave or email your teacher to find out about the work that you will miss while you are away.
- If you and your teacher arrange to meet so that you can make up an assignment and you miss that meeting, you may receive a "0" for that assignment.

SCUPI Honor Code:

Students in this course must follow the SCUPI Honor Code. This includes:

- must not get help from anyone to do his/her work without the teacher's permission.
- must not get help from any outside sources to do his/her work without the teacher's permission.
- must not copy the words of another and present those words as his/her own work.

Note: Using AI tools to generate an essay or large sections of text will result in an F.

Participating in these activities can result in an F and referral to university officials for academic integrity violations.

Participation:

Active participation is crucial for language learning. Participating in class makes you an engaged learner of English. In this class, participation means:

- arriving to class on time
- staying on task (including appropriate use of technology)
- actively listening to your classmates and teacher when they speak in class
- asking questions
- bringing all class materials
- attending class regularly
- completing all homework on time
- actively and constructively participating in class activities
- being prepared to answer questions
- using only English in class

Student Responsibility

For students, it is your responsibility to keep track of your assignments, the due dates as well as additional information announced by the instructor. It is also your responsibility to ask the instructor if you need clarification.

This syllabus is a contract between you and the instructor. It is the first place you should look for answers to your questions about course requirements, expectations, and policies. By enrolling in this course, you are agreeing to adhere to the requirements, expectations and policies outlined in this syllabus, including sections on the SCUPI Honor Code. Students who fail to submit their work on time or miss more than 3 classes could receive a failing grade and may not graduate.