

**Spring 2018**  
**J337F/J395 59: Long-Form Feature Writing**  
**Classes: T/Th 2-3:30 CMA 4.144**

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### **Description & Objectives**

“One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or along the way.”  
—Poet and storyteller Ben Okri

“Tell me something I don’t know.” Almost forever good editors have asked reporters for stories that leap off the page and lodge themselves indelibly in readers’ minds. Stories that illuminate corners of the world and human experience people wouldn’t otherwise see. “Stories,” in the words of an old editor of mine, “that levitate.”

In my experience, we find such tales where our deep curiosity leads us. They can be about war, politics, crime or any other issue of importance to the immediate public interest. Or they can delve into areas that simply tell us something interesting about our world – like one of those trademark NPR stories that illuminates the secret life of the tuba or the unexpected history of the pear.

To tell such stories effectively, yes, we need to get our facts straight. But making them memorable requires tapping into what the writer Tom Wolfe calls the “emotional core” – exactly how and to what extent human beings and their experiences are bound up with the issue under your storyteller’s microscope.

Together we’ll learn how to find such stories, explore time-honored techniques for telling them, and examine new ways of interactive storytelling by which consumers of journalism take on greater responsibility for explaining things to themselves.

In sum, the goal of this course is to come up with nonfiction stories we *really* want to tell, to learn to tell them well, and to think hard about the techniques that help us to do so. We’ll explore habits for thinking deeply about the storytelling process, from the spark of an idea through to the finished tale. Stories that, in a word, levitate.

Along the way, we will learn to:

- Define what constitutes a *really good story* of the kind people want to read, watch or hear.
- Think critically about your choice of topics.
- Identify the best format and tools for telling the story you want to tell.
- Hone thinking, writing and production skills.
- Study and practice techniques for adding quality to your stories.
- Consider the role of ethics in explanatory storytelling as it relates to fairness, accuracy and seeking truth in a digital age.

## Course Mechanics

**Focus:** Consider this course a thinking person’s professional workshop. We’ll think as hard as we can about why, as journalists, we do what we do and how we can do it best. We’ll look for stories *you* want to tell, the assumption being that if you’re truly interested in something you can, by employing good technique, make other people interested too. You will produce one long-form story at the end of the semester after working methodically through the steps necessary to get there – from inspiration and reporting to organizing, drafting and editing. We’ll devote a portion of class time to discussing our work and helping one another sort out challenges that arise.

**What it’s not:** This is *not* a course that will teach you new multimedia skills or software programs you will then use to tell stories. In fact, our purpose is exactly the opposite: to determine what tools are most appropriate for the story we want to tell and to use them. In short, the tools will not dictate the work; the work will dictate our choice of tools.

## Classes

Our class meets for 75 minutes twice a week. Think of it as a multifaceted editorial meeting in which we will:

- Start every Tuesday with a discussion of world, national and local news, and how it relates to our work. We call this **News of the Week**. We’ll use a digital subscription to The New York Times (required) as our anchor and draw from other news sources as well. Suggested outlets: The Guardian, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Al Jazeera English, BBC World News, Reuters, VICE News and BuzzFeed.
- Start every Thursday with a discussion of stories you’ll pull from any source anywhere (e.g., magazines, newspapers, books) *because they appeal to you*. We call this **Stories We Like**. You’ll be responsible for presenting your story to the class, saying why you chose it and what we have to learn from it in terms of **Storytelling Essentials**. (See “Assignments” below.) Works of poetry and fiction are welcome, but remember, our focus is that which will help us create nonfiction stories.
- Build up our intellectual capital for acquiring a better command of what story possibilities the world holds and how to discover and act on them.
- Workshop our reporting, writing and production techniques according to the Course Schedule below.

## Assignments

1. Assignments will focus on the stages of bringing a good story to life: coming up with winning ideas; introducing your ideas in proposal form; developing *the* idea through research and reporting; organizing your information; drafting your story; engaging with an editor; and producing a final story we (and others) will like. Here are the deadlines:

- **Assign 1: Initial list of story ideas (due: Jan. 26, 6 p.m.)** 50 pts.
- **Assign 2: Story proposals, the first two (due: Feb. 9, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 3: Story proposals, the final one (due: Feb. 19, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 4: Reporter's blueprint (due: March 2, 6 p.m.)** 50 pts.
- **Assign 5: Outline + evolved blueprint (due: March 23, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 6: Story rough cut (due: March 30, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 7: Story fine cut (due: April 13, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Assign 8: Story final (due: April 27, 6 p.m.)** 100 pts.
- **Class participation** 300 pts.

