Course Syllabus

Jump to Today

SYLLABUS

JRN 2050 Introduction to Journalism

Dr. Dean Nelson

Fall 2026

deannelson@pointloma.edu (NOTE: use my whole name); 619-849-2592

Office Hours: MWF afternoons, and by appointment -- BAC 111

TEXTBOOKS

--The Journalism Behind Journalism, by Gina Baleria

--Talk to Me: How To Ask Better Questions, Get Better Answers, and Interview Anyone Like a Pro, by Dean Nelson

--Associated Press Stylebook

I recommend buying your own copy of these books, but renting or sharing the expense with one of your colleagues is also acceptable. I have a copy on one-hour reserve in the library. Getting access to the reserve copies will take planning on your part.

COURSE OUTCOMES

The course is designed to help students 1) Understand what the 1st Amendment to the Constitution means in society and how that amendment is played out by the news media; 2) Develop an understanding of and appreciation for the news media in a democracy; 3) Achieve competence in gathering and reporting news as a means for developing professional writing ability.

GRADING

News stories are worth 20 points each, reading responses are worth 10 each, and quizzes are worth 5 to 10. The final exam is worth 100. After about four weeks into the semester you will write at least one news story per week, where you come up with the idea, do the interviewing, research and writing, in a news style on deadline. One copy must be submitted in Canvas and one copy must be emailed to the editor of the Point. Stories are due by class time on Wednesdays. This is a performance course – journalism is something you do – so you will be evaluated on your performance. There is no curve. Stories will be graded on the following 20-point scale:

18-20 – great; crisp, on-target, covers the bases, thoughtful, clean, virtually publishable as is.

16-17 – good; publishable with minor changes and editing

14-15 – has the basics, but is incomplete

10-13 – has multiple problems

0-12 -- unacceptable (e.g. has a misspelled name, fabricates or plagiarizes)

An additional five points per story will be awarded if the story is accepted for publication in the student newspaper, The Point, or on the website, Lomabeat, or another publication approved by the professor.

Stories must be typed, double-spaced, according to the format described in class.

Criteria for grading include accuracy, completeness, newsworthiness and significance of information, reader interest, fairness, organization of story, clarity, conciseness, precision of language, grammar, punctuation, spelling and proper use of style.

Since spelling and deadlines are critical in journalism, they rate special emphasis in grading. Misspell a proper name in a story and your paper will receive a zero, which can be made up by doing a completely different story the following week. Miss a deadline and your grade will drop a level for each class day or portion of day. In some cases, stories can be rewritten the following week with additional information requested by the professor, for a presumably higher grade.

Every Monday there will a current events quiz. Every Friday there will be a stylebook quiz. Throughout the semester you'll turn reading responses to text book chapters (see schedule in Modules on Canvas).

Also on Fridays, each of you will show clips you have selected from a movie that depicts some aspect of journalism, and lead a discussion on the clips. The list of acceptable movies is at the end of the assignment schedule. I'm open to suggestions regarding movies that are not on that list, but you must clear it with me before your presentation.

Students are expected to read at least one news site (even a hard copy!) every day and monitor other news websites or news broadcasts whenever possible, and be ready to discuss events and coverage. Subscribing to news apps is a good idea. Through the university, you have access to the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal websites. News stories should be analyzed for both quality of writing and depth of reporting. We will discuss the content and structure of stories regularly in class. Students also should sample other media, including feeds posted by journalists. Also, consider listening to the New York Times' podcast, The Daily.

There will be opportunities throughout the semester for you to attend events and watch movies for extra credit.

If you have special health or educational needs, please inform me of them within the first day or so of the semester. The university has a welcoming policy regarding those who need assistance in test-taking or other learning issues. If you don't know that policy, I can explain it and so can the Student Services office.

We have a very unforgiving stance on fabricated, AI or plagiarized work. Essentially, the policy is that I will fail you for this course, send you to the provost, who will possibly de-enroll you from the university, and the issue will be in your permanent file. Not a good thing.

This is a course that demands something every day we meet, and it is easy to fall behind. If one does fall behind, this will be a very long and unsatisfying semester. If one keeps up, the semester will get easier as it goes along, and maybe even fun.

FINAL EXAM – Wednesday, Dec. 16, 7:30 am-10:00 am

As required by our accrediting agencies, the following learning outcomes must be stated:

Department Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate the skills necessary for effective research, writing, and oral communication in various genres and media.
2. Students will display interpretive, analytical, and critical skills developed through the close study and analysis of texts.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures and literary texts.
4. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the nature, structure, and history of language.
5. Students will develop redemptive social and spiritual engagement through studies of language, text, cultures, and media.

Journalism Program Learning Outcomes

Students who complete the program in Journalism will be able to

1. exhibit effective research and reporting practices.
2. display strong interpretive, analytic, and critical thinking skills.
3. communicate ideas clearly and accurately in forms appropriate to the purpose, medium, and audience.
4. employ appropriate ethical and legal standards and professional codes in their service to their communities and cultures.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Wed Sep 2, 2026	Assignment Provide some background on yourself	due by 8:30am
Fri Sep 4, 2026	Assignment Brief Survey	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Where do you get your information?	due by 8:30am
Wed Sep 9, 2026	Assignment Reading Response JBJ Chap. 1, News Criteria Discussion	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Reading Response TTM Intro	due by 8:30am

Fri Sep 11, 2026	Assignment 5 News Examples	due by 8:30am
	Quiz AP Style Quiz - A & B	due by 8:30am
Mon Sep 14, 2026	Assignment 5 Story ideas for The Point	due by 8:30am
	Quiz Current Events Week 3	due by 10pm
Wed Sep 16, 2026	Assignment Reading Response JBJ Chap. 2	due by 8:30am
Fri Sep 18, 2026	Quiz AP Style Quiz - C & D	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Movie Clips	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Reading Response TTM Introduction AND Chap. 1	due by 8:30am

Mon Sep 21, 2026	Quiz Current Events Week 4	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Reading Response JBJ Chap. 3	due by 8:30am
Wed Sep 23, 2026	Assignment Description of 1st story	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Reading Response: Vocation	due by 8:30am
Fri Sep 25, 2026	Quiz AP Style Quiz - E & F	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Movie Clips	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Reading Response TTM Chap. 2	due by 8:30am
Mon Sep 28, 2026	Quiz Current Events Week 5	due by 8:30am

Wed Sep 30, 2026	Assignment First story	due by 8:30am
Fri Oct 2, 2026	Quiz AP Style Quiz - G & H	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Movie Clips	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Reading Response JBJ Chap 4	due by 8:30am
Mon Oct 5, 2026	Quiz Current Events Week 6	due by 8:30am
	Assignment Reading Response TTM Chap 3	due by 8:30am
Wed Oct 7, 2026	Assignment Second story	due by 8:30am
Fri Oct 9, 2026	Quiz AP Style Quiz - I, J, K	due by 8:30am

	Assignment Movie Clips	due by 8:30am