### **JCOM 203: WRITING AS PRACTICE**

4 credits: CRN: 26017 Winter 2025 Global Scholars Hall 132 Mondays/Wednesdays 4 to 5:50 p.m.

Instructor: Lori Shontz, Professor of Practice

Email: <u>lshontz@uoregon.edu</u>

Student drop-in and appointment hours, virtual and in-person:

- In-person drop-in hours, no appointment necessary, Allen 328:
  - O Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- In-person, phone or Zoom appointments:
  - o Schedule at this link: <a href="https://calendly.com/lorimshontz">https://calendly.com/lorimshontz</a>
  - O Availability varies, and there are 10-minute "ask a quick question" and 20-minute standard options
- What are these for? They're for you. Getting to know your instructors matters—research shows that students who connect with faculty have more success in college. It matters to me, too: I'm better able to make recommendations for internships and jobs, and I'm able to give better advice for scheduling, etc. Plus, it's fun to get to know everyone.
  - O You don't need a specific question or problem to come to drop-in hours or make an appointment. We can just chat. Come and tell me about a book or podcast you love!

#### WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

Not everyone identifies as A Writer. But everyone in the SOJC – including those of you with a visual focus — must be able to produce writing that meets industry standards.

This class is going to raise your skill level in two ways: First, we're going to write together every day, so you'll learn that writing is a habit, not something that requires the muse to stop by. Second, we'll focus on the building block of all writing – the sentence. We're going to pull sentences apart, tease out how they work, apply those lessons to our own sentences. Then we're going to revise those sentences so they do a better job of conveying your ideas, explaining what you know or have learned or need -- and showcasing your creativity.

We're going to do this by focusing on short, typical industry assignments – emails, pieces of a portfolio website, a story based on interviews. You're going to revise everything at least once. These short assignments allow me to give you actionable feedback every week. That feedback that will pay off throughout your SOJC career. And beyond.

Think of this class as a bridge between the kind of writing you've done throughout your academic career and the kinds of kinds of stories, publicity materials and creative briefs you'll do in upper-level classes and your career.

The focus is strictly on improvement, which is why this class isn't graded. It's Pass/NoPass, meaning that everyone will need to meet a basic minimum standard and that everyone will leave this class as a better writer. Everyone has room for improvement; this class is built to make that happen.

This metaphor from my colleague Courtney Munther is a good one: This term, look at writing as you would weightlifting: To build the muscle, you must fuel yourself (i.e., read), show up, do the reps and – importantly – rest. Feedback from others will also be key helping to refine your form.

Specifically, this is what you'll do in this class:

- Practice writing as a process rather than simply a product.
- Demonstrate baseline professional proficiency in grammar and sentence construction.
- Create emails and other professional materials at a level of baseline proficiency.
- Tailor content to different audiences and platforms, recognizing their unique needs, interests and preferences.

### WHAT YOU'LL READ AND WHAT YOU'LL NEED

### You need to buy one book, which is widely available used:

• Writing Tools: 55 essential strategies for every writer, by Roy Peter Clark. You can buy the older version: 50 essential strategies. That's the one I have.

Other readings will be links or PDFs posted on Canvas. Among the authors: William Zinsser, Anne Lamott, Stephen King and the fantastically named Verlyn Klinkenborg.

You will need to use The Associated Press Stylebook, which you can access for free through the Knight Library at this link (you'll need your DuckID).

### The Technology:

- Canvas: Everything you need for this class is at canvas.uoregon.edu; log in with your DuckID.
- **Technical support:** If you have questions about accessing and using Canvas, visit the <u>Canvas support page</u>. Canvas and Technology Support also is available by phone or live chat: <u>541-346-4357</u> | <u>livehelp.uoregon.edu</u>.

#### COMMUNICATING WITH ME

My favorite part of teaching is talking with students—getting to know you, coaching you, connecting you with former students I think you should know. So please don't hesitate to contact me with questions, suggestions ... even complaints. I mean it.