2. **Grad students only:** In consultation with your instructor, grad students will read a book, view a documentary video or otherwise consider a significant piece of work that uses the techniques of explanatory journalism to examine its topic. You will then write a critique assessing the work, citing at least three outside sources to help develop the argument. Length: 700 words. **Deadline: On or before March 26, 6 p.m.**

3. **“Storytelling Essentials”:** In this class participation exercise, we'll keep a running list of what we determine to be the essential elements for the successful telling of stories.

4. **Taking notes:** To help ensure productive discussions, you'll want to keep notes on your reading-listening-viewing assignments. The instructor reserves the right to require occasional “reflection papers” to test comprehension of course materials. (See “A Tip for Success” below.)

**Project Formats:** If your project is print only, plan on producing a story of not less than 2,500 *finished* words (3,000 for graduate students) and not more than 3,500 *finished* words (4,000 for graduate students); if you plan on incorporating multimedia elements, please consult Tracy about parameters appropriate to this course. **Remember: Long-form storytelling requires length to establish depth, but quality, not gross quantity, is our main goal. Thus the stress is on thorough, “finished” work, with no loose ends.**

## Grades

1. **Timing:** Deadlines are sacrosanct in journalism and critical in any area of media production. Meet them and qualify your assignments for full credit; miss them and your highest potential grade will drop – one grade level at each of the following benchmarks: 30 minutes, 12 hours, 24 hours late.

2. **Assessment:** Assignments will be graded on the skill with which you use words and, where appropriate, images and sound; good organization; solidly reported content; and production skills necessary to satisfy your topic – and the degree to which you improve your skills over the course of the semester. (See Appendix I for a detailed assessment grid.)

3. **Points:** Final course grades will be calculated on the plus/minus basis and tallied according to the following guidelines:

▪ Developmental assignments	400
▪ Semester project (total of all three drafts)	300
▪ Class participation	300
“News of the Week”	50
“Stories We Like”	50
Attendance and discussion	200

#### 4. Grading Scale

A = 940 to 1000 points

    A- 900 to 939

    B+ 870 to 899

B = 840 to 869

    B- 800 to 839

    C+ 770 to 799

C = 740 to 769

    C- 700 to 739

    D+ 670 to 699

D = 640 to 669

    D- 600 to 639

#### Filing Your Work

We will post all assignments (proposals, outlines, drafts) as “files” to a discussion thread on Canvas. Please also file a backup copy of your assignment by email to Tracy and Cate with the assignment properly labeled (see below) and sent as a Word attachment.

**Important: When filing an attachment always put the same label (slug) on both your email and the Word attachment.**

Here’s how to create a proper slug:

Start by using the correct tag for the item you’re sending: For all assignments, it’s “file.” For all other messages, it’s “memo.” Add a space, then your last name, and then another space, and finally the assignment number (or for memos only, a brief topic identifier). If your last name is Smith, for example, and you’re filing your first assignment, the slug reads:

**file smith assign1**

If you’re sending a routine memo, it reads:

## memo smith missed deadline

Please send all backup files to both Tracy and Cate. Send memos to either one or both, depending on to whom you want to talk about what.

**Important: Excepting memos, anything you write for this class (story proposals, blueprints or story drafts) must carry a working headline. Artfully summing up our theme in a handful of words helps us focus – and focusing on what we want to say is vital in the telling of good stories.**

## Editorial Consultations

You will meet with Tracy at least once during the semester to discuss individual progress, reporting methods, research ideas and career goals. Please make use of office hours to discuss any of the foregoing. You're always welcome.

## Readings

Reading, both panoramic and sharply focused, is essential to your success as a journalist. Formal reading assignments come from main two sources – required texts and materials provided for you on Canvas. **Please do all the reading (or viewing or listening) assigned for each discussion so we can make the best use of our class time.**

## Required Texts and Subscription

“Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers’ Guide From The Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, edited by Mark Kramer and Wendy Call

“The Art and Craft of Feature Writing,” by William E. Blundell

The New York Times: A digital subscription (look for at the student discount rate)

## Course Flags

This course carries two course flags in the undergraduate curriculum: Independent Inquiry and Writing. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to provide you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. Writing courses are, as the term implies, writing intensive.

