



The University of New Mexico

PERSUASIVE WRITING

C&J 371 Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR: Dennis F. Herrick, M.A.

Office: C&J Room 223

herrick@unm.edu

Autumn, 2007

Mondays and Wednesdays

4 to 5:15 p.m., C&J Computer Pod

Office hours in C&J 223:

12:30 to 1:45 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays or by appointment. Drop-ins welcome anytime.

Persuading Others Through Effective Writing

Effective opinion writing has the power to change a community, for better or for worse depending on the motivations, values and goals of the writer.

This course will explore how to achieve effective results through persuasive writing in letters to the editor, editorials, Op-Ed opinion columns, and personal columns.

This is an advanced writing course, so students are expected to already be proficient in grammar, punctuation, sentence construction and AP Style. Writing assignments will be severely penalized for mistakes committed in these basic writing skills as well as in fallacious logic or erroneous fact-checking.

Anger and social outrage fuel many examples of persuasive writing. But these emotions generally are ineffective unless they are (1) controlled through the

discipline of sound writing, (2) backed by facts, and (3) constructive in proposing solutions.

Although there is some element of persuasion theory in this course, the emphasis is on the development of effective writing.

Your grade will be based on the following percentages:

Published letter to the editor	10 percent
10 writing assignments	65 percent
Other quizzes, assignments.....	10 percent
Final Commentary Project (any topic)	15 percent

For a fuller explanation of how written assignments will be graded and to see student publications, see the class Web site at unm.edu/~herrick/cj371.

TEXT: Online readings as assigned. No textbook, but students will need a copy of the AP Stylebook. Students are required to read the Albuquerque Journal or The Albuquerque Tribune every day and others as assigned. Students need access to a computer for downloads as well as a storage medium, such as a USB drive, or their e-mail account's storage area save and call up their work for rewrites.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of course, the student should be able to:

- Write a competent editorial, opinion column, letter to the editor and personal column following accepted journalistic standards.
- Evaluate a newspaper's content and appearance in terms of professional news values and design.
- Possess knowledge of press law, taste, ethics and argumentation in selection of content for publication.
- Effectively employ ethical, logical, and emotional appeals based on the needs and perspectives of the target audience.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of arguments that you encounter.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course will require you to read and analyze the editorial and op-ed pages of a daily newspaper before each class so you will be ready to discuss them in class.

At the start of each class, you must have already read the daily newspaper as well as the day's assignments. All students must bring the AP Stylebook and storage medium to class. Any assignment for the day must be ready to be turned in.

There are no opportunities for extra credit. Because exercises or quizzes will be done in most classes, it is impossible to achieve a good grade without consistent attendance.

To receive an A, you must have a letter to the editor published during the semester in the Albuquerque Journal or some other pre-approved publication.

Miscellany...

ATTENDANCE: If you cannot attend a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and take appropriate action. If you must miss a scheduled in-class quiz or assignment, let me know in advance. Pop quizzes and unannounced in-class exercises that are missed cannot be made up without an excused absence.

PLAGIARISM: “Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language” defines plagiarize as: “...to take ideas, writings, etc. from another and pass them off as one’s own.” It can get you fired from a future job—and can get you a failing grade on an assignment, or the entire course here.

ASSISTANCE? Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. Handouts are available in alternative accessible formats upon request.

DIVERSITY: This course encourages different perspectives related to such factors as gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and other relevant cultural identities. This course seeks to foster understanding and inclusiveness related to such diverse perspectives and ways of communicating.

ETHICS: The course emphasizes ethical practices and perspectives. Above all, students and instructors should strive to communicate and act, both in class interactions and in assigned coursework, in a manner directed by personal integrity, honesty, and respect for self and others. Included in this focus is the need for academic honesty by students as stated by the “UNM Pathfinder.” Students need to do original work and properly cite sources. For example, be aware of plagiarism—directly copying more than three or four words from another author without quoting (not just citing) the author is plagiarism. Further, course content will encourage the ethical practices and analysis of journalism

COMPLAINTS: Procedures for students with a complaint about any member of the teaching staff are described in the “UNM Pathfinder.” Basically, students should try to resolve the matter with the instructor first. If the complaint is not resolved to the student’s satisfaction, the student can appeal the matter to the departmental chair and then, if necessary, to the associate dean of the college.

