Instructor: Dr. Michele Jones
Office: Bldg. 36, Rm. 184 | Office hours: MTWR 1 - 2:30 p.m. or by appointment
Email: mjones2@uwf.edu | Cell phone: 919-265-9614
Office phone: 474-6276 (I prefer to not receive voicemail here. If I don’t answer, please send an email, text or call my cell instead.)

Catalog description:
Experience in preparing news, opinion and feature material for publication in the student newspaper.

Course summary:
The purpose of this course is to give students hands-on experience working on a news publication. As such, the format of the course combines classroom learning with the expectations of an internship.

Learning outcomes:
In this course, students will:
● Fulfill the role of reporter or copyeditor for a weekly newspaper.
● Understand the responsibilities of a working journalist.
● Develop and refine skills necessary to compete for jobs at professional news organizations.

Textbook & supplies:
● AP Stylebook (I encourage you to buy a subscription to apstylebook.com instead of or in addition to the printed style guide.)
● UWF email and associated Google applications
● A dictionary, thesaurus, grammar guide and any reporting textbooks used in your previous courses are recommended.

Grading:
ASSIGNMENTS FOR REPORTERS
You must complete one story package each week for a minimum of fourteen story packages by the end of term. You may do more than fourteen if The Voyager editors assign additional stories. Your story average will come from ten of your grades for completed story packages.

HOW COURSE GRADES will be calculated for reporters:
Story packages (draft, revision, photos) ....................................................75%
Story pitches ..........................................................................................15%
Professionalism (including meeting attendance and participation) ..........10%

ASSIGNMENTS FOR COPY EDITORS
Dr. Swain will grade copy editors’ assignments. You must edit five stories per week, including one first edit. He will randomly pick two to grade. You need to submit copies with your name and the stage of the story at the top of each page, such as: “Smith, 2nd edit.”
HOW COURSE GRADES will be calculated for copy editors:
1. For the first month of the course, errors in copy will be pointed out, without a grade.
2. For the remainder of the course you will be graded by an errors-per-column-inch system used by many newspapers.
3. Your course grade will be the average of grades on stories edited after the first month.

Expectations for Academic Conduct/Plagiarism Policy:
As members of the University of West Florida, we commit ourselves to honesty. As we strive for excellence in performance, integrity - both personal and institutional - is our most precious asset. Honesty in our academic work is vital, and we will not knowingly act in ways that erode integrity.

Accordingly, we pledge not to cheat, nor to tolerate cheating, nor to plagiarize the work of others. We pledge to share community resources in ways that are responsible and that comply with established policies of fairness. Cooperation and competition are means to high achievement and are encouraged. Indeed, cooperation is expected unless our directive is to individual performance. We will compete constructively and professionally for the purpose of stimulating high performance standards. Finally, we accept adherence to this set of expectations for academic conduct as a condition of membership in the UWF academic community. A full statement of the plagiarism policy is provided at http://uwf.edu/academic/policies/policies.cfm and excellent examples of what is and what is not plagiarism are available in the Pace Library tutorial available online at http://www.uwf.edu/library/tutorials.

Expectations for student conduct
The Student Code of Conduct sets forth the rules, regulations and expected behavior of students enrolled at the University of West Florida. It is the student’s responsibility to read the Student Code of Conduct and conduct themselves accordingly. You may access the current Student Code of Conduct at http://uwf.edu/judicialaffairs.

Journalism ethics:
In this course, as in all journalism courses, you are governed both by the rules of academic honesty and those of journalism ethics. As journalists, all we have is our integrity. If that is compromised, we can't do our jobs, our audience doesn’t trust us, and our colleagues’ work is undermined by the doubt cast upon our profession. Any instances of plagiarism, fabrication or deception in the reporting process will be met with swift and decisive punishment up to a failing grade for the course.

Assistance:
The Student Disability Resource Center SDRC at the University of West Florida supports an inclusive learning environment for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that hinder your full participation, such as time limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos and podcasts, please notify the instructor or the SDRC as soon as possible. You may contact the SDRC office by e-mail at sdrc@uwf.edu or by phone at (850)
474-2387. Appropriate academic accommodations will be determined based on the documented needs of the individual.

Attendance
You must attend all scheduled meetings. The only reasons to miss meetings are as follows.

A. Students will be excused from class to observe religious holidays of their faith. No major test, major class event, or major University activity will be scheduled on a major religious holiday.
B. Absences for imposed legal responsibilities (e.g., jury duty, court appearance) will be recognized as excused absences.
C. Absences resulting from participation in extracurricular activities in which students are official representatives of the University will be recognized as excused absences.
D. Absences for serious illness, death or serious illness within the student’s immediate family, military obligations, or other sound reasons offered by the student may be accepted as excused absences.

If you have a reason that falls into one of these categories, you must notify me before the meeting you will miss. We will discuss a proper course of action for you to stay up on your work.
Policies and Procedures for Reporters

Weekly Schedule and Deadlines

Sunday or Monday
You will be assigned to a section editor (news, L&E or sports) and receive a story assignment by email from your editor before our Monday meeting. Read your assignment carefully and come to the meeting prepared with questions for your editor and a plan for how you will approach the story.

Monday at 2:30 p.m.
Story pitch due by email to all the editors and me.
You will discuss your pitches and assignments for the week with the editors at the beginning of our meeting. After that, we will have a training session to address common issues in stories or topics that will help your reporting and writing.

Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.
We will meet to update the editors about progress on your stories. You should have a significant portion of the reporting done and the rest of it planned out before this meeting. Bring your notes. After briefing the editors, we will have a quiz, writing exercise or discussion about the training material we covered on Monday.