This is how you can reach me—and how I'll reach you. Communication is a two-way street, and I'll do my best to hold up my end.

• Canvas announcements: This is the easiest way to reach the entire class. You should receive announcements in your inbox. If you don't, let me know.

- Email: I am reachable via email, <a href="mailto:lshontz@uoregon.edu">lshontz@uoregon.edu</a>, and I'll get back to you within 24 hours except over the weekend.
- **Student drop-in hours and appointments:** Visit with me! See the top of the syllabus for details.

Important: If something's not working for you, let me know as soon as you can.

#### **BASIC NEEDS**

If you have challenges outside the classroom that are making it harder for you to learn, there is help for you. If you're comfortable telling me about any such challenge you are facing, please do so. If there is anything I can do to help, I will.

### You can also get information and help at these links:

- **Mental health:** The UO's <u>Counseling Center</u> is open; see the link for information about inperson appointments and remote options. Note that there is a <u>Let's Talk service</u>, which has daily Zoom drop-in hours so you can talk to a human being.
- **Food:** If you are having trouble affording food, please <u>visit this webpage</u>, where the UO has a list of resources and programs with free food.
- In general: If you are having trouble connecting with the university in any way, email <u>uoadvising@uoregon.edu.</u>

### WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU

Come to class - when you are healthy.

- Attendance policy:
  - o **If you miss more than four classes, you will not pass this class**. This is a face-to-face class, and you need to be here to be successful. If you miss more than four classes, I will ask you to withdraw or I will assign a no pass grade for the class.
  - o If you have extraordinary circumstances this term that force you to miss more than four classes, let me know as soon as possible. We can work together to determine a reasonable accommodation.
  - o **There are no "excused" or "unexcused" absences.** This is UO policy because we understand that life happens, and you may need to miss class. You don't need to let

me know if you are going to miss class, but keep the attendance policy in mind and be thoughtful about your absences.

### • Attendance exceptions:

- o **Illness and disruptive life events:** Do not come to class if you are sick; please stay home, rest and recover.
- O Accommodation for religious observances: The University of Oregon respects the right of all students to observe their religious holidays and will make reasonable accommodations, upon request, for these observances. If you need to be absent from a class because of a religious obligation or observance, please complete the <u>Student Religious Accommodation Request</u> form and email it to me by the end of Week One we can make arrangements in advance.
- O Accessible education, military service and university-sponsored events: Upon request, UO makes attendance exceptions for accessible education, military service and university-sponsored events, including but not limited to athletics. For university-sponsored events, students must provide documentation to me by Week One; this documentation must be signed by a university employee verifying the student's participation in the event(s) and indicating the dates of the class(es) they will miss. If reasonable coursework modifications can be made, the absences will be permitted.
- Pregnant and parenting students: Consistent with Title IX, UO provides pregnant students, students who have given birth and students who have experienced false pregnancy with modifications related to pregnancy, childbirth, loss of pregnancy, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, lactation, and related medical conditions. If you need to request accommodations, use this form.
- o **Extraordinary circumstances:** The course attendance policy is meant to cover ordinary, day-to-day absences. If you experience an extraordinary circumstance, let me know as soon as possible, and I will work with you to consider how we might adjust course requirements.

**Participate, and be respectful:** There are lots of ways to participate, well beyond just raising your hand to talk in front of the entire group. You can engage with your small group during in-class activities. Visit my drop-in hours. Send me interesting links.

**Make deadline:** You'll turn in something to me every week, and except for your Letter to Lori (Week One) and your Final Portfolio (Finals Week), **every out-of-class assignment is due at 8 p.m. Friday**. I've planned the deadline so that I can give you actionable feedback every week before your revision is due.