LATE PAPERS: As in a real newsroom, which this course

attempts to emulate, assignments are due on the deadlines stated. Late assignments will receive an F; non-submitted ones will receive a zero.

DISTRACTIONS: In the interest of preserving an effective learning environment, as free from as many disruptions as possible, all mobile telephones and pagers shall be turned off while in the classroom.

Use of the computers for e-mail or Internet surfing during class time is forbidden without specific permission from the instructor each time. Violations will result in you being penalized in grades on that day’s assignment and your final grade. Computer games are never allowed. The ban on snacks and drinks in the lab is re-emphasized here.

GRADING: See class Web site at unm.edu/~herrick/cj371 for explanation of how written assignments are graded.

I’M AVAILABLE:

If you are having problems in this course, don’t hesitate to contact me. I check my e-mail several times a day, I maintain regular office hours every week, and my office door is always open to students who wish to drop in. I am always available to talk with students just before or just after class, either in the classroom or in my office. I am always willing to work with any student to help improve skills in a particular area. Don’t wait until the end of the semester if you need assistance.

It is your responsibility to learn the material in this course with the intention of preparing yourself for working in a newsroom. It is my responsibility to help you achieve the skills, perspective and knowledge to help you succeed.

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Dennis F. Herrick is a lecturer in journalism at the University of New Mexico. He taught journalism for more than two years at the University of Iowa.

He was owner and publisher of weekly newspapers and a shopper in Iowa for 12 years before selling his company in 1997. His newspapers won several awards for news coverage, photography and newspaper design during his ownership. He also worked as a reporter for more than 10 years with daily newspapers in Michigan, and was chief of staff for a member of Congress in 1977-85. He has won several individual newspaper writing awards, including awards for editorial writing at the state and national levels.

The instructor acknowledges the contributions of many other educators. Their collective creativity is reflected in this syllabus. Especially helpful were the syllabuses for this course by Dr. Denny Wilkins of St. Bonaventure University and Dr. Conrad Fink of the University of Georgia.

Class Schedule for C&J 371

(subject to changes announced in class)

- Week 1: Aug. 20 and Aug. 22
Orientation, introduction
Spelling and grammar practice quizzes
Newspaper assignments made
NEXT WEEK:
Read and analyze assigned reading
- Week 2: Aug. 27 and Aug. 29
Exercises and/or quizzes every class
First of regular current events quizzes
Discussion of assigned reading
History and typography
THIS WEEK
Read “Love is a Fallacy”
- Week 3: Sept. 3
Labor Day — No Class
Sept. 5
Framing the Argument
THIS WEEK:
Assigned reading
- Week 4: Sept. 10 and Sept. 12
Writing: Making It Sing
THIS WEEK:
Read “Punctuation Guide” of AP Stylebook
Assigned reading
- Week 5: Sept. 17 and Sept. 19
The Forum Function
THIS WEEK:
Assigned reading
- Week 6: Sept. 24 and Sept. 26
Letter to the Editor
THIS WEEK:
Assigned readings; letter for publication
- Week 7: Oct. 1 and Oct. 3
Reporting the Editorial
Research on the Internet
THIS WEEK:
Read Chapter 1
- Week 8: Oct. 8 -Oct. 10
The Editorial Crusade
THIS WEEK
Read Chapter 4
- Week 9: Oct. 15 and Oct. 17
Stretching the Form
THIS WEEK
Read Chapter 5
- Week 10: Oct. 22 and Oct. 24
Personal columns
THIS WEEK
Assigned readings
- Week 11: Oct. 29 and Oct. 31
Opinion columns; Op-Ed Page
THIS WEEK
Assigned readings
- Week 12: Nov. 5 and Nov. 7
Layout and Presentation
THIS WEEK
Read Chapter 7
- Week 13: Nov. 12 and Nov. 14
Time Management
THIS WEEK
Read Chapter 9
- Week 14: Nov. 19 - Nov. 21
In the Cage
THIS WEEK
Assigned reading
- Week 15: Nov. 26 and Nov. 28
The Future of Editorial Pages
THIS WEEK
Read Chapter 10
- Week 16: Dec. 3 and Dec. 5
In-class exercises and review
THIS WEEK
Assigned readings

FINAL COMMENTARY PROJECT due on Dec. 5