



EN 3254: WRITING

JOURNALISM & COMMUNICATIONS

Instructor:

Dr. Sean Trainor

Meeting:

MWF 12:50pm-1:40pm (Period 6) in 011 Matherly Hall

Office/Hours:

MWF 11:45am-12:35pm | [021 Keene-Flint](#)

F 3:00pm-5:00pm | [233H Bryan Hall](#)

(and by appointment)

Contact:

sean.trainor@ufl.edu | @ess_trainor

352-273-3399 | seantrainor.org

OVERVIEW & LEARNING OUTCOMES

Journalists and communications professionals -- in PR, advertising, marketing, and telecomm -- write clearly, concisely, and engagingly. They quickly acquire expertise in new areas and distill complex information into digestible prose. They hustle ceaselessly and keep tabs on a bafflingly complicated media landscape. And they possess a rare knack for linking the contents of their writing to public conversations that are constantly in flux.

In this class, a working freelance journalist will provide you with the writing skills you'll need to succeed as a journalist or communications professional. You will learn how to:

- refine your grammar and style;
- pitch, research, and write different kinds of stories;
- promote your stories in a variety of settings;
- optimize your prose style for various audiences and contexts;
- navigate the media landscape, and;
- translate complex concepts into simple, engaging prose.

REQUIRED READINGS

Students should purchase the following texts at their earliest convenience:

- Yellowlees Douglas, [The Reader's Brain: How Neuroscience Can Make You a Better Writer](#) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015). ISBN: 978-1107496507.

This book is available at the University of Florida bookstore. It's also available via online retailers at a considerably lower price.

Course quizzes will be based directly upon *The Reader's Brain*.

Additional readings are available through links in the course schedule. Students will be shown in class how to locate sources for modules that require independent research.

GRADING AND EVALUATION

- Please note: there is no final exam in this course. –

A total of 2,000 points will be available over the course of the semester. Students' final grade will be determined by adding the total number of points they scored on all assignments and dividing the sum by 2,000. Points will be distributed among assignments in the following fashion:

- **Attendance:** 150 Points
- **Participation:** 200 Points
- **Quizzes:** 80 Points (divided between seven quizzes)
- **Minor Writing Assignments:**
 - *Introductory Profile:* 50 Points
 - *Snarky Profile of Publication of Your Choice:* 50 Points
- **Discussions:** 70 Points (divided between seven discussions)
- **Perspectives Assignment**
 - *Rough Draft of Pitch:* 25 Points
 - *Pitch:* 50
 - *Rough Draft and Peer Review:* 25 Points
 - *Final Draft:* 200 Points
 - *Promotion Strategies:* 50
- **Media Ecosystem**
 - *Pitch:* 50 Points
 - *Rough Draft and Peer Review:* 25 Points
 - *Short Version:* 200 Points
 - *Long Versions:* 200 Points
 - *Promotion Strategies:* 50 Points
- **Translational Journalism**
 - *Pitch:* 50 Points
 - *Rough Draft and Peer Review:* 25 Points
 - *Press Release:* 200 Points
 - *Article:* 200 Points
 - *Promotion Strategies:* 50 Points

Attendance

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. If students arrive after attendance has been taken, they should speak to Dr. Trainor, who will consider offering attendance credit on a case-by-case basis. **Students may miss up to three class meetings without penalty. Any additional unexcused absences will lead to a reduction in their grade. More than three additional unexcused absences will cause them to fail this class.**

Students may request that any absence be excused. More information on what the University of Florida considers an excused absence can be found [here](#). If you believe you have an absence that could be excused, please present documentation for this absence to your instructor for review. Absences

related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the class session the student will miss.

Students who participate in athletic or extracurricular activities are permitted to be absent 12 scholastic days per semester without penalty.

Participation

Classroom participation is a key component of this course. **Students are therefore expected to participate in no fewer than three-quarters of all class meetings.**

Quizzes

Students will be required to take seven multiple-choice quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes will typically contain 10 questions, and (with the exception of the beginning-of-semester syllabus quiz) will assess students' mastery of grammar and style principles introduced in class and/or in Yellowlees Douglas's *The Reader's Brain*.

