

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY-AFRICA  
JRN3000: NEWS REPORTING AND WRITING

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**PURPOSE**

This course will emphasize on reporting -- the gathering of information, and turning that raw information into readable, informative and compelling news stories. Issues covered include research techniques, story structure and deadline writing. Story components such as the Intro/Lead, the nut graph and back grounding are explored at depth. The art of interviewing is taught and tested. Finally, specialized writing is introduced in the coverage of beats such as the police, the courts, sports, business, local government, parliament, education, science and health. This course is the backbone of the journalistic adventure.

*The Gazette is a listed co-requisite of this course. This semester, you will take charge of producing The Gazette. In this, you will translate into action the reporting and writing skills you will learn in this class. The entire university looks upon you to produce a professional newspaper.*

**OBJECTIVE**

Upon completion, students should be proficient in news reporting and writing on various beats for a daily newspaper. Furthermore, the course aims to lay the ground from which students may branch to various journalistic genres.

**ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS & ATTENDANCE POLICY**

The grade for this course is based upon fortnightly assignments, on-the-spot deadline writing, the Gazette production and a final exam.

University rules stipulate that class attendance is mandatory. An accumulated five absences, irrespective of prior apology or legitimately evidenced reason, constitute Grade F. Only the dean may intervene to reverse this statute.

From the first day of class through the end of the course, you will be given research, reporting and writing assignments. You will be expected to complete and submit these assignments online, via the e-learning site. You must be in class to receive and understand these fortnightly assignments. It is not the instructor's duty to repeat instructions he has already given in class. It is your responsibility to keep track of all instructions. In the unfortunate event that you shall miss a class session, you're advised to make prior arrangements with a fellow student to update you on missed instructions.

Be warned: if you miss any session, you will most likely not have adequate preparation to satisfactorily complete assignments. Your work and your grade will suffer.

This class will begin at 9 o'clock every Saturday. Any lateness or absence **must be cleared in advance with the instructor**. *If you are late for over 15 minutes without prior notice, you may not sign the register.* The lateness allowance may change without notice.

## DEADLINES

Journalism is a profession where deadlines are sacred. In addition to class punctuality, all assignments are due at the time assigned. The only exceptions to this rule are because of: 1) technology failure; 2) illness, which is verified by a letter from a doctor; or 3) any other acceptable excuse cleared in advance with the instructor.

## ABOUT E-LEARNING AND ITS DEADLINES

This course will vastly utilize the school's e-learning facilities. We will analyze online stories done by seasoned reporters and correspondents. Deadline writing will be posted online and completed in class. All course content, assignments and grading will be posted on your e-learning site. All assignments shall be submitted on this site. All deadlines shall fall on Saturday, a week later, at 4pm.

Late submissions, PREVIOUSLY APPROVED by the instructor, shall be given an additional 24 hrs. ALL late submission not previously approved by the instructor will cost you 5 points.

Be warned: you will not be able to submit assignments after Sunday 4pm, the deadline for LATE SUBMISSIONS. If you miss even the late submission deadline, don't bother asking for more time, because the instructor will NOT accept further fresh submissions.

All rewrites of the first half of the semester are due by mid semester, Saturday, July 2. Those of the second half are due by the final exam day, Saturday, Aug 13.

## How to access e-learning:

There are three ways to access the e-learning site:

1. Through the university homepage: scroll down and click on *e-learning*
2. In your Internet browser's address box: type *elearn.usiu.ac.ke*
3. My Web site: [www.kodibarth.com/teaching](http://www.kodibarth.com/teaching). From here, log in.

\*\* Your login name is your school ID; your initial password is also your school ID. You may change your password after you have accessed your platform. If you suspect you will occasionally need me to intervene in your site, you're advised NOT to change your password.

## SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. MENCHER, Melvin. *News Reporting and Writing*, ninth edition. (Boston: McGraw-Hill), 2003. – COURSE TEXT
2. BAGNALL, Nicholas. *Newspaper Language* (Oxford: Focal Press), 1999
3. BROOKS, Brian S., et. al. *News Reporting and Writing* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 1996.
4. HARRIS, Geoffrey and David Spark. *Practical Newspaper Reporting*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Oxford: Focal Press), 1998.
5. ITULE, Bruce and Douglas A. Anderson. *News Writing and Reporting for Today's Media* (Boston: McGraw-Hill), 2000
6. McINTYRE, Bryce T. *Advanced Newsgathering* (New York: Praeger), 1991.
7. OAKHAM, Mandy, ed. *Don't Burry The Lead* (Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University Press), 1997.
8. SPARK, David. *Investigative Reporting* (Oxford: Focal Press), 1999.



# SCHEDULE

## **Week 1: Introduction: What is News?**

- Preliminary definitions
- News values
- The relativity of news
- *Assign1: Person on the Street (POS).*

## **Week 2: Components of a news story**

- Verification, Complete, Fairness, Balance, Objectivity, Selectivity, Human Interest, Responsibility

## **Week 3: Story structure**

- The Intro/Lead, the Nut graph, Body, Back grounding, Transitions
- The inverted pyramid; the Hourglass; varied-element stories
- *Assign2: to be assigned*

## **Week 4: The writer's art**

- Writing plain English: Accuracy, Clarity, Economy/Brevity, Vitality
- Attribution
- Quotes
- Anonymous sources
- *Reading: to be assigned*

## **Week 5: Reporting principles: I**

- Digging for information
- Making sound observations
- Finding, cultivating and using sources
- *Assign3: to be assigned*

## **Week 6: Reporting principles: II**

- Interviewing principles
- Speeches, meetings and press conferences
- Hunches, feelings and stereotypes
- *Reading: to be assigned*

## **Week 7: Investigative reporting: the in-depth story**

- *Assign4: Profile (due next week?)*

## **Week 8: Gazette Project I**

- Covering beats I: Business reporting

## **Week 9: Gazette Project II**

- Covering Beats II: The Courts

## **Week 10: Gazette Project III**

- Covering beats II: The Police

## **Week 11: Gazette Project IV (goes to print)**

- Covering beats III: Sports

## **Week 12: Gazette Project V (break)**

## **Week 13: Gazette Evaluation;**

- Recap of key issues in RW

## Week 14: Final Exams week

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### EVALUATION AND GRADING

This course will require significant out-of-class work and, consequently, good time management.

**400 points are obtainable in this class, broken down as follows:**

- **Four** fortnightly assignments: **100** points (25% of final grade)
- **Four** impromptu deadline exercises in class: **40** points (10 % of final grade)
- The **Gazette** project **100** points (**25% of final grade**)
- Final Written exam: **120** points (30 % of final grade)
- Attendance, class participation and academic professionalism : **40** (10% of final grade)

Your final grade will be tabulated as follows:

360 - 400 points = 90 -100% = A  
348 - 359 points = 87 - 89% = A-  
336 - 347 points = 84 - 86% = B+  
320 - 335 points = 80 - 83% = B  
308 - 319 points = 77 - 79 % = B-  
296 - 307 points = 74 - 76% = C+  
280 - 295 points = 70 - 73% = C  
268 - 279 points = 67 - 69% = C-  
256 - 267 points = 64 - 66% = D+  
248 - 255 points = 62 - 63% = D  
240 - 247 points = 60 - 61% = D-  
000 - 239 points = 00 - 59% = F