## Attendance & Rules of the Road

Showing up when you need to be there is a first requirement of the journalism professional. Do your own work. Come to class on time. If you can't be on time, tell Tracy why – in advance and, if possible, the day prior.

**Important: Please attend all classes. If you accumulate three unexcused absences from regular classes, you should consider dropping the course.**

Please don't interpret this to mean you have three “free passes” – you don't. Each class

period carries specific weight in your grade for class participation. Being five minutes late equals half an absence. Fifteen minutes late is a full absence. Leaving class early will be treated the same way. Unexcused absences can be converted to excused absences when you present acceptable documentation – e.g., a note from a healthcare provider.

**Digital absences:** Display a phone, laptop or tablet or use one to text, email or browse the internet and you will be marked absent. Running personal digital errands on class time renders us mentally absent and isn't fair to others who are mentally present and engaged.

Attention is the key to good intellectual work. To help us maintain our focus, sharp and clear, use of electronic devices of any kind isn't permitted unless required for in-class assignments as specifically approved by the instructor. **Long story short: If you require personal digital connectivity during class time, this is not the class for you.**

**Likewise, please don't consume food in class. Beverages are okay provided they don't prove a distraction.**

### **A Tip for Success**

**Taking good notes** is second nature to professional and creative people; even in the presence of cameras or other recording devices you want your own record of comments and events to help you decide what *you* think about things and how they connect to *other things* you know. Accordingly, each time you encounter a source, whether human or media (e.g., book, article or video) please take notes. To talk or write authoritatively about a subject you need to not only read, view and/or listen but to master the relevant materials, which means retaining key ideas and supporting detail. Don't leave your data in the cloud; making information your own requires that you work it. Taking good notes is the best way yet invented to do just that.

There is lots of reading in this class, from which we're looking to gain insights about the elements of our own work. If you don't take reading notes, you won't retain much and, hence, you won't have much to offer in class or a record of what you considered important while reviewing the course materials. To repeat: Please take good notes.

### **Our Roadmap**

The following class schedule is intended to provide a roadmap of the territory we'll cover. At the same time, a map is a map, and we'll speed up, slow down or change direction depending on the "reality on the ground" – to wit, our progress as a class in covering the requisite materials and techniques.

## **COURSE INTRODUCTION: EXPLAINING WHAT TO WHOM AND WHY?**

### **Jan. 16          Some Basic Questions**

What will this course cover? How will it work? We'll review the syllabus and talk about how you will source "News of the Week" and "Stories We Like."

**Assigned** Course syllabus  
TD memo: “News of the Week Made Easy”

**18 Basic Definitions**

What is explanatory journalism? How is it evolving? What is the “explanatory continuum”? What are “storytelling essentials”? How do we pick the best tools best for telling our stories?

**Assigned** “Telling True Stories,” p. xv-xvii, 3-16  
Alumni Story Sampler on Canvas  
TD memo: “Lucky Eight’ Story Ideas”

**In-class** A brief tour of story modes and techniques

**23 The Case for Story: Debating the Digital Earthquake**

What’s our “personal relationship with story”? What’s the impact of the digital revolution on our storytelling traditions? Are we in a “golden age” or dumbing down? What’s at stake?

**Assigned** David Folkenflik: “Great Long-Form Journalism, Just Clicks Away”  
Jonathan Mahler: “When ‘Long-Form’ Is Bad”  
CJR: “Readers Will Finish Long Stories, Especially If They Come from a Trusted Source”

**Suggested** Daniel Smith, et al: “Cooperation and the Evolution of Hunter-Gather Storytelling”

**25 Storytelling Basics: Considering the Continuum**

Explanatory journalism exists on a sliding scale, from the overwhelmingly expositional to the intensely narrative. Let’s examine stories to decide how they’re the same or different, and what that tells us about the nature of the craft and its materials. **Practice: We’ll discuss writing story proposals.**

**Assigned** John Branch and the NYT team: “Deliverance from 27,000 Feet” (2017); “Without Climbing Everest, Chronicling a Solemn Descent” (2017); Kathryn Schulz: “The Really Big One” (2015)  
TD memo: “Writing Proposals That Levitate”

**Homework** Read “Deliverance” and “Big One” – which do you like better and why? Read “Without Climbing” – what do you

think the respective reporting techniques? Read the “Proposals” memo to prepare for your first assignments.

