

LSC # Approved  
Action 7-15-91

COVER SHEET: Request for Approval to Use W-Designation

TYPE I. Professor Commitment

- Professor James DeGeorge Phone x7584  
 Writing Workshop? Yes  
 Proposal for one W-course  
 Agree to forward syllabi for subsequently offered W-courses?

SIGNATURES:

Professor(s) James M. DeGeorge  
Department Chairperson Craig G. Evers  
College Dean Richard Jordan  
Director of Liberal Studies Charles D. Abbott

## **WRITING SUMMARY -- JN 120/Journalistic Writing**

JN 120, Journalistic Writing is a required journalism course taught every semester. Most students in the class are journalism majors; some are communication media majors and fashion merchandising majors and a few students take the course as an elective. Class size is limited to 20 students, one per computer in the department's writing lab.

Writing in the course divides into three types of assignments: (1) pre-writing exercises in preparation for writing news stories, (2) note taking in connection with interviews of potential news subjects, and (3) completed news stories. All the writing is evaluated and discussed in conferences but the major grades are assigned to the writing of complete stories.

### **Pre-writing**

As pre-writing activities for news writing, these exercises help the student gain fluency in certain syntactic strategies frequently used in news writing. Many of the exercises are done by the class as a whole--group composing, as it were. To accomplish this, the instructor projects images from his computer onto the screen in front of the class and students suggest possible wording. The results are recorded on the screen and evaluated and revised by class consensus. In addition, the instructor spends time at each computer station with the student intervening as the student composes individually. The instructor sees and comments on the writing and revising involved in this process.

### **Note taking**

This writing is used as a way to enhance interviewing skills. Students conduct and record interviews with potential news sources. Student and instructor then review the notes to determine completeness and accuracy. These notes become raw material for news stories and the instructor uses the notes as a device to help find and focus the story.

### **News story writing**

Writing a complete, short news story and gaining fluency in the format is the objective of the course. The process is taught in two stages: writing the lead and writing the rest of the story, or in news parlance, completing the inverted pyramid. The process begins with a heuristic to discover the news and asks students to rough out in words the heart of the lead and then to shape the words into a complete sentence. Intervention during the process is made possible as the instructor visits each computer work station and discusses the process with the student. Much rewriting is involved here. The student finally submits a number of assignments which have benefited from the revision process.

The same kind of process takes place in composing the complete story. The instructor introduces the successful components of an effective news story one by one to the students. Then, through the writing/intervention/revision process, the student finally produces the complete story, having incrementally learned to write each component. Midway through the semester the student and instructor review together the student's portfolio of completed assignments to determine a grade-in-progress. There are between 12 and 15 of these exercises which culminate after revision and conferencing in formal assignments to be graded.

## **I. Catalog Description**

JN 120/Journalistic Writing

3c--01--3 sh

Prerequisites: EN 101, JN 105, JN 106

Emphasis on intelligent use of writing ability in a journalistic style and understanding of the why of journalism and mass media. This course practices and improves writing skills for all news media, print and broadcast.

## **II. Course Objectives**

- A. To recognize information that constitutes a good lead and separate that information from non-essential matter
- B. To compose a good summary lead from this material
- C. To analyze information and organize it into the components of a good news summary
- D. To compose a complete news story observing the requirements of readability, precision and concision

## **III. Course Outline**

- A. Three strategies used by news writers to achieve economy and continuity (2 weeks)
- B. The summary lead (5 weeks)
  1. Why it has developed
  2. The attributes of a good lead
  3. The process of composing a good lead
- C. The inverted pyramid (7 weeks)
  1. The rationale
  2. The components and structure
  3. The process of composing the components into the complete news story
- D. Interviewing techniques

## **IV. Evaluation Methods**

The portfolio method is used to review the student's combined works to reach a final grade.

