**Communication 161: Convergent Media Writing**

Dr. John McHale                                           Office: Fell Hall 451

[jpmchal@ilstu.edu](mailto:jpmchal@ilstu.edu) Office Hours: M (3) 4-530; W 3-445; By Appnt.

**Course Objectives**

This course is an introduction to the variety of mass communication media students may encounter in their careers. Students will engage in preparation and presentation of various mass communication formats. Upon the successful completion of the course, students will:

1)     Develop a critical understanding of quality print, radio, television, social media, feature film, and new forms of writing. Students will demonstrate a substantial increase in general knowledge of Mass Media.

2)     Develop writing skills sufficient to write for print, radio, television, film or online. Students will demonstrate ability to write professionally.

3)     Acclimate the student to the demands of writing for a living. Toward this end, the student will be faced with seemingly incessant and fast approaching deadlines and upheld to professional rigor. Students will demonstrate evidence of professional competence in application of technical writing skills.

4)     The overall transformative goal of this class is for students to realize the importance of committing themselves to the lifetime journey of continually challenging themselves to become better writers.

**Required Textbook**

**McHale, J. P. (2016). *Convergent Media Writing: Telling a Good Story Well*. 3rd Edition Revised; Kendall-Hunt Publishing; Dubuque, Iowa.** ISBN for the print book: 9781524993696

You must have this book to pass the class. Previous versions will not suffice.

The textbook Convergent Media Writing: Telling a Good Story Well revised 3rd edition will provide the organizational backbone for this class. I see no way to make it through this class without it. It was written for you and is perfectly tailored to our needs, but other universities use it as well. ISBN for the print book: 9781524993696. **Do not buy a used or previous version as it will not have the required elements especially the on-line features.** <https://he.kendallhunt.com/mchale>. [www.grtep.com](http://www.grtep.com) The Barnes and Noble and The Alamo also have copies available.

**This book also contains a code that allows you to complete interactive assignments (quizzes, tests, and short essays). You will need to use the access code in the front of your book and register for the portal.**

**The publisher provides us (and all other students at other schools who use the book, like Loyola, Pace University, University of Nebraska, among others) with an interactive platform that enables us to allow you to have on-line, open book quizzes for each chapter and on-line open-book Midterm and Final Exams.[We will not be using the Essay Post function. Tolerance.]**

As the book has undergone these recent major revisions, I would suggest you go with the printed book at <https://he.kendallhunt.com/mchale>.The new Print and eBook options are both available. These are efforts to serve you and other institutions that use our book better. Accomplished previous students kept this book. It is a great reference on your first few jobs, at least.

**McHale, J. P. (2016). *Convergent Media Writing: Telling a Good Story Well*. 3rd Edition Revised; Kendall-Hunt Publishing; Dubuque, Iowa.** ISBN for the print book: 9781524993696

*E-Book: Convergent Media Writing: Telling a Good Story Well*

***Strongly Suggested:***

*Associated Press Stylebook.* New York: Perseus Books Group. I recommend you will be well served with the **last edition**, not the latest addition of the AP Stylebook. Save yourself money and buy a used copy on Amazon.com. They offer free shipping to students. You can also access AP style online.

Crafting Messages In A Multimodal Media Environment is supplemental and is designed to increase the educational value of our guest lectures.

**Assignments**

**Major Writing Assignments**

            Each student will complete six major writing assignments. These are **listed below with due dates on syllabus schedule** and are described in the text. There are also rubrics for evaluation of these assignments and examples of each assignment in the text *Convergent Media Writing.*

**Quizzes**

Students will be required to finish a quiz for each chapter in the textbook (on the Kendall Hunt interactive web page [www.grtep.com](http://www.grtep.com)).

**Tests**

            There is an open-book take-home midterm and final exam on the Kendall Hunt on-line portal that each student must complete by the assigned dates at midnight. [www.grtep.com](http://www.grtep.com)

**Reading/ Participation**

Students enrolled in this course should be prepared to write constantly and under much pressure.