**Suggested** NYT: “The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek” (2012)  
John Hersey: “Hiroshima”(1946) (book excerpt)

### 30 **Working the Blend: Plot, Architecture, Format and Technique**

Long-form storytelling is typically a blend of elements: plot, structure (story architecture), format and technique. Let’s also talk about “working the weave” – the technique of establishing the proper balance of narrative and exposition. **Practice: We’ll discuss the “Universal Story Template.”**

**Assigned** Ana Swanson: “Kurt Vonnegut Graphed the World’s Most Popular Stories”  
John McPhee: “Structure”  
TD memo: “Universal Story Template”

**Suggested** “The Art & Craft of Feature Writing,” p. 69-126

**Homework** Prepare to talk about the elements and purpose of structure. Bring in a story and be ready to pinpoint the lede and nut-graf sections and say how they work separately but together.

### Feb. 1 **Form I: The Social Dynamic Narrative**

Longtime New Yorker writer John McPhee put it this way: “You find out what sort of writer you’ll be by banging around from one form to the next.” We’ll start our study of form with one that melds an evolving event or trend with the narrative techniques of a nonfiction novel. In so doing, it tries to tap the emotional core in the service of larger social issues.

**Assigned** Jacqui Banaszynski: “AIDS in the Heartland”  
Context and analysis on Canvas

**Homework** Bring in a story you think is a current-day equivalent of “AIDS in the Heartland”

### 6 **Form I: The Social Dynamic Narrative, Continued**

**A Skype conversation with “AIDS in the Heartland” author Jacqui Banaszynski.**

**Assigned** Jacqui Banaszynski bio



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### **Form II: The Public Interest Explainer**

Where does this type of story fit on our “explanatory continuum”? What are some hallmarks of great explaining? Let’s first look at “enlightened public narrative.” **Practice: We’ll discuss the “Reporter’s Blueprint.”**

**Assigned** NPR team: “The Giant Pool of Money”  
TD memo: “The Reporter’s Blueprint”

**Homework** Bring in a story you think is a current-day equivalent of “The Giant Pool of Money.”

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### **Inspiration I: Finding a Story**

Coming up with ideas that have the right degree of “specific gravity” (substance + emotional density = energy <sup>2</sup>) to carry the distance is both the challenge and the redemption of long-form work. Where do the good ideas come from? **(A conversation with director R.B. Brenner.)**

**Assigned** Amy Argetsinger: “Kakenya’s Promise” (Parts 1 and 2)  
R.B. Brenner bio

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### **Form III: Literary Nonfiction**

Literary nonfiction comes in many forms, from the artfully angled profile to the autobiographical essay with stops in between. Do we need to make a case today for literary journalism? Is literary journalism too literary?

**Assigned** **Narrative:** Gay Talese: “Brave Tailors of Maida”  
**Personal essay:** Zadie Smith: “Love in the Gardens”  
**Essay on the edge\*:** George Orwell: “A Hanging”  
(\*Teacher will explain!)

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### **Form III (cont.): Pointillism, a Subset of Literary Nonfiction**

Let’s continue our discussion of nonfiction with a literary flair.

**Assigned** Gay Talese: “New York Is a City of Things Unnoticed”  
“Telling True Stories,” p. 65-78, 89-94

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### **Reporting I: The Art, Craft and Psychology of Handling Sources**

Long-form work is source-intensive and, therefore, you surely want to think about practical guidelines in dealing with sources but also the deeper dynamics of the relationship between journalist and source. **Practice: Let’s discuss the basics of field reporting.**

**Assigned** “Telling True Stories,” p. 24-45  
Janet Malcolm: “The Journalist and the Murderer” (excerpt)

New York Times Book Review: "Is It Possible for a Writer to Be Objective?"

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**Form IV: Working the Profile**

The pros tell us that doing a good profile is not only a matter of interviewing your main subject but also the people who know him or her best and can deepen the depth of field. Historical research is important too.

**Assigned** Thomas Golianopoulos: "(Bleep) That Gator"  
Alex Tizon: "My Family's Slave"  
Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah: "A Most American Terrorist: The Making of Dylan Roof"  
"Telling True Stories," p. 86-89

**Suggested** Gay Talese: "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold"

Mar. 1

**Reporting II: Thinking Your Story Through (And What Happens When You Don't)**

Stage your reporting properly and save yourself tons of wasted effort when you're in the field. How do we find the "right" direction? How do we identify sources and cultivate them?