- A. Satisfactory completion of the pre-writing assignments in III. A., 5%
- B. Satisfactory completion of notes taken in interviews, 5%
- C. Completed lead assignments judged according to criteria developed during the instruction process, 20%
- D. Completed news stories evaluated according to criteria developed during the instruction process, 70%

## **V. Required reading**

- A. DeGeorge et. al., excerpts from *Style and Readability*
- B. Fred Fedler, *Writing for the Print Media*
- C. Numerous stories from newspapers

## COMBINING IN CONTEXT

*In these exercises, combine the following groups of sentences into a paragraph or paragraphs, using noun/noun connections where appropriate. You should also use wh-connections where needed. Since many of the sentences take their meaning from preceding sentences, work on the sentences in numerical order.*

### The New Fuels

1. Most people have heard of gasohol.  
Gasohol is a blend.  
The blend is of gasoline.  
The blend is of alcohol.
2. You might even know that the alcohol comes from farm products.  
The alcohol is in this mixture.
3. But most people are not familiar with some other fuel mixes.  
The fuel mixes were recently created.
4. For example, how many of us know about petrocoal?  
Petrocoal is a combination.  
The combination is of gasoline with alcohol.  
The alcohol is made from coal.  
The alcohol is made from natural gas.
5. Or who could name the ingredients?  
The ingredients are in methacol.  
Methacol is a fuel.  
The fuel is recommended by the National Maritime Union.  
It is recommended for powering ships.
6. You might easily identify one ingredient by its name.  
The ingredient is methanol.
7. Yet, you would not likely guess the other ingredient.  
The ingredient is pulverized coal.
8. You would probably have the same trouble.  
The trouble is with Hydro Fuel.  
Hydro Fuel is a blend.  
The blend was created by United International Research, Inc.

## EXERCISE 3

### Leads

#### IMPROVING WEAK LEADS

**SECTION I: CONDENSING LENGTHY LEADS** Condense each of these leads to no more than two typed lines: about 20 words.

1. Maggie Baile, 28, of 810 N. Ontario Ave., an employee at the Halstini Manufacturing plant, 810 Hall Road, suffered second and third degree burns at 2:15 p.m. yesterday when sparks from her welder's torch started a fire that quickly spread through the factory, causing nearly \$1 million in damage.
2. During a regularly scheduled meeting in its chambers at 8 p.m. last night, the City Council voted 5 to 2, after nearly 3 hours of debate, in favor of a proposal which, for the convenience of pedestrians, will require developers to construct a sidewalk in front of every new home and subdivision.
3. At its annual awards banquet last night, the city's Chamber of Commerce named Marlene P. Gianangeli, the founder and owner of the city's largest pest control firm, the city's "Businessperson of the Year," and then elected Destiny Schifini, a vice president at the Sun Bank, to a two-year term as chamber president, to begin on the 1st of January.

**SECTION II: USING PROPER SENTENCE STRUCTURE** Rewrite the following leads, using the normal word order: subject, verb and direct object. Avoid starting the leads with a long clause or phrase. You may want to divide some leads into several sentences or paragraphs.

1. Saying that he had concluded that no benefit would come to anyone from the imprisonment of a 51-year-old woman who killed two teen-agers while driving while intoxicated last summer, Circuit Court Judge Thomas L. Levine today suspended the woman's driver's license for five years and sentenced her to one year in the county jail—but then suspended her jail sentence on the condition that she seek professional help for her chronic alcoholism.
2. Although the world has plenty of food due to great advances in agricultural techniques in recent years, the World Bank reports that about 700 million people in developing countries do not have enough to eat, primarily because they do not have sufficient funds to buy the food that is available.
3. Because the victim contributed to his own death by refusing medical attention that might have saved his life, James K. Arico, the 47-year-old man accused of stabbing him during an argument seven months ago, was allowed to plead guilty to assault today and was sentenced to six months in the county jail. He had been charged with murder.

**SECTION III: USING STRONG VERBS** Rewrite these leads, using stronger, more active and descriptive verbs.

1. A 75-year-old woman who was approached from behind while walking south on the 5200 block of Cypress Woods Drive was robbed by a teen-ager who threatened her with a stick Tuesday morning.

## EXERCISE 4

### Body

#### IMPROVING POORLY WRITTEN STORIES

**INSTRUCTIONS:** The following stories contain many of the flaws discussed in this chapter. The stories' second paragraphs are weak. Their later paragraphs are poorly organized and poorly written, with inadequate transitions. Rewrite the stories, correcting all their errors.

1. A hammer-wielding masked man robbed a convenience store Wednesday night and made off with an unknown amount of money.

Claire McAuliffe was the clerk on duty at the time of the robbery. She was working alone.