### • Late Assignment policy:

- o I allow a 24-hour grace period four times with no penalty. You can turn in an assignment late four times during the term, not including the final portfolio. You do not need to ask for permission. Just submit.
- Feedback is not always possible for late assignments: If you turn in your assignment more than three days after the deadline, you will not receive detailed feedback. You will receive a grade (complete/incomplete).
- o **I will not accept work that is more than five days late.** Except for extraordinary circumstances.

o If you need more than 24 extra hours or find yourself needing more than four automatic extensions: Email me, and we'll talk about solutions.

#### WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME

**Prompt feedback and return of assignments:** I will return your assignments—with feedback—before the next assignment is due and so you have time to use the feedback. If your work is not up to the "passing" standard, you will know immediately. No surprises.

**High standards:** I would be doing you—and the communities and clients who rely on professional-level writing skills—a disservice if I didn't hold you to a high standard to be able to pass the class. *To pass the class and prepare for upper-level classes in the SOJC, expect to spend at least four hours a week outside of class reading, writing and reflecting.* 

Help: If you're struggling, let me know. *If my comments on your work are unhelpful or if you don't understand them, email me and let me know.* Communication requires at least two people; I will work to hold up my end of the conversation.

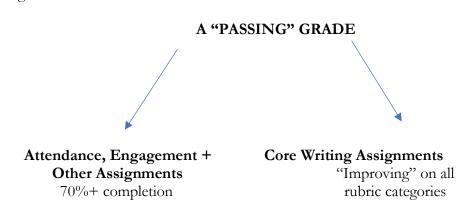
#### GRADING

This class is pass/no pass for an important reason: to give you space to grow without focusing on points or letter grades. Peer-reviewed research (the highest standard) shows that grades can prevent students from absorbing and using feedback—and feedback is a huge part of how you learn.

That's why the work in this class will be "graded" as complete/incomplete. However, the core writing assignments will also be graded according to the rubric below. You will not receive "points" for the work you submit; your work will be assessed along a continuum of growth, from beginning to excelling.

Your work this term will be split into two categories: "Attendance, Engagement + Other Assignments" and "Core Writing Assignments." Each category has a separate gradebook on Canvas.

To pass this class, you must **complete at least 70%** of the work in "Attendance, Engagement + Other Assignments" + your final portfolio must meet **baseline proficiency** ("improving") for each learning outcome on the rubric.



LEARNING OUTCOME	Excelling	Improving	Developing	Beginning
Clarity and Coherence	Exceptionally clear and well-organized; ideas flow logically; content is engaging and easy to follow.	Generally clear and organized; some organizational or coherence issues.	Several clarity or coherence issues; difficult to follow at times and/or unengaging.	Unclear and disorganized; difficult to understand or follow; unengaging.
Writing Style	Strong, compelling writing; varied sentence structure; tone is professional and appropriate for the audience.	Good writing; some variety in sentence structure; limited variety in sentence structure; occasional tone/style issues.	Weak writing; monotonous sentence structure; inappropriate tone or style.	Poor writing; lack of sentence structure variety; unprofessional and/or inappropriate tone or style.
Research, Reporting and Accuracy	Factually correct, well-researched and well-reported; demonstrates strong critical thinking; compelling details and information.	Minor factual errors; generally well-researched and reported; demonstrates solid critical thinking; relevant details/information.	Several factual errors (or one major factual error); not well-researched or reported; may not demonstrate good critical thinking; irrelevant details/information.	More than one major factual error; poor research/reporting; does not demonstrate critical thinking; lacking key details/information.
Grammar and Writing Mechanics	Virtually no or very few errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP style.	Some errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP style, but not distracting.	Frequent errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP style that affect readability.	Persistent errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation or AP style that severely impact readability.
Reflection and Revision	Work demonstrates clear, specific evidence of thoughtful reflection and revision. Revised work shows meaningful changes.	Work demonstrates some evidence of thoughtful reflection and revision. Revised work shows meaningful changes.	Work shows minimal or vague evidence of reflection and revision. Changes to revised work may be marginal or ineffective.	Work shows little or no clear evidence of reflection and revision. Work may be unchanged from original.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University Student Conduct Code (<u>conduct.uoregon.edu</u>) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct.