Students will have no more than 30 minutes to complete all quizzes.

Major Assignments

Students will be expected to complete three major assignments over the course of the semester.

The first assignment, entitled the Perspectives assignment, will offer students an opportunity to write a feature story -- either a personal essay or opinion piece -- on a topic of their choosing. The second, entitled the Media Ecosystem assignment, will ask students to survey and express their position on an ongoing media controversy. The final assignment, entitled the Translational Journalism assignment, will require students to translate the findings of a University of Florida researcher into the language of the public.

Minor Assignments and Discussions

In addition to the major assignments outlined above, two minor writing assignments and seven graded discussions. More information about these assignments can be found on the course schedule and/or in their respective Canvas assignment drop boxes (which can be found on the assignments page).

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION / LATE SUBMISSIONS

1. **Late submissions will be accepted for full credit at any time throughout the semester. While deadlines are important, it is infinitely more important that students submit their best work -- whenever it may be ready. The only exception to this rule involves rough drafts and peer review, which MUST be submitted on time to avoid inconveniencing students' classmates.**
2. **Emailed assignments will NOT be accepted at any time during the semester. All assignments MUST be submitted via Canvas to generate the TurnItIn report prior to grading.**

GRADING

Written assignments will be assessed using rubrics. These rubrics will assess the content of students' papers, as well as their papers' structure, grammar, and style (namely, concepts introduced both in class and in Yellowlees Douglas's *The Reader's Brain*).

GRADING SCALE

A	4.0	94-100
A-	3.67	90-92
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.0	83-86
B-	2.67	80-82
C+	2.33	77-79
C	2.00	73-76
C-	1.67	70-72
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.00	63-66
D-	0.67	60-62
E	0.00	0-59

ACADEMIC HONESTY and PLAGIARISM

All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect. Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obliged to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class. Honor Code: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

If a student plagiarizes all or any part of any assignment, I will award a failing grade on the assignment, and I will report you to the honor board at the Office of the Dean of Students. Once a student is reported to the honor board, he/she cannot drop the course. Your work will be tested for its "originality" against a wide variety of databases by anti-plagiarism guardian sites to which the university subscribes, and negative reports from such sites constitute PROOF of plagiarism. Other forms of academic dishonesty will also result in a failing grade on the assignment as a minimum penalty. Examples include cutting and pasting a BLOG entry or citing phony sources/quotations to include in your assignments. You are responsible for understanding the University's definitions of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, which include the following:

- Submitting all or part of someone else's work as if it is your own
- "Borrowing" all or portions of anything (books, song lyrics, poetry, movie scripts) without crediting the source
- "Borrowing" verbatim text without enclosing in quotation marks and citing source

As a general rule, anytime you cut and paste you are citing a source. If you do any cutting and pasting without giving credit to that source, you are committing plagiarism. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions and examples of plagiarism, see: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/msl/07b/studentplagiarism.html>

Making "duplicate submissions" of assignments - that is, submitting work in one class that you also submit in another class (UNLESS you have permission of both instructors in advance and IN WRITING.) "Collaborating" or receiving substantive help in writing your assignment unless such collaboration is part of the given assignment also constitutes plagiarism. However, you may receive general advice from tutors or UF writing lab instructors and you may form study groups among your classmates to study for the exams.

For more information, see the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Web site (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr>) or call 352-392-1261 x207.

As a University of Florida student, your performance is governed by the UF Student Honor Code, (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>). The Honor Code requires Florida students to neither give nor receive unauthorized aid in completing all assignments. Violations include cheating, plagiarism, bribery, and misrepresentation, all defined in detail at the above site.

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES

This section of ENC 3454 satisfies the requirements for General Education Credit in the following area: Composition- E6 (6,000 words). Course grades now have two components: To receive writing credit, a student must receive a grade of "C" or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course to satisfy the CLAS requirement for Composition (C) and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit (E6). You must turn in all papers totaling 6,000 words to receive credit for writing 6,000 words. The writing requirement ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

PLEASE NOTE: a grade of "C-" **will not** confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition (C) requirement. The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to content, organization and coherence, argument and support, style, clarity, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. Please see the following web site for more information:

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting accommodation should contact the Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202 or online at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>. The office will provide documentation to the student whom must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will study engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly a recorded absence from the class.