The store is located at 100 N. Wilshire Avenue, and she told police that he entered the store at about 11 p.m. She described him as about 6 feet tall, 200 pounds, 30 years of age and balding.

At first, he asked for a pack of cigarettes. Then he pulled out a knife from a pocket and threatened McAuliffe, saying he would cut her if she didn't give him all the money in the cash register. He reached into the register himself and began scooping out all the money, including all the change. He then ran out of the store, fleeing on foot.

Police have no suspects. While cruising the neighborhood, they were unable to find anyone matching the description she provided.

2. An ex-teacher who taught at the elementary level and who claims she is the victim of sex discrimination today filed a lawsuit against the School Board.

After graduating from college three years ago, Janet Hodgson was hired as a second grade teacher at Wilson Elementary School. Nineteen days after starting her 3rd year, she discovered that she was pregnant.

According to her lawsuit, Mrs. Hodgson asked her principle for a leave of absence because she was suffering from pre-eclampsia toxemia of pregnancy.

Her lawsuit adds that she was told by her principle that she could have a one-year leave of absence with the understanding that she would be eligible to return to her job at the start of the next school year, and that—if her performance was satisfactory—she would be granted tenure at the end of that year. Tenure is normally granted at the end of three full years of continuous service. Before that time, teachers are given only one-year contracts.

About 9 months into her leave, Mrs. Hodgson wrote to her former principle, reminding him of her intent to return to her job.

Mrs. Hodgson received a reply from the principle that said her job had been filled and the school had no intention of reappointing her. Mrs. Hodgson said the principle also refused to tell her of any other job openings.

Mrs. Hodgson claims in her lawsuit that her discharge was carried out without notice, explanation or good cause. She claims that she has suffered mental anguish, loss of pride, emotional distress and financial hardship. She is seeking compensatory damages of \$25,000 and punitive damages of \$5 million.

3. A Memphis couple have filed suit against Cira Bazinet, M.D.; Memorial Hospital; and Zilow Needle Manufacturers, Inc., charging them with the negligent care of a patient.

The couple's lawsuit charges that Stephen J. W. Dummerth was treated negligently which caused serious injury and damages to him. On May 2 of last year, Dummerth was admitted to Memorial Hospital for an operation. He charges that during the operation a Zilow needle was broken and that the tip, which broke off within his body, was not removed from his body during the operation.

## EXERCISE 5

### Leads

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Write only a lead for each of the following stories. As you write the leads, consult the checklists on pages 87–88. This exercise—and others throughout this book—contain misspelled names and style errors that you will be expected to correct. To learn the proper spellings of the names, use the city directory in Appendix A. To check the proper style, consult *The Associated Press Stylebook* in Appendix B.

1. The man is Herman Weiskoph of 4817 Twin Lakes Boulevard in your city. The woman involved is Sharon Meyer of 810 Kalani Street. She is pregnant with his child. However, they are not married. At 9 a.m. next Monday morning, a judge in your county will hear his plea. The judge, JoAnne Kaeppler, today issued a temporary restraining order to prevent Meyer from having an abortion. The judge issued the order in response to a suit filed by Weiskoph. On Monday, the judge will decide whether to make the order permanent or to dissolve it. In his lawsuit, Weiskoph offers to marry Meyer, to pay all her medical expenses, and/or to take custody of the child after it is born. He bases his suit upon a claim “that a natural father has rights to the life of his child.”
2. At its meeting last night, the Muncie city council in Indiana made another important but controversial decision. Not everyone agrees with it. After hearing from interested citizens during a 60-minute hearing, the council voted by a narrow margin, 4–3, to stop donating cats and dogs from the city pound to the University of Indiana. Proposed experiments there caused some controversy earlier this year. The controversy erupted when one researcher proposed suspending cats from their legs to test the effects of spaceflight on bones. Another controversy erupted when a researcher proposed drowning dogs to test methods of saving human drowning victims. Last year, the city donated about 1,400 cats and dogs picked up on the city’s streets and held 10 days at the pound without being claimed. Now, instead, it will put the cats and dogs to sleep, as it does with other unclaimed animals. University officials said they are unhappy, and one researcher explained, “People don’t understand, but our experiments with animals have resulted in great advances for mankind, providing life-saving medicines and other innovations that make all our lives healthier and safer.”
3. There is a new study out, one conducted by your city’s police department. The department questioned a random sample of 350 people living within your city and announced the results during a press conference held at 9 a.m. this morning. The chief of police made the announcement. He said the survey revealed that 65 percent of all the crimes occurring in your community are not reported to the police because the victims consider the incidents unimportant or believe that nothing can be done about them. About half the violent crimes of rape, robbery and assault seem to be reported, he said. The rates for reporting crimes ranged from 25 percent for household larceny to 69 percent for motor vehicle theft. Forty percent of those who reported crimes gave economic reasons, either to recover property or collect insurance money, for doing so. Thirty-five percent cited a sense of obligation.
4. Previously, if you parked in a parking spot reserved for the handicapped in your city you would be fined \$10. However, your city council met last night and heard and discussed complaints that other motorists often use the spaces, so the handicapped are unable to shop or eat out or be entertained. As a result, the council voted 5–2 to raise the fine to \$250—the highest in the state—to prevent able-bodied drivers from using the parking spots reserved for the handicapped. Those spaces normally are close to store entrances. Two members of the Paralyzed Veterans Association were