Participation in both the Monday and Wednesday meetings, including being prepared to update the editors about your story, counts toward the professionalism part of your grade.

Friday at 8 a.m.
First draft of your story with reporting notes due by email to me.
Extensions will be granted only if:
  ○ You are covering an event after 8 p.m. on Thursday.
  ○ You are unable to talk to sources in time to meet the deadline AND discussed these problems with me and your section editor more than a day before deadline in an attempt to find other options.
  ○ You are struck by an unusual, unavoidable and severe personal problem, such as serious injury or illness, natural disaster or homelessness.

Sunday at 8 a.m.
Second draft of your story with reporting notes and photos due by email to EIC, you section editor and me. Send photos to the photo editor.
Extensions will be granted only if:
  ○ You had a deadline extension for your first draft and pushing back your second deadline is appropriate to allow time to edit.
  ○ You are struck by an unusual, unavoidable and severe personal problem, such as those listed above.

Story Pitches
Reporters must submit story pitches every Monday by 2:30 p.m. Send an email to the editor-in-chief and me (editor@thevoyager.net and mjones2@uwf.edu)
with a subject line that includes the words “story pitch” and the date the pitch is due. In the body of the email, include ALL this information:

- **Issue date:** In which issue of The Voyager should this story run?
- **Section:** News, Sports or Life & Entertainment
- **The story’s main point:** What facts do you have now (i.e. the who, what, when, where, why of the story)? What angle do you expect to take?
- **News peg:** Why is this story timely and important now?
- **Sources:** People you’ll interview, their role at UWF or elsewhere, and their phone numbers and/or email addresses.
- **Multimedia:** Possible photo, video or sound components for this story.
- **Any other relevant information** (e.g. why you personally could or could not cover the story, documents or background research you’ve done, potential challenges, experience with this topic or sources.)

Story pitches are a reporter’s opportunity to shape his or her own assignments. As in professional reporting jobs, sometimes you have to do stories you don’t care for, but if you pitch stories that are interesting and relevant, the editors may put you on those stories instead.

Story pitches count for 15 percent of your final grade. They are graded for quality and completeness.

**Story Packages**

A story package includes:

- **First draft with reporting notes** (40 points)
  Email your story to me (mjones2@uwf.edu) as a Word document. Double-space the text and indent the beginning of each paragraph. After the story, leave some space or a break and add your notes, which includes:
  - a list of all your sources, their phone numbers, email addresses;
  - the date, time and method by which you spoke to them, e.g., by phone or in person;
  - the URLs of any online sources you used;
  - any other source information that will help the editors verify facts.

- **Second draft with updated reporting notes** (40 points)
  Email your revised story with updated reporting notes to me, the editor-in-chief (editor@thevoyager.net) and your section editor (news@thevoyager.net, entertainment@thevoyager.net, or sports@thevoyager.net).

- **Related photo(s) or graphics.** (20 points)
  Email related photos and graphics with complete cutline information to me, the editor-in-chief, your section editor and the photo editor (photo@thevoyager.net).

You are expected to complete at least 14 stories during semester. Your story average will come from ten grades for completed story packages, usually the ten
best scores. **Story packages that include zeros from missed deadlines or ethical transgressions on any component will count toward your average; those grades will not be dropped with your lowest scores.** For example, if a student had two weeks in which he missed deadlines and earned zeros, his average will come from his top eight scores, plus the two that included zeros.

You must do at least one story package per week during the semester. You may not skip a week and do two for a previous or subsequent week unless you clear it with me and the appropriate editor(s). Missed assignments will earn zeros and will count toward your story average.

No more than two critical review or opinion assignments may count toward your average.

**Professional and Ethical Conduct in Reporting**

To maintain high levels of integrity and serve the UWF community with useful and accurate information, reporters for The Voyager must adhere to the ethical standards of journalism and behave professionally at all times.

As a reporter:
- You must identify yourself to sources as a reporter for The Voyager as soon as possible in an interview or conversation. Do not tell a source that your story is "just for class." Your story will be published, and your sources have a right to know that.
- You may not interview your friends, roommates, coworkers, fraternity brothers, sorority sisters, teammates, family members or anyone else with whom you have a personal relationship.
- You should not interview professors who teach courses in which you are currently enrolled. If such a professor is the only relevant source for a particular story, you must clear it with the editors to use him or her as a source.
- You should not interview communication arts students, professors or staff unless the source is particularly relevant to a story and no alternative sources are available.
- You may not report on an organization of which you are a current or past member or employee.
- You may not accept gifts, tickets, free admission or other “freebies” from sources.
- You should always try to find the best sources and information for a story and not simply settle for the most conveniently accessible person who will give you a quote.

The rules of ethics and professionalism are often situational, and the list above is not exhaustive. If you find yourself in a gray area, please talk to the editors and/or me about what you should do.

The best way to remain ethical and professional is to remember that your purpose is to report accurate and complete stories and that your loyalty is to your
audience of UWF students, faculty, staff and community members. If you take that to heart, you’re less likely to go wrong.

**Benching**

If the editors decide that a reporter is more of a liability to The Voyager than an asset, the editor may ask me to bench that reporter. If you are benched, you are still required to fulfill the requirements of the practicum course and meet deadlines, but your story assignments will come from me, your stories will not be published in the newspaper, and you will meet with me each week to discuss your work and progress. Benched students may not accept extra story assignments from the editors.

The purpose of benching is to address weaknesses in a reporter's skills or professional conduct. Benching should be a temporary status, but can be extended as long as necessary.