COURSE EVALUATION

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.

NOTIFICATION LETTER FROM THE DEAN OF STUDENTS' OFFICE

Students who experience a family or personal emergency (death in the family, unplanned hospitalization, etc.) may contact the Dean of Students Office and request notification letters be sent to their professors. Students are required to provide faculty members with appropriate documentation to support their absence unless, due to the nature of the issue, the information is provided to and verified by the Dean of Students' Office.

STUDENT COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH

Campus resources are available for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals which interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

- [UF Counseling & Wellness Center](#) (CWC): (352) 392-1575 for documentation, stress and wellness, mental health screening, concerns about a classmate, self-help, sexual or physical abuse;
- Career Resource Center: 392-1601, First floor, Reitz Union, career development assistance.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

All readings, excluding *The Reader's Brain*, are available below. Readings are due on the day for which they are assigned (i.e. readings listed under 10 January are due by class time on 10 January).

WEEK 1

Mon., Jan. 8 (Introduction to Course)

Weds., Jan. 10 (Introduction to the Introductory Profile)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Introductory Profile Prompt [only on Canvas]
 - James Baldwin, "[Autobiographical Notes](#)"

Fri., Jan. 12 (Introduction to the Perspectives Assignment)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Perspectives Assignment Prompt [only on Canvas]
 - Francis Bryant [Sean Trainor], "[Have I Become An Educated Rita?](#)" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*
 - Jorge Escobar, "Between Dos Mundos: A Day in the Life of a Hispanic-American" [only on Canvas]
 - Cameron Carriglio, "New to Brewing?: A Beginner's Guide to Making What You're Already Drinking" [only on Canvas]
- **Assignment(s):**
 - Quiz #1 (Syllabus: Fri., Jan. 12 at 11:59pm)
 - Introductory Profile (Sun., Jan. 14 at 11:59pm)

WEEK 2

Mon., Jan. 15 (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day [No Class!])

Weds., Jan. 17 (Mastering Grammar)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Yellowlees Douglas, "Supplement: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know ...," *The Reader's Brain* [course text]

Fri., Jan. 19 (Introduction to Pitches)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - 3-5 pitches from [The Open Notebook Pitch Database](#)
 - Guide to Pitches [only on Canvas]
- **Assignment(s):**
 - Quiz #2 (Grammar: Fri., Jan. 19 at 11:59pm)

WEEK 3

Mon., Jan. 22 (Mastering Clarity)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Douglas, Chs. 1-3

Weds., Jan. 24 (Peer Reviewing Effectively)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Peer-Review Cheat Sheet [only on Canvas]

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Rough Draft of Perspectives Pitch [for Peer Review] (Weds., Jan. 24 at 9:00am)
 - Submit peer reviews of two classmates' pitches by Thurs., Jan. 25 at 11:59pm

Fri., Jan. 26 (Understanding Your Grade / Writing Effective Titles, Hooks, and Nutgrafs)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - An unidentified sample article stripped of title, hook, and nutgraf [only on Canvas]
- **Assignment(s):**
 - Quiz #3 (Clarity: Fri., Jan. 26 at 11:59pm)
 - Perspectives Pitch (Sun., Jan. 28 at 11:59pm)

WEEK 4

Mon., Jan. 29 (Mastering Continuity)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Douglas, Ch. 4

Weds., Jan. 31 (Introduction to the Translational Journalism Assignment)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Translational Journalism Assignment Prompt [only on Canvas]
 - Sean Trainor, "[The Long, Twisted History of Your Credit Score](#)," *TIME*
 - Kylie Adams, "Fueled by Fossils: Andrea Dutton Discovers the Real Reason Dinosaurs Went Extinct" [only on Canvas]
 - Hellkamp, "The Infinite Relationship Between Mental Health and our Educational System" [only on Canvas]

Fri., Feb. 2 (Library Research Visit by April Hines)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Quiz #4 (Continuity: Fri., Feb. 2 at 11:59pm)

WEEK 5

Mon., Feb. 5 (Mastering Cohesion)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Douglas, Ch. 5