Reading the assigned material is required and necessary to understand assignment specifications. Reading about the information is important but only part of the learning process. A quasi-Socratic approach utilizing discussion posts is used to teach this course, which requires informed participation. Participation in online discussions and assignments is extremely significant in understanding writing for the convergent media.

All reading assignments should be completed before beginning assignments or quizzes. Students’ ability to articulate ideas expressed in the text will be imperative.

**Peer Editing**

Each student will practice and demonstrate the ability to edit others’ work. This will help each student recognize the strength and weaknesses of their own writing. Editing is also an important skill for a writer to review their own work and the work of others.

Each student will use the criteria/rubrics for evaluating writing assignments found in the textbook. Each student will comment on each edited assignment and assign point values for each mistake as per the assessment tools provided in the book.

**Professionalism**

Please keep in mind this course is designed for you to begin to think about expectations in the professional world. Choice of assignment topics allows you to write about subjects that you enjoy, but those topics should be appropriate for general audiences (in some cases PG-13 audiences or even R audiences). Your treatment of topics, however, should not be offensive. If you think a topic or approach may be questionable, check with your lab instructor for approval before the due date.

**Writing Guidelines**

At the top of each page, include your name, the assignment number, and the date of submission, single-spaced. Use APA 6th edition (American Psychological Association) style for references.

**Deadlines**

All assignments must be turned-in on time. Just as in the “real world,” not meeting deadlines can cost a broadcast facility money; missing class deadlines will cost you points toward your final grade (see section on grading).

**Late Policy**

All out-of-class assignments are due by midnight on the due date. Out-of-class assignments are considered late ten minutes after the beginning of the class period in which they are due and will receive an automatic deduction of **two full grades** (20 percent, or A to C, B to D, C to F) for that assignment. An additional letter grade will be deducted for each subsequent 24-hour period for which the assignment is late.

Predictable problems are not excuses for turning in work late. Make sure to anticipate those predictable problems so that you can prevent them.

**Assignments**

On-line Quizzes   [www.grtep.com](http://www.grtep.com)                                                     100 Points = 20 x 5 points

Lab Assignments 40 points

Participation 10 points

AP Exercise 1                                                                                     10 points

AP Exercise 2                                                                                     10 points

Peer Editing                                                                                  30 = 3 x 10

(Straight Print) News Story or Press Release                                     100 points

(Feature Print) News Story or Press Release                                     100 points

Radio News Story                                                                              100 points

Television Announcement 100 points

Television News/Video Media Release  100 points

Final Project                                                                                        200 points

Midterm Exam (Take-home, open-book) [www.grtep.com](http://www.grtep.com)    50 points

Final Exam (Take-home, open-book) [www.grtep.com](http://www.grtep.com)                 50 points

Total                                                                                                    1000 points

**Grading Scale**

900-1000=A; 800-899=B; 700-799=C: 600-699=D: >600=F

We demand rigorous effort, but we are fair.

Tolerance is an ethical imperative, and must be reciprocal.

Notes for current or future Mass Media majors:

**Portfolio Artifacts**--One of the culminating experiences of a mass media degree is the completion of COM 396 Mass Media Capstone, a course that includes the preparation of a personal portfolio to organize and showcase your abilities. We encourage you to retain items from this class, whether produced independently or in groups, for inclusion as portfolio artifacts. Beyond the Capstone class, your portfolio may also prove a valuable tool as you seek entry into a graduate program or employment in your areas of specialization.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act and need special arrangements for this class, please let me know or contact the ADA coordinator for the Department of Communication. Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability contact Disability Concerns, Fell 350, 438-5853 (Voice), 438-8620 (TDD).

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism/Cheating**

Honesty in writing is critical to the media professions. Media writers who lie, plagiarize, or are irresponsible in their writing not only reduce the credibility of their profession and themselves, and usually lose their jobs. Plagiarism includes using someone else's ideas, work, or words as one's own without providing proper citation. It can also include attributing information to a source that is really from another source. We expect you will be honest in your attributions of information, and accurate in your reporting and writing and in all areas that challenge you in this class.

