

COMM 260-01W: Environmental Journalism
Loyola University Chicago
SPRING 2024

TUESDAY-THURSDAY 8:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.
Mundelein Center, Room 605 (Lake Shore Campus)

Instructor: Brett Chase

Email: bchase2@luc.edu

Office hours: Send me an email to set up a meeting.

Bio: Brett Chase is a veteran journalist who covers environmental news for the Chicago Sun-Times.

Course Description and objective: This course will introduce you to journalistic writing focused on environmental issues. It's a strong and persuasive style of writing that will help you engage readers with clear and concise prose.

We'll discuss the importance of accuracy, fairness, objectivity and critical thinking. There will be writing exercises and assignments, including a final project.

Please note: Students will not use AI-assisted technology in this class.

Textbooks: You will need an AP Stylebook. I suggest the online version, which is less than \$30 for one year. You will be quizzed on your knowledge of AP style.

I also recommend *The Elements of Style*, William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White. Students will stay current on relevant local and national news.

Grading

Attendance and participation will count toward a third of your final grade. Meeting deadlines are crucial, and final versions of stories should be ready to publish. Accuracy is critically important.

Final grades will be determined based on the following breakdown:

Attendance and participation: One third
Writing assignments, including rewrites, outside class: One third
Final writing project: One third

Grading Scale

100-94 = A	93-90 = A-
87-89 = B+	84-86 = B 80-83 = B-
77-79 = C+	74-76 = C 70-73 = C-
69-67 = D+	66-64 = D 63-60 = D-
59-0=F	

Schedule (subject to change)

Week One (Jan. 16 and 18)

The most important thing in journalism: Accuracy. Reporting and writing basics. Show, don't tell. What makes a good story? Ethics. *Climate discussion.*

Week Two (Jan. 23 and 25)

Researching and pitching stories. Making an impact. Types of stories: News, features, explainers and investigative. *What's environmental protection and why is it needed?*

Week Three (Jan. 30 and Feb. 1)

Review basics of reporting, writing and style. What is news? What is propaganda and misinformation? Telling stories through people. Basics of interviewing. Why rewrites are necessary. *Environmental justice and why it's important.*

Week Four (Feb. 6 and 8)

Environment and politics. How industry plays a role in climate policy and environmental protection.

Week Five (Feb. 13 and 15)

Working on long-term projects. Seeking documents and making open records requests. What to do with a news release. *Understanding air pollution.*

Week Six (Feb. 20 and 22)

Drinking water. Public health Lessons from Flint, Benton Harbor and beyond.

Week Seven (March 5 and 7)

Spring break. No classes.

Week Eight (March 12 and 14)

Recycling and sustainability. Discuss final projects and midterm progress.

Week Nine (March and 21)

PFAS and other threats. Lead in drinking water: The Chicago problem.
Environment in the news

Week Ten (March 26 and 28)

Work on outside assignments. We will not be meeting in class this week.

Week Eleven (April 2 and 4)

How environmental justice policy is playing out in Chicago and across the United States.

Week Twelve (April 9 and 11)

Transitioning from fossil fuels and the emerging green economy.

Week Thirteen (April 16 and 18)

Writing about science for a general audience. Discuss recent studies.

Week Fourteen (April 23 and 25)

Environment in the news. Address questions about final projects.

Final exam

Final project due

Grading

The School of Communications' standard for an A grade is a story that is ready to be published. That means a story should be free of errors, clear, compelling and well organized. Otherwise, it will not receive an A.

What makes a story not publishable?

Any errors
An incomplete, confusing or dull lead
Poor organization
Lack of reputable sourcing or incomplete attribution
Spelling and grammatical errors
Style errors

School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments. Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments,

and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;

- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at

https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml.

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. **The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course.** All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction. The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances.

The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml .

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's

application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association or to similar organizations.

Accommodations

Loyola University Chicago provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC). Professors will receive an accommodation notification from SAC, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. Please note that in this class, software may be used to audio record class lectures in order to provide equitable access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester. For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or SAC@luc.edu.

Online Recordings

In this class software may be used as needed to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions will be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class, to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class when the Sakai course is unpublished (i.e. shortly after the course ends, per the Sakai administrative schedule). Students who prefer to participate via audio only will be allowed to disable their video camera so only audio will be captured. Please discuss this option with your instructor.

The use of all video recordings will be in keeping with the University Privacy Statement shown below.

Privacy

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording.

Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

As Loyola's mission statement holds, "We are Chicago's Jesuit, Catholic University—a diverse community seeking God in all things." Together, as a community rich in diversity, we are called to "expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith."

Recognizing and appreciating the diverse collection of identities, experiences, perspectives, and abilities of the students, faculty, staff, and community partners with whom we collaborate, the School of Communication commits itself to enriching academic experiences through the advancement of diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive practices.

Managing Life Crises and Finding Support

Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral ([LUC.edu/csaa](https://luc.edu/csaa)) for yourself or a peer in need of support. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: [LUC.edu/dos](https://luc.edu/dos) or

LUC.edu/csaa; phone number 773-508-8840, email deanofstudents@luc.edu

Title IX Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners

As an instructor, I am considered a Responsible Campus Partner (“RCP”) under Loyola’s **[Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation](#)** (located at **www.luc.edu/equity**). While my goal is for you to be able to share information related to your life experiences through discussion and written work, I want to be transparent that as a RCP I am required to report certain disclosures of sexual misconduct (such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner and/or domestic violence, and/or stalking) to the University’s **[Title IX](#)** Coordinator.

As an instructor, I also have a mandatory obligation under Illinois law to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect (**<https://www.luc.edu/hr/legal-notices/mandatedreportingofchildabuseandneglect/>**).

The purpose of these reporting requirements is for the University to inform students who have experienced sexual/gender-based violence of available resources and support. Such a report **will not generate a report to law enforcement** (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Furthermore, the University’s resources and supports are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. Please note that in certain situations, based on the nature of the disclosure, the University may need to take additional action to ensure the safety of the University community. If you have any questions about this policy, you may contact the **[Office for Equity & Compliance](#)** at **equity@luc.edu** or 773-508-7766.

If you wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call **[The Line](#)** at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with additional resources as needed. More information can be found at **luc.edu/coalition** or **luc.edu/wellness**.