**Assigned** "The Art & Craft of Feature Writing," p. ix-xii, 1-22

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**Inspiration II: Fanning the Creative Spark**

No doubt about it: Coming up with winning story ideas is a creative process. What are some ways to locate and ignite our creativity? How do we get audiences "to invest"? How do we induce the "A-ha!" experience? **(A conversation with singer-songwriter Darden Smith.)**

**Assigned** "Telling True Stories," p. 19-24, 55-59  
SongwritingWithSoldiers website  
Darden Smith bio

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**Inspiration III: Treasure Buried in the Mountain: Searching the Writerly Core**

If curiosity be a key, how do we exploit our own deep curiosity? What roles do myth and the psyche play in finding stories worth telling? How do we identify a story that rises internally?

**Assigned** Christopher Booker: "The Seven Basic Plots" (excerpt)  
"The Art & Craft of Feature Writing," p. 23-68

**SPRING BREAK**

**20 Form V: The Chess Game of Visual and Audio Storytelling**

A good documentarian, working in photos, film, sound or all three, faces challenges the pure writer doesn't. How different is it to work the "blend" and the "weave" in telling stories for the eyes and ears? (**Conversation with Eli Reed and Tracy Dahlby.**)

**Assigned** Eli Reed bio and Magnum Photos portfolio; other materials  
TBA

**22 Organization I: Methods and Chronology Revisited**

Explanatory work can be fun but is also fraught and fluid. You need a system. How do you find the one that works for you? Let's look again at how to handle source material, space and time.

**Assigned** "The John McPhee Reader": "Introduction"  
John McPhee: "Encounters with the Archdruid"

**27 Organization II: Reasons Stories Fail – No Characters, No Conflict, Too Much "About"**

Put people first. Okay, but how do we know when we've found the right ones? Why is "viewpoint switching" so important and why do we often come up short? What is "About-itis" and why is it a problem?

**Assigned** "The Art & Craft of Feature Writing," p. 13-22 (review)  
Tom Herman's memo on "About-itis"

**29 Organization III: Translating Reporting Into Writing and Production**

Stories aren't only about people and events; they also involve historical background and other elements that exist outside the narrative flow. How do we achieve proper balance between narrative and context? How do we translate our blueprint into a workable writing and production outline?

**Assigned** "The Art & Craft of Feature Writing," p. 127-157  
"Telling True Stories," p. 97-121

**Apr. 3 Production I: Let's Talk About Our Writing**

So we've reported our story, organized our materials and our thoughts, and moved on to drafting our work. Let's talk about how to make the writing part as painless as possible.

**Assigned** George Orwell: "Politics and the English Language"

5                    **Production II: Really, We Do Need to ‘Work the Weave’**

One of the biggest challenges of telling narrative stories is to arrive at the right combination of ideas, examples and background. We’ll review how to blend the necessary elements.

**Assigned**        “Telling True Stories,” p. 125-159

10                   **Form VI: Telling Medium- and Long-form Stories on the Web and Where the Market is Headed**

Former students and alumni of this course have or are now working as videographers for legacy and start-up media. In this session we’ll discuss the state of medium- and long-form work on the web, technological change and the state of journalism in general. Where does writing come into play? **(A Skype conversation with NBC News documentarian Rebecca Davis.)**

**Assigned**        **Davis story sampler**  
Rebecca Davis bio

**INTERLUDE: CONSIDERING CULTURE & ETHICS**

12                   **Separating Fact from Fiction**

Narrative storytelling can impose unique ethical challenges. How do we keep fact separated from fiction and sources protected? To what extent do we have to maintain “distance” from our stories?

**Assigned**        “Telling True Stories,” p. 163-193

17                   **Working Across Cultures**

Crossing cultural boundaries requires special considerations too. How do we maintain our identity while exploring the identity of others? How do we gain entry into unfamiliar worlds and present them fairly?

**Assigned**        Tracy Dahlby: “Into the Field: A Foreign Correspondent’s Notebook” excerpt  
“Telling True Stories,” p. 46-51

19                   **Production III: The Overwhelming Advantages of Self-Editing**

The ability to step back, spot flaws in your work and work out solutions as objectively as possible is a key to successful production – and not as painful as it sounds. We’ll discuss tips for better self-editing.