Be certain to keep extra hard copies of your assignments, your creative process, and any computer disks on which you write your assignments. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating, by taking or giving work that belongs to someone else, you will receive a zero (0/F) on either the assignment or exam. In accordance with Illinois State University procedures regarding misconduct, your name will be given to the department chair and, likely, the Student Dispute Resolution Services office. This can result in failure of the class and, possibly, dismissal from the university.

**Grading**

Accuracy and readability are such essential parts of media writing that writing errors that normally might be excused **cannot** be excused in this class (as they are not excused in the media professions we are studying).

All out-of class assignments will be graded in accordance with the Associated Press style guide. In addition, spelling and punctuation errors (such as misspelling [anything other than a proper noun], providing an incorrect address, writing run-on sentences, using sentence fragments when a full sentence is required, using inaccurate information, etc.) will result in an **8-point** deduction from the overall grade for **each error**. This also means 8-points off each time you commit the same error.

Misspelled proper names will incur a **16-point** deduction. Clearly, you will want to edit and re-edit your work before turning it in for a grade. I encourage students to solicit the help of their friends, peers, and even family members to improve written pieces through the editing process. The Visor Center also offers assistance in the editing process.

**The things we care the most about are those into which we put the most effort.**

**Tentative Course Schedule**

All class periods are tentative: Thinking people change their minds.

8-19 **Class 1: Lecture**

* Introduction to class
* Dramaturgical Theory
* Narrative Theory

8-21 **Class 2: Lecture**

McHale, Preface

McHale, Ch. 1: Telling a Good Story: Dramaturgical Theory and Narrative Theory

Chapter quiz due at <https://www.grtep.com/>

Read *Crafting Messages in a Multimodal Media Environment:*Ch. 1: Introduction to Multimodal Media Writing

**8-23 Class 3: Lab**

* Discussion
  + Class
  + Goals
  + Syllabus
  + Thinking dramatically in an active and critical media consumption
  + Importance of AP style to future classes and employers
* Introduction (Major, background, and favorite mass media presentation)
  + Lab Instructor
  + Students
* Assignment
  + Associated Press Stylebook (AP) Exercise One (McHale, p. 245)

**8-26 Class 4: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 2: Theoretical Consideration of Mass Media Writing

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

Transactional Model of Communication and Convergent Media Writing

Semiotics (Fiske and Hartley)

Media Effects: Historical Debate:

Lippmann, Durkheim, Laswell (High Effects) to Lazarsfeld (low effects) to Moderate effects (Klapper)

Agenda Setting (Cohen, McCombs & Shaw, Herzog)

Gatekeeping (Lewin)

Structuration (Giddens)

Spiral of Silence (Noelle-Neumann)

Cultivation Theory (Gerbner)

Social Learning (Bandura)

Structuration (Giddens)

Uses and Gratifications (Katz)

Preview Theory and Ethics in Writing

Dialectic (Plato, Socrates, and Hegel)

Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Theory

Rashomon Effect

Dilemma of Objectivity (Sandman)

Theoretical Ethics and Advertising:

Frankfurt School (Adorno) post-Frankfurt School (Marcuse)

**8-28 Class 5: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 3: The Writing Process

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**8-30 Class 6: Lab**

* View Situation Comedy
  + Discuss Dramaturgical Theory: (will/want, major dramatic question, complications, climax, resolution, etc.) Structural considerations (unity, variety, pace, & climax)
* Homework
  + Due: Associated Press Stylebook (AP) Exercise One
  + Assignment: Associate Press Stylebook (AP) Exercise Two **(pg. 259-263)**

**9-2 Labor day: No Class**

**9-4 Class 7: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 4: Writer’s Toolbox

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

Grammar, Punctuation, Vocabulary, and Sentence Structure, etc.