You will be able to use your notes and any other resources you need for all assignments in this class—which is exactly how it works in a newsroom.

In JCOM 203—and in any journalism or communications class or environment, in person or remote—academic integrity means the following:

- **Do not plagiarize:** Do not copy someone else's work and pass it off as your own. That includes the work of professional reporters as well as the work of your classmates, friends, family, fraternity brothers, sorority sisters, teammates, roommates, fellow club officers, etc. You get the picture.
- Attribute your work properly: Use first and last names for everyone you quote or paraphrase. Quotations are direct quotes—don't tweak what someone said to make the sentence sound better. When you use information from a news or other source, attribute it to that source.
- Don't copy directly from websites or other background sources: This is plagiarism, too. Don't think you can fool me—or your readers—by changing a word or two around. That doesn't fly. Again: Attribute your work properly. Be especially careful if you are cutting and pasting information from the internet. In fact, don't do it.
- **Do not make things up:** Don't invent sources, facts, people, scenarios, scores, quotes, etc. I truly hope this is self-evident.
- **IF YOU AREN'T SURE, ASK:** You're still beginning communicators. If you are unsure about whether you're skirting too close to the line, ask me.

If you plagiarize or otherwise violate these principles of academic integrity, you will flunk this class. Period.

#### **GENERATIVE AI**

You can use AI in this class only under specific conditions, which I've explained below. According to UO policy, if you use AI in other circumstances, I may submit a report of suspected academic misconduct to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards for that office to determine responsibility and, if warranted, assess a grade penalty.

Here's what you should be aware of as you decide whether you want to use Generative AI:

- You need to double or even triple check everything. No GenAI tool differentiates among verified information, honest mistakes, misinformation, disinformation, sarcasm or satire. In short: GenAI is often wrong. Trust nothing. Verify.
- A response to a GenAI prompt is based not on quality, but on the quantity of the material that has been used to train the tool. A lot of published journalism, for instance, is not the kind of journalism we teach at the SOJC. Some of it is boring. Some of it upholds problematic power dynamics, including white supremacy. That's not the kind of work I want you to do or the kind of communication communities and democracy need.

• You must explain to your readers, viewers and listeners how you used Gen AI in your work. GenAI is a source, and it needs to be treated as such.

### Here's how you CAN use Gen AI:

- Transcribing interviews. Many communicators use Otter.ai.
- Searching for expert sources or a summary of basic facts to help get yourself familiar with a new topic you're writing about. The host of the Newsroom Robots podcasts recommends Perplexity.ai, which pulls from peer-reviewed journals (the highest research standard). But again: VERIFY.
- Copy editing and proofreading, including checking for correct grammar and AP style. Grammarly can be helpful.

### Here's how you CANNOT use Gen AI:

- Inputting your notes and asking it to use those notes to write your assignment.
- Inputting my assignment directions and asking it to produce a response.

### In all other cases: ASK ME:

- If you find yourself wanting to use AI in another way in this class, send me an email with the details first: what you want to use, why you want to use it, how you will use it.
- You must have my explicit permission before you proceed. You'll get that only in writing, not in a discussion with me.

### One last, important, personal note:

One of the most important things I do as a teacher is give you feedback. Obviously, that's because it sharpens your craft. That matters.

But it's also because giving feedback helps me to build a relationship with each one of you. Learning is social. We all learned that during the pivot to remote at the beginning of the pandemic, right? It was hard to learn alone.

You'll get better feedback when the original work comes from you, personally, rather than being filtered through GenAI. Your original work and the struggle to produce it are vital to helping us build strong relationships, which are at the heart of both quality communication and meaningful learning.

#### TITLE IX

If you are experiencing sex- or gender-based discrimination, harassment or violence, you should call the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE (7224) or visit <u>safe.uoregon.edu</u> for help. If you are experiencing any kind of discrimination or harassment, contact the Dean of Students Office at 541-346-3216 or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator/OICRC at 541-346-3123 to request information and resources.