**Assigned**        “The Art & Craft of Feature Writing,” p. 218-224; optional,

p. 188-217.

- 24 Your Careers: The Independent Storyteller**  
How do creatively motivated people make a go of it in this heavily digitized, competitive age? Where should you place yourself? What steps should you take? How do you develop and protect your aesthetic and earn a living at the same time? **(A conversation with writer Richard Parker.)**

**Assigned** “Telling True Stories,” p. 263-287  
Parker story sampler  
Richard Parker bio

- 26 Production IV: But Everybody *Does* Need an Editor**

To be successful, you also need “another set of eyes” on your work to help shape the ideas and get a “sense of audience.” We’ll talk about the relationship between content producers and content editors.

**Assigned** “Telling True Stories,” p. 197-223

- May 1-3 Course Wrap-Up: Reviewing the Road Traveled**

## APPENDIX I

### Assessment Grid for Production Work

In evaluating your work for this course, we will use the following framework:

1. The work shows an effective, well-focused presentation of topic.

0                      1                      2                      3                      4

2. The ideas represented in the work are focused and well developed for the purposes of the assigned format.

0                      1                      2                      3                      4

3. The work demonstrates effective research and/or reporting, factually accurate, and is supported by appropriate sources.

0                      1                      2                      3                      4

4. The writing is straightforward, logical and persuasive of its point of view.

0                      1                      2                      3                      4

5. Grammar, spelling and punctuation are correct.

0                      1                      2                      3                      4

6. The work properly attributes sources.

0                      1                      2                      3                      4

7. The visual and audio materials used in the work (if any) are of a quality and variety conducive to telling the story well.

0                      1                      2                      3                      4

8. The work demonstrates critical thinking about issues relevant to a full treatment of the topic at hand.

0                      1                      2                      3                      4

## APPENDIX II

### Required University Notices and Policies

#### University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

#### Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone), <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

#### Plagiarism and the Consequences of Plagiarizing

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>

#### Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin

The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning.

The UT Learning Center: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Career Exploration Center: <https://moody.utexas.edu/career-services/students/career-exploration-programs>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

### **Moody College Writing Support Program**

The [Moody College Writing Support Program](#), located in BMC 3.322, offers one-on-one assistance without charge to undergraduates seeking to improve their professional writing in all fields of communication. We have student specialists in Journalism, RTF, CSD, CMS, Communication & Leadership and PR & Advertising. In addition, we offer workshops to strengthen core writing skills in each field and to inspire students to strive for excellence. Students may guarantee their time by booking half-hour appointments on our website for assistance during all stages of the writing process. Writing coaches also will take drop-ins if they are not working with appointments.

### **Use of Canvas in Class**

This course will use Canvas—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, to submit assignments, and to give you online quizzes and surveys. You can find support in using Canvas at <http://canvas.utexas.edu> or by contacting the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

### **Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students**

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <https://security.utexas.edu/policies/aup>

### **Religious Holy Days**

By UT Austin policy, you must notify the instructor of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the instructor will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)**

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

### **Counseling and Mental Health Services**

Taking care of your general well-being is an important step in being a successful student. If stress, test anxiety, racing thoughts, feeling unmotivated or anything else is getting in your way, there are options available for support.

For *immediate* support:

- Visit/Call the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC): M-F 8-5p | SSB, 5th floor | [512-471-3515](tel:512-471-3515) | [cmhc.utexas.edu](http://cmhc.utexas.edu)
- CMHC Crisis Line: 24/7 | [512.471.2255](tel:512-471-2255) | [cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html)

**CARE Counselor** in the Moody College of Communication is: Abby Simpson, LCSW

- |CMA 4.134 | [512-471-7642](tel:512-471-7642) (Please *leave a message* if she is unavailable)

**FREE Services** at CMHC:

- Brief assessments and referral services
- Mental health & wellness articles - [cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/commonconcerns.html)
- MindBody Lab - [cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/mindbodylab.html)
- Classes, workshops, & groups - [cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html](http://cmhc.utexas.edu/groups.html)

### Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office

### Q drop Policy

The State of Texas has enacted a law that limits the number of course drops for academic reasons to six (6). As stated in Senate Bill 1231:

“Beginning with the fall 2007 academic term, an institution of higher education may not permit an undergraduate student a total of more than six dropped courses, including any course a transfer student has dropped at another institution of higher education, unless the student shows good cause for dropping more than that number.”