## EXERCISE 6

### Body

#### WRITING COMPLETE NEWS STORIES

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Write complete news stories based on the following information. Be thorough: include most of the information in your stories. Because much of the material is wordy, awkward and poorly organized, it will have to be extensively rewritten.

1. There was a meeting of scientists at the University of Oklahoma today. They talked about dangers of nuclear war. The scientists represented many different fields, from biology to physics and meteorology. They concluded that the results of a nuclear war would be much worse than believed. Survivors may envy the dead. "We have very good reason to be scared," said one scientist about the long-term effects of nuclear war. More than 500 scientists from around the world—including Russia and China—attended the conference. Some concluded that a nuclear war between two major superpowers would result in the extinction of the human race. One said that even a relatively small nuclear war would trigger major changes in climate, which would destroy crops and endanger millions of people. A major nuclear war, they estimated, would kill more than 1 billion people and critically injure at least that number. A huge cloud of dust could be thrown into the atmosphere, cutting off sunlight and causing temperatures to drop well below freezing for weeks—possibly months or even years, so the world would be plunged into a new ice age. Much of the world's farmland would be covered with ice. People would freeze or starve in a dark, smoggy world. In a full-scale nuclear war, the Northern Hemisphere would be destroyed. Everyone there would suffer, not just the citizens of the warring nations. In fact, everyone there would be likely to die. The effects would spread across the equator to the Southern Hemisphere, so the entire globe would be affected. The predictions are based upon statistics concerning a nuclear war involving 5,000 megatons of explosives, or about one-third of the arsenal of the Soviet Union and the United States. The consequences would be more or less severe, depending upon the amount of weapons used and how they were used. A less severe war, a 3,000-megaton war, would lower the global average temperature by 8 degrees, which would be sufficient to wipe out all the world's grain production. The scientists said a Civil Defense program would save people's lives—but only for a few miserable weeks or months. Instead of being killed by the initial blasts, the survivors would die more slowly: of starvation, radiation, cold and disease. There would be no electricity or means of communication or transportation. Medicine and medical care would be unavailable. In parts of the United States, even water might be difficult or impossible to obtain.
2. It was an unusual case. It reached the Supreme Court in the State of New Hampshire, and the judges there reached their decision today. They ruled in favor of the doctor, not in favor of the couple filing the lawsuit. The couple are Wilbur and Martha Yantorini of Keene. Wilbur, the father of two other children, underwent a vasectomy two years ago to keep from fathering any more children, as he felt that was all that he could reasonably afford to raise. A year later, his wife, Martha, became pregnant. Three months ago, she gave birth to a third child, Fred. Wilbur then underwent a second vasectomy, as medical tests showed the first had been unsuccessful. The couple subsequently filed suit upon the doctor who performed the first operation, Dr. Richard Z. Abberger. They are demanding the costs of rearing the third child—a normal, healthy male. It is the first case of this kind to be filed in the state of New Hampshire, and perhaps the first in the nation. The couple demanded \$500,000, calculated at the rate of \$25,000 for 20 years to raise and educate Fred. They also