**9-6 Class 8: Lab**

* Print News
* Discuss Assignment # 1: Straight Print News Story (or Press Release)
  + Look at example of Straight Print Example in text.
  + Look at example of Press Release Example in text.
  + How does an inverted pyramid story begin? What is included in the lead?
  + What are feature of inverted pyramid stories?
  + How are IP stories different from other types of print writing?
  + What items are used after the lead?
* Homework
  + Due: Example of Inverted Pyramid Story (Discuss)
  + Due: Associated Press Stylebook (AP) Exercise Two **(pg. 259-263)**

**9-9 Class 9: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 4: Writer’s Toolbox

Grammar, Punctuation, Vocabulary, and Sentence Structure, etc.

McHale, Ch. 5: Style: Telling It Well: Associated Press and Strunk & White

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**9-11 Class 10: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 5: Style: Telling It Well: Associated Press and Strunk & White

McHale, Ch. 6: The Inverted Pyramid

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

Writing Straight News for Print and the Web

**9-13 Class 11: Lab**

**Review Assignment 1: Straight Print News or Press Release**

**Can bring a draft to share**

* Straight Print Exercise
* Preview Feature Print Exercise (McHale, **p. 278)**
* Assign: Tell student to bring print feature example to next lab.

**9-16 Class 12: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 6: The Inverted Pyramid

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

Writing Straight News for Print and the Web

**9-18 Class 13: Lecture**

**Guest Lecturer: Dr. Megan Hopper**

Read *Crafting Messages in a Multimodal Media Environment,* Ch. 3: The Inverted Pyramid Style: A Brief History, Dr. K. Megan Hopper, p. 31

**9-20** **Class 14: Lab**

* Homework
* **Due: Assignment #1** Straight Print News Story or Straight Print Press Release
* **Copyediting Assignment, p. 258** (10 minutes)
* Preview Assignment 2: Feature Print Story
* Students bring print feature examples
* Discuss Print Feature Story Example in text
* Discuss student examples of feature print news stories
* Discuss examples of Feature Print News Story or Feature Print Press Release
  + **Preview: Feature Print Exercise in text**
* Remind: Read McHale Ch. 7 on Ethics for next lab
* Preview: Ethics Exercise: Discuss Ethical dilemma

**9-23 Class 15: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 8: Feature Print and Web Writing

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

*Crafting Messages in a Multimodal Media Environment*, Ch. 4:Telling a Feature Story: What Happened? Dr. Phil Chidester, Ph.D.

**9-25 Class 16: Lecture**

Guest Lecture

Read *Crafting Messages in a Multimodal Media Environment*, Ch. 4:Telling a Feature Story: What Happened? Dr. Phil Chidester, Ph.D.

McHale, Chapter 7: Ethics

**9-27 Class 17: Lab**

* Review Assignment 2: Feature Print Story
* **Due: Feature Print Exercise (McHale, p. 278)**
* Ethics: Discuss contemporary ethical and legal considerations in mass media such as unethical news or entertainment
* Homework

Optional Assignment: Print Opinion Extra Credit

**9-30 Class 18: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 7: Ethics

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

McHale, Ch. 9: Legal Issues in Mass Media Writing

**10-2 Class 19: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 9: Legal Issues in Mass Media Writing

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

McHale, Ch. 10: Broadcast Media Writing

**10-4 Class 20: Lab**

* Homework
  + **Due: Assignment 2: Feature Print News Story or Feature Print Press Release**
  + **Copyediting Assignment:** Peer-Evaluation of assignment (10 minutes)
* Preview Assignment 3: Radio News
* Discuss Radio News Example in text
* Interviewing Exercise (McHale, **p. 281**)
* Return Assignment 1: Discuss what went well and what did not?
  + Assignment: Critically consume radio news (NPR)
  + Assignment: Bring your Assignment 1 to next lab for Radio Exercise

**10-7 Class 21: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 10: Broadcast Media Writing

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

Read *Crafting Messages in a Multimodal Media Environment* Even in a Mass Media Revolution, A Good Story Well Told is Still the Gold Standard, Dave Kindred, p. 52

**10-9 Class 22: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 10: Broadcast Media Writing

Read *Crafting Messages in a Multimodal Media Environment* Even in a Mass Media Revolution, A Good Story Well Told is Still the Gold Standard, Dave Kindred, p. 52

