

COM 167: Broadcast Newswriting and Reporting

Section 001 • Spring 2026

Meeting Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays – 2:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m., starting January 13, 2026

Location: Fell 280

Instructor: Jim Gee

Office: Fell 025C (TV-10 Newsroom) or online by appointment. A link for Zoom will be posted in Canvas.

Walk-in Office Hours: M-F 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. or by appointment (use this link: [TinyURL.com/JimGeeTV10](https://tinyurl.com/JimGeeTV10))

Contact: jpgee@ilstu.edu • 309-438-5484 (office) • 217-369-8755 (cell)

Required Text

Johnson, K. A., & Radosh, J. (2023). *The broadcast news toolkit: Inside the digital newsroom*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

The online version of this book is available for FREE for all COM 167 students through [Milner Library](#).

Print (paperback) versions of the book should be available through the campus bookstores or your favorite online retailers for about \$40. However, a physical copy of the book is NOT required!



Required Materials, Technology, and Resources

For this course, you will need:

- The textbook.
- A laptop to bring to class – our course is largely centered on writing. Fell 280 has a limited number of iMac computers, but students generally find it easier to complete in-class writing assignments on their own machines. Students who don't have a functioning laptop may request a "loaner" from the University through the [Technology Support Center](#).
- Access to the internet: While we will be meeting this semester "face-to-face" in Fell 280, I will be available to consult with you over Zoom at other times. In addition, you'll be turning in assignments by uploading them to Canvas or recording them on another platform.
- The [Canvas App for Students](#): We will be using Canvas extensively. While you are always welcome to email me directly at jpgee@ilstu.edu, I will try to use the Canvas app as much as possible. I strongly suggest that you configure the Canvas to provide you with "push" [notifications](#) for our course.
- Access to an audio recording device. Most students have smartphones, which work wonderfully for this purpose. We'll discuss alternatives in class.
- Pad and pen for use in class – we'll need to take notes on occasion.
- A valid ISU email address ("@ilstu.edu") which is checked daily. If you have not done so, please consider adding your university email account to your smartphone. It is easy; I am happy to walk you through the process.
- Access to the Microsoft 365 software suit available to all students for free at Office365.IllinoisState.edu. We will be using OneDrive to share large media files. See this [helpdesk article](#) for assistance using Microsoft 365.

Course Catalog Description

Intensive training in the fundamentals of newsgathering and writing for the electronic media. Prerequisites: COM 161.

OVERVIEW

What's in It for You

This class will help you to gather, organize, and write stories for presentation in broadcast (i.e., through video and audio) media. News writers and reporters must make judgements. This class will help you to do that with confidence, ranging from what information is important to your audience to separating fact from opinion and fiction. In addition, you'll gain experience in collaborating with others both through group work in class and by contributing to the TV-10 newsroom. Please read the [welcome guide](#) for TV-10.

Success in the Course

I've found that students who succeed in this course

- have exemplary attendance and attentiveness in class.
- arrive on time and are ready to go by the start of class.
- bringing a charged, ready-to-go laptop to class.
- follow the news and know what's happening in the world before you come to class.
- work and read ahead of assignment due dates.
- prepare for and participate in class discussions.
- turn in assignments on Canvas (or through other means as directed) well before the start of class.
- regularly check your ISU email for important updates and changes.
- proactively communicate with me (meaning you email, call, or video conference with me when you have a question or need some help).
- engage in metacognitive ("thinking about thinking") practices that maximize learning (we'll talk about this in class).

Learning Goals

In this course, we will work to explore the following concepts:

- The nature of news versus other types of communication
- How journalists must change their messaging in order to maximize their communication through various media types
- The changing role of journalism in our society
- The basic vocabulary of the newsroom
- How audiences consume news and the best ways of writing news for the ear and eye
- The importance of word choice and sentence structure to convey information accurately and interestingly
- Ways to incorporate audio and video in your news stories
- A basic understanding of how to gather news
- A basic understanding of legal and ethical issues faced by broadcast journalists
- A basic understanding of non-linear video editing for news, sports, and entertainment stories

Plan of Study

The specific plan of study, outlining tentative activities for each class period, will be available in the "Modules" section of our Canvas course site.

Success Week

Illinois State University calls the week before the final exam period Success Week. The goal is to provide you with time to prepare for exams free of last-minute assignments. You can read more about it at

<http://policy.illinoisstate.edu/academic/4-1-5.shtml>

POLICIES (How This Class Works)

Class Meetings

This course will be meeting in-person on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. You should be prepared to spend the full time in class each day. In addition to regular meetings, however, you will also have homework to do between

class sessions. This may include assigned reading or other projects which will prepare you for the next class meeting.