You are not required to participate in an investigation to receive support, including requesting academic supportive measures. Additional resources are available at this link.

As a UO faculty member, I am a designated reporter. This means if you tell me about sex discrimination, harassment or retaliation, I am required to report this to the Title IX coordinator. (More information is <a href="https://example.com/here.">here.</a>) There are confidential employees at the UO, including advocates in the <a href="https://example.com/here.c

#### WEATHER AND CAMPUS EMERGENCIES

If there is an emergency that disrupts academic activities, that means that course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages could change. I'll communicate information about changes as soon as possible through Canvas announcements (or email if Canvas is not working).

Unless the UO is officially closed for inclement weather, our class will meet in person. If I need to cancel class while the university is open, I'll announce via Canvas.

#### **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS**

The best journalism and communications work reflects the community it covers. That's why I am passionate about increasing and maintaining diversity in the classroom and in workspaces. If everyone is the same gender, race, ethnic group, sexual identity, religion, etc., you're going to produce homogenous work that is at best boring, at worst riddled with errors of fact and/or omission.

In this class, I will encourage open inquiry, freedom of expression and respect for difference. I expect you to respect the differences among you and your classmates and between the class and me. I will respect yours. We can certainly disagree—in fact, I expect that we will at times. But we can all respect each other, and we can all learn from each other.

If anything in this class makes you uncomfortable, let me know ASAP. Let's talk about it.

# COURSE CALENDAR

Schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced via Canvas.

WEEK 1: THE WRITING PROCESS, PART ONE	READING TO BE DONE BEFORE CLASS	DUE
<ul> <li>Monday, Jan. 6</li> <li>Introductions to each other and to the writing process</li> <li>Writing practice</li> <li>Read aloud together: Chapter One of On Writing Well, by William Zinsser</li> </ul>	Obviously, nothing today.	8 p.m. Wednesday:  • Letter to Lori (note: send this in the body of an email to me at <a href="lshontz@uoregon.edu">lshontz@uoregon.edu</a> .  This is the only assignment you will submit this way.
<ul> <li>Wednesday, Jan. 8</li> <li>Writing practice</li> <li>Read aloud together: Introduction: A nation of writers, Roy Peter Clark</li> </ul>	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 41: Turn procrastination into rehearsal. (PDF on Canvas so you have time to get the book.)	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 1  8 p.m. Friday:  • Email to a professor
WEEK 2: THE WRITING PROCESS, PART TWO	READING TO BE DONE BEFORE CLASS	DUE
<ul> <li>Monday, Jan. 13</li> <li>Writing practice</li> <li>Review Email to a professor: content + form, with a focus on sentence structure</li> </ul>	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 43: Read for both form and content.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 2  • Reflection on email to a professor feedback
Wednesday, Jan. 15  • Writing practice	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 44: Save string.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 3

Read aloud together:     New Sentences, by     Sam Anderson		8 p.m. Friday:  • Revision: Email to a professor
WEEK 3: THE ART AND CRAFT OF THE SENTENCE, PART ONE	READING TO BE DONE BEFORE CLASS	DUE
Monday, Jan. 20 • NO CLASS: Martin Luther King Day		
<ul> <li>Wednesday, Jan. 22</li> <li>Writing practice</li> <li>Read aloud together:         <ul> <li>The structure of sentences, by Alice</li> <li>Kolln</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 1: Begin sentences with subjects and verbs.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 4  8 p.m. Friday:  • OPTIONAL: Revision 2, email to a professor
WEEK 4: THE ART AND CRAFT OF THE SENTENCE, PART TWO	READING TO BE DONE BEFORE CLASS	DUE
<ul> <li>Monday, Jan. 27</li> <li>Writing practice</li> <li>Read aloud together:     Selections from Bird     by Bird, by Anne     Lamott</li> </ul>	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 2: Order words for emphasis.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 5