Weds., Feb. 7 (Crafting Emails to Researchers)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Joanne B. Freeman, "Dueling as Politics: Reinterpreting the Burr-Hamilton Duel," *The William and Mary Quarterly* [only on Canvas]

Fri., Feb. 9 (Interviewing Researchers, Pt. I)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Chip Scanlan, "[How Journalists Can Become Better Interviewers](#)," *Poynter*
 - Natalie Mozette, "[Guide for Reporters Who Want to Master the Art of the Interview](#)," Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas
 - Ann Friedman, "[The Art of the Interview](#)," *Columbia Journalism Review*
- **Assignment(s):**
 - Researcher Discussion (Fri., Feb. 9 at 9:00am)

- Post the names, titles, and research areas of at least three UF researchers on whose work you would potentially like to focus for the Translational Journalism Assignment
- Quiz #5 (Coherence: Fri., Feb. 9 at 11:59pm)
- Rough Draft of Perspectives Assignment [for Peer Review] (Fri., Feb. 9 at 11:59pm)
 - Submit peer reviews of two classmates' papers by Sun., Feb. 11 at 11:59pm

WEEK 6

Mon., Feb. 12 (Interviewing Researchers, Pt. II)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Investigate the research portfolio of Dr. H  l  ne Huet
- **Assignment(s):**
 - Interview with H  l  ne Huet Discussion (Mon., Feb. 12 at 9:00am)
 - Post three or more questions you would like to ask Dr. H  l  ne Huet about her research

Weds., Feb. 14 (Promoting Your Article on Twitter)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Reading to be determined closer to date

Fri., Feb. 16 (Promoting Your Article Using Photos and Videos)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Reading to be determined closer to date
- **Assignment(s):**
 - Final Draft of Perspectives Assignment (Sun., Feb. 18 at 11:59pm)
 - Perspectives Assignment Promotion Strategies (Sun., Feb. 18 at 11:59pm)

WEEK 7

Mon., Feb. 19 (Mastering Concision)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Douglas, Ch. 6

Weds., Feb. 21 (Introduction to the Media Ecosystem Assignment / Writing an Effective Rebuttal, Pt. I)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Media Ecosystem Assignment Prompt [only on Canvas]
 - Sean Trainor, "[Campus PC panic is getting ridiculous: Here's what a 'trigger warning' really looks like — and what it does for students,](#)" *Salon*
 - Additional reading to be determined closer to date

Fri., Feb. 23 (Writing an Effective Rebuttal, Pt. II)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Media Ecosystem Drafting Discussion (Fri., Feb. 23 at 9:00am)
 - Post your group's Media Ecosystem-style draft response to the TBD article from Weds., Feb. 21
 - Quiz #6 (Concision: Fri., Feb. 23 at 11:59pm)

WEEK 8

Mon., Feb. 26 (Mastering Cadence)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Douglas, Ch. 7

Weds., Feb. 28 (Assessing The Atlantic)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Snarky Profile of Publication of Your Choice Prompt [only on Canvas]
 - Readings to be determined closer to date

Fri., Mar. 2 (Assess Reductress, Jacobin, The Daily Caller, and National Review)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Survey top articles on [Reductress](#) (Group 1); [Jacobin](#) (Group 2); [The Daily Caller](#) (Group 3); and [National Review](#) (Group 4)
- **Assignment(s):**
 - Quiz #7 (Cadence: Fri., Mar. 2 at 11:59pm)
 - Media Ecosystem Pitch (Fri., Mar. 2 at 11:59pm)
 - Snarky Profile of Publication of Your Choice (Sun., Mar. 4 at 11:59pm)

WEEK 9

Mon., Mar. 5 (Spring Break [No Class!])

Weds., Mar. 7 (Spring Break [No Class!])

Fri., Mar. 9 (Spring Break [No Class!])