If you have recently been ill or are concerned about becoming ill, you're welcome to wear a mask in class.

Attendance

This course relies heavily on discussion and group work. The textbook is supplementary, rather than a substitute, for learning in class. Good attendance is paramount. Poor attendance will indirectly impact a large percentage of your grade, since there will be graded work in class most days. Likewise, deadlines are important for your learning (and journalism!), so turning in assignments on time is equally important.

Absences

If you anticipate needing to miss a class period, you must communicate with me *in advance* with enough time for us to arrange an alternative. You should also make connections with fellow students in the course so they can provide you notes of our class discussions and other activities.

While the Dean of Students office provides a courtesy notification service to students for extended absences, this does NOT constitute an automatically excused absence. While you are welcome to take advantage of this service, you are still expected to make arrangements with me as soon as possible to make up missed work.

In the event of an extended period of absence or an inability to complete work due to extended illness, we'll work with the Dean of Students office to assist in making alternative arrangements. We will be guided by the University's policies on the subject, including the [policy](#) adopted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit the Dean of Student's [Absence Notification page](#) for more information.

In the event of a death in the family, we will be guided by the University Bereavement Policy included toward the end of this syllabus.

Late Assignments

I am willing to work with you if you expect to miss class period. If you need to miss a session, or if you are unable to complete an assignment on time, it is important that we make an arrangement ahead of time. **Arrangement** is defined as an agreement made in advance between you and me. Notification is not enough; for example, sending an e-mail ten minutes before class is not acceptable.

The bottom line: Learning is COM 167 is a partnership – if you communicate with me, I'll do everything I can to be flexible and work with you to find an acceptable alternative.

Severe Weather or Other Cancellations

You should assume class will be held as scheduled unless the campus is officially closed by the University administration. Notifications of campus closures will come through a variety of channels, including the main website at IllinoisState.edu. I also strongly encourage you to sign up for ISU Emergency Alert text and email messages at https://security.illinoisstate.edu/emergency_alert/

In the event of any campus closure, I will provide guidance concerning any required changes to the plan of study via email and Canvas.

Recordings

The University wants to make students aware that a course may be recorded by the faculty member for later use. Please understand that each faculty member makes an individual decision on whether recording and/or sharing their class materials is warranted. Any recordings that a faculty member makes available are for use by students enrolled in the class and are for the purpose of individual or group study only. The recordings may not be reproduced, shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to publicly accessible web environments. Please do

not independently record the course without prior authorization from the faculty member or an approved accommodation from [Student Access and Accommodations Services](#) office.

Assessment (How Much You've Learned and the Grades You've Earned)

You will be evaluated on how well you understand and apply the concepts presented in this class. You will also be required to develop a working knowledge of current events. This will be assessed through in-class news writing assignments, longer-form journalism pieces, reflective essays, and other projects. You will also be required to put the concepts we discuss in class into practice in the TV-10 newsroom. We will work off a “points” system for this course, as follows:

In-class activities and writing	300 points
Long-form packages	75 points
Video exercises	50 points
TV-10 Newsroom experience	250 points
TOTAL	675 points

In-class Activities and Writing

There are no direct grades for participation. Rather, we will engage in exercises most days that will be counted for a grade. The criteria for in-class exercises will vary, but generally, if you give it a good try, you'll score well. Note: if you're absent for the in-class exercise, regardless of the reason, you won't receive credit for it.

Final Exam

There is no final exam for this course. In exchange, you will be learning in the TV-10 Newsroom for brief shifts each week (see below). We will meet during the final exam period only if we need to make up significant class time due to University closures during the semester.

TV-10 Experiences

In the first week of class, you will sign up for a shift in the TV-10 newsroom, located in the basement of Fell Hall. As News Director, I will coordinate your experience in the newsroom with the assistance of veteran TV-10ers. You will have several options to choose from, including technical positions such as writing stories, setting up stories for the future, or performing on-air as a weathercaster or segment host. You will be required to complete 14 hours of experience in TV-10 this semester, spread over 14 weeks. Each week you will be required to submit a brief report to me about your activities. You will note that TV-10 Experiences are a substantial portion of your final grade. This is, in effect, your final exam grade for the semester.

Grading Scale

At the end of each semester, I will round grades to the nearest whole percent—this means, if you have an 89.4%, it is a “B”. If you have an 89.5%, it is an “A”.