Wednesday, Jan. 29  • Writing practice  • Read aloud together: Kurt Vonnegut's letter to Xavier High School	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 3: Activate your verbs.  • Tool 4: Be passive aggressive.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 6  8 p.m. Friday:  • Professional bio
WEEK 5: PRE-WRITING: RESEARCHING, REPORTING, REFLECTING	READING TO BE DONE BEFORE CLASS	DUE
Monday, Feb. 3  • Writing practice • Review professional bio: content + form, with a focus on punctuation	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 10: Cut big, then small.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 7  • Reflection on professional bio feedback
Wednesday, Feb. 5  • Writing practice • Read aloud together: Interviewing Basics by Mark Blaine in Interviewing: The Oregon Method	<ul> <li>Roy Peter Clark:</li> <li>Tool 14: Get the name of the dog.</li> <li>Tool 16: Seek original images.</li> </ul>	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 8  8 p.m. Friday:  • Revision: professional bio
WEEK 6: THE RHYTHM OF WRITING, PART ONE	READING TO BE DONE BEFORE CLASS	DUE
Monday, Feb. 10  • Writing practice  • Connect with your classmate to do first profile interview.	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 34: Write from different cinematic angles.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 9

<ul> <li>Wednesday, Feb. 12</li> <li>Writing practice</li> <li>Read aloud together: <ul> <li>A writer's life a</li> <li>teacher's message:</li> <li>Describe the world in great detail, by Lori Shontz</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 7: Fear not the long sentence.  • Tool 18: Set the pace with sentence length.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 10  8 p.m. Friday:  • OPTIONAL: Revision 2, professional bio
WEEK 7: THE RHYTHM OF WRITING, PART TWO	READING TO BE DONE BEFORE CLASS	DUE
<ul> <li>Monday, Feb. 17</li> <li>Writing practice</li> <li>Read aloud together, classic writing: Joan Didion, Slouching Toward Bethlehem</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Roy Peter Clark:</li> <li>Tool 9: Let punctuation control pace and space.</li> <li>Tool 19: Vary the length of paragraphs.</li> </ul>	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 11
<ul> <li>Wednesday, Feb. 19</li> <li>Writing practice</li> <li>Connect with classmate to do last interview before profile is due.</li> </ul>	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 27: Reveal traits of character.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 12  8 p.m. Friday:  • Profile story
WEEK 8: INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES	ACTIVITIES TO BE DONE INSTEAD OF CLASS	DUE
<ul> <li>Monday, Feb. 24</li> <li>Wednesday, Feb. 26</li> <li>NO CLASS</li> <li>You will meet individually with me for 20 minutes to discuss revisions and progress in the class.</li> <li>Stay tuned for signup details</li> </ul>	TBA	8 p.m. Friday: Reflection: Highlights of your individual conference

WEEK 9: SELF EDITING AND PROOFREADING	READING TO BE DONE BEFORE CLASS	DUE
<ul> <li>Monday, March 3</li> <li>Writing practice</li> <li>Review profile story: focus on structure.</li> <li>Read aloud together: TBA</li> </ul>	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 10: Cut big, then small	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 13
Wednesday, March 5  • Writing practice  • Read aloud together, classic writing: Hunter S. Thompson, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas		By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 14  8 p.m. Friday:  • Revision of profile
WEEK 10: FINISHING TOUCHES	READING TO BE DONE BEFORE CLASS	DUE
Monday, March 10  • Writing practice • Read aloud together: Selections from Several Short Sentences About Writing, by Verlyn Klinkenborg	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 32: Place gold coins along the path.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 15
Wednesday, March 12  • Writing practice  • Read aloud together: TBA	Roy Peter Clark:  • Tool 50: Own the tools of your craft.	By end of class:  • In-class writing exercise No. 16  8 p.m. Monday, March 17
		Final portfolio     (including reflection)