WEEK 10

Mon., Mar. 12 (Learning to Shorten Your Writing)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Readings to be determined closer to date

Weds., Mar. 14 (Learning to Shorten Your Writing)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Readings to be determined closer to date

Fri., Mar. 16 (Follow-Up Research Visit by April Hines)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Rough Draft of Long Version of Media Ecosystem Assignment [for Peer Review] (Fri., Mar. 16 at 11:59pm)
 - Submit peer reviews of two classmates' papers by Sun., Mar. 18 at 11:59pm

WEEK 11

Mon., Mar. 19 (Media Ecosystem Workshop #1)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Media Ecosystem Workshop Discussion (Mon., Mar. 19 at 9:00am)
 - Post at least one issue you're struggling with or a question you're having difficulty resolving as you finalize your Media Ecosystem assignment

Weds., Mar. 21 (Media Ecosystem Workshop #2)

Fri., Mar. 23 (Fixing Remaining Writing Issues / Checking In on the Translational Journalism Assignment)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Final Draft of Media Ecosystem Assignment [Short and Long Versions] (Sun., Mar. 25 at 11:59pm)
 - Media Ecosystem Assignment Promotion Strategies (Sun., Mar. 25 at 11:59pm)

WEEK 12

Mon., Mar. 26 (Translating Humanities Research, Pt. I)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Sean Trinor, "Fair Bosom / Black Beard: Facial Hair, Gender Determination, and the Strange Career of Madame Clofullia, 'Bearded Lady,'" *Early American Studies* [only on Canvas]

Weds., Mar. 28 (Translating Humanities Research, Pt. II)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Sean Trinor, "[Lessons of the Bearded Lady](#)," *The Atlantic*

Fri., Mar. 30 (Fixing Remaining Writing Issues / Checking In on the Translational Journalism Assignment)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Translational Journalism Pitch (Fri., Mar. 30 at 11:59pm)

WEEK 13

Mon., Apr. 2 (Translating Social Science Research, Pt. I)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Alexes Harris, et. al., "Drawing Blood from Stones: Legal Debt and Social Inequality in the Contemporary United States," *American Journal of Sociology* [only on Canvas]

Weds., Apr. 4 (Translating Social Science Research, Pt. II)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Social Science Translation Discussion (Weds., Apr. 4 at 9:00am)
 - Post your group's Translational Journalism-style draft response to Harris's "Drawing Blood from Stones: Legal Debt and Social Inequality in the Contemporary United States"

Fri., Apr. 6 (Intro to Press Releases / Exercise)

WEEK 14

Mon., Apr. 9 (Translating Physical / Medical Science Research, Pt. I)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Shu-zhong Shen, et. al., "Calibrating the End-Permian Mass Extinction," *Science* [only on Canvas]

Weds., Apr. 11 (Translating Physical / Medical Science Research, Pt. II)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Physical / Medical Science Translation Discussion (Weds., Apr. 11 at 9:00am)
 - Post your group's Translational Journalism-style draft response to Shen's "Calibrating the End-Permian Mass Extinction"

Fri., Apr. 13 (Writing Effective Press Releases)

- **Required Material(s):**
 - Robert Wynne, "[How To Write A Press Release](#)," *Forbes*
 - Robert Wynne, "[What Journalists Really Think Of Your Press Release](#)," *Forbes*
 - Michael Pranikoff, "[The 8 Golden Rules of Writing Great Press Releases](#)," *Cision: PR Newswire*
 - Janet Murray, "[How to Write an Effective Press Release](#)," *The Guardian*

WEEK 15

Mon., Apr. 16 (Work Day)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Rough Draft of Long Version of Translational Journalism Assignment [for Peer Review] (Fri., Apr. 16 at 11:59pm)
 - Submit peer reviews of two classmates' papers by Tues., Apr. 17 at 11:59pm

Weds., Apr. 18 (Translational Journalism Ecosystem Workshop #1)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Translational Journalism Workshop Discussion (Weds., Apr. 18 at 9:00am)
 - Post at least one issue you're struggling with or a question you're having difficulty resolving as you finalize your Translational Journalism assignment

Fri., Apr. 20 (Translational Journalism Ecosystem Workshop #2)

WEEK 16

Mon., Apr. 23 (Work Day)

Weds., Apr. 25 (End-of-Semester Discussion)

- **Assignment(s):**
 - Final Draft of Translational Journalism Assignment [Press Release and Article] (Weds., Apr. 25 at 11:59pm)
 - Translational Journalism Assignment Promotion Strategies (Weds., Apr. 25 at 11:59pm)