- A (89.5% or more)
- B (79.5% - 89.4%)
- C (69.5% - 79.4%)
- D (59.5% - 69.4%)
- F (59.4% or less)

Evaluation Questions

I will make every effort to provide us with ways of objectively identifying expectations for your performance as a student and my evaluation of that performance. I do not give grades; you, as the student, demonstrate competence and critical thinking and earn grades. However, no grading system can be totally objective. If you believe you have earned a grade other than one you receive, we will use a procedure that has been successfully used in COM 110 courses at Illinois State University. I will provide you with details as needed.

Artificial Intelligence

We will discuss the pros and cons of many forms of Artificial Intelligence as it relates to both journalism and learning in this class. Some AI tools, like those incorporated into search engines, can be helpful in finding background information about the stories you will cover, or to help you discover new and interesting story ideas-- although AI generated ideas and information should always be checked with primary sources before being incorporated into news stories. On the other hand, generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini, that specifically assist you in writing, should be avoided. Why? Because the goals of this class is to help you to learn how to make decisions in terms of story content and structure. You can't learn unless you do the work yourself!

Academic Honesty, Cheating, and Plagiarism

You are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the [Code of Student Conduct](#) and any additional syllabus language. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and/or unacknowledged collaboration on any work, or the presentation of someone else's work, is plagiarism.

Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI-generated content) without proper attribution or authorization is another form of plagiarism. Further, you are expected to produce your own, original, unaided texts and other media for this course. So, using an AI service without advanced permission for essay exams or other assignments would constitute an act of academic dishonesty in this class.

If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible. Any allegation of academic dishonesty may be referred to [Student Conduct and Community Responsibilities](#), a unit of the Dean of Students Office, for possible review. If found responsible for academic dishonesty, a grade penalty can also be applied.

Special Needs

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 308 Fell Hall, Office Phone (309) 438-5853, Video Phone (309) 319-7682 or visit the website at [StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu](#).

OUR LEARNING COMMUNITY

Learning is tough. This course is very project-based, meaning we will produce scripts and other media, and then well critique each other's work. You must show attentiveness, empathy, and tolerance toward your peers. In other words, be encouraging and supportive, and leave smugness and snarky comments at the door. Discourteous individuals will be asked to leave that day's class. Any major or habitual disruption of the class will result in a lowering of your grade.

We want this to be a positive learning environment. Illinois State University is committed to creating and maintaining a working, learning and living environment that is welcoming, supportive, respectful, inclusive, diverse and free from discrimination and harassment. We want to have open discussions respectful of each other's ideas and values.

Professional Courtesy

Professional courtesy includes respecting others' opinions, not interrupting in class, being respectful to those who are speaking, and working together in a spirit of cooperation. We will all demonstrate these behaviors at all times in this class. With that in mind, disruptive behaviors such as sleeping (yes, that's really happened!), reading materials irrelevant to class purposes, texting, or disrupting the class in other ways will be addressed in a conversation between you and me.

Addressing Behavioral Concerns

I will work with you should any issues, like those outlined above, arise. I will speak with you during breaks or schedule a meeting outside of class time to discuss these expectations and work with you to develop a behavioral modification plan. If these behaviors persist, you will be at risk of failing the course, in keeping with the University's Student Code of Conduct.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mental Health Resources

Life at college can get very complicated. Students sometimes feel overwhelmed, lost, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationship difficulties or diminished self-esteem. However, many of these issues can be effectively addressed with a little help. Student Counseling Services (SCS) can help you cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. Student Counseling Services is staffed by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are FREE and completely confidential. Find out more at Counseling.IllinoisState.edu or by calling (309) 438-3655.

Illinois State University Bereavement Policy

Bad things happen to good people—a death in the family is one of the worst things any of us will have to deal with in life. I will do everything within reason (and more) to make sure the impact on your learning at such a time is minimized. With that in mind, the University has policies to guide us. In brief, if you have a death in the family, you will need to contact me through the Dean of Students office at (309) 438-2008 (you are welcome to communicate with me directly, too, but your first call should be to the Dean of Students), and we'll make reasonable arrangements. Details can be found at the following [website](#).

Campus Safety and Security

Illinois State University is committed to maintaining a safe environment for the University community. Please take a few moments to make sure you are signed up for ISU Emergency Alerts at IllinoisState.edu/EmergencyAlert.

Student Technology Training

All students are encouraged to take the online Introduction to Technology tour found here: IllinoisState.edu/Quickstart. Additionally, technology support can be found at Help.IllinoisState.edu, which offers online chat and help articles as well as phone support at [\(309\) 438-HELP](tel:(309)438-HELP) (4357). Walk-up support and computer repair & purchases are available from TechZone located on the first floor of the Bone Student Center as well as TechZone.IllinoisState.edu.

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