McHale, Ch. 11: Radio News

* Radio Script Formats: Split page radio scripts and Radio news scripts
* Writing Radio news
  + Study radio news examples
* Handling Sound
* **Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

Read *Crafting Messages in a Multimodal Media Environment* Even in a Mass Media Revolution, A Good Story Well Told is Still the Gold Standard, Dave Kindred, p. 52

**10-11 Class 23: Lab**

* Discuss listening to radio news assignment
* Radio News Exercise
* Broadcast News: Discuss differences between interpersonal, public speaking, print, and broadcast communication
* Option: Radio Public Service Announcement Exercise
* Homework
  + Assignment 3: Radio News Story

**10-14 Class 24: Lecture**

**Guest Speaker Deb Lesser: Radio Writing**

Read *Crafting Messages in a Multimodal Media Environment,* Crafting Radio News, Deb Lesser

**10-16 Class 25: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 12: Telling a Visual Story

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

Theory: Jacobson’s Poetic Function and Visual Sequence Composition

Intro to Television news

McHale, Ch. 14: Television News

**10-18 Class 26: Lab**

* Homework
  + Due: Assignment 3: Radio News Story
* Editing Exercise: Peer-Evaluation of assignment (10 minutes)
* Discuss Television News Story assignment
* Inception Turorial
* Television News Exercise
* Return Assignment 2 Print Feature Story: Discuss what went well and what did not.

**10-21 Class 27: Lecture**

McHale Ch. 14: Television News

* Writing Television News
* Inception, Split-column form
* View TV News Examples

**10-23 Class 28: Lecture**

McHale Ch. 14: Television News

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**10-25 Class 29: Lab**

* Discuss Television News Story assignment
* Inception Tutorial and Inception work

**10-28 Class 30: Lecture**

**Guest Lecturer: Writing Television News: Laura Trendle-Polus**

Read *Crafting Messages in a Multimodal Media Environment,* Writing for Television News, Laura Trendle-Polus

**10-30 Class 31: Lecture**

**Mid-term Examination Due By Midnight at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**11-1 Class 32: Lab**

**Television News Story:** Editing

**11-4** **Class 33: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 13: Scripting the Visual

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**11-6** **Class 34: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 15: Promotional Writing

* + Theoretical Ethics and Advertising: Frankfurt School (Adorno) post-Frankfurt School (Marcuse)

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**11-8 Class 35: Lab**

**Due: Television News Story**

Editing Assignment: Peer-Evaluation of assignment (10 minutes)

Homework

Assign: Assignment 5

* + - Television Announcement
  + Television Announcement Storyboard Example in text
  + Persuasive Appeals in Television Announcements

**11-11 Class 36: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 18: Documentary Writing

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**11-13 Class 37: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 16: Public Relations and Story

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

* + Defining Public Relations
  + Media as a Public
  + Communication Tools
  + Public Relations and Advertising
  + Image Restoration Discourse

*Multimodal Media Writing,* Ch. 10: Mass Media Writing and the Public Relations Major, Peter M. Smudde, Ph.D., APR &, Jeffrey L. Courtright, Ph.D., p. 81

**11-15 Class 38: Lab**

Critically Consume Documentary

**11-18 Class 39: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 13: Scripting the Visual (Single Column Script Format)

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**11-20 Class 40: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 17: Television Programming

Long Narrative writing

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**11-22 Class 41: Lab**

* Homework
  + Assignment 5 Due
    - Television Announcement
* Peer-evaluation of assignment (10 minutes)

View Entertainment Drama [B.B. Pilot] and Read Script

**12-2 Class 42: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 17: Television Programming

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

McHale, Ch. 19: Feature Film

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**12-3 Class 43: Lecture**

McHale, Ch. 19: Feature Film

McHale, Ch. 20: Social Media

**Chapter quiz due at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)

**12-6 Class 44: Lab**

Final Project Due

Finish Viewing Entertainment Drama and Read Script

Review for Final Exam

**Final Exams should be complete by Wed. Dec. 11 at Midnight at** [**https://www.grtep.com/**](https://www.grtep.com/)