Goals:
Journalism Basics is a writing workshop. Our goal is to produce clear, true, well-written stories. Students will learn the skills essential for success in journalism: researching, reporting and writing news and feature stories on deadline.

The course will help students develop fundamental techniques including writing in news style, interviewing, use of the Internet for research, and covering events and press conferences.

Through in-class drills and simulations, students will learn to report, write and edit news and feature stories under deadline pressure. They will learn how news stories move through the editing cycle at daily newspapers and news sites. Through simulations and writing exercises, students will learn to give and receive constructive criticism of their writing and reporting.

Through class discussions, students will learn to analyze news and feature stories, and to compare and contrast how stories are played in national, regional, and local newspapers. They will analyze and discuss examples from the day’s news, critiquing the stories for clarity, accuracy, voice, tone, balance, writing quality, length, and placement in the newspaper.

Students will learn to recognize and properly address ethical and legal concerns in journalism. The class will also consider the future of journalism in the Internet era.

The course is designed to make the students better writers, more acute observers, and better informed citizens. It will lay the foundations of journalistic craft for students interested in working for a campus publication or pursuing journalism as a career. Students will be encouraged to publish their work if it is of sufficiently high quality.

Requirements:
Class attendance is mandatory. Be on time.

Active participation in class drills, simulations and discussions.

Civility. All criticism must be constructive.

Absence policy:
Each student will be granted two unexcused absences. After two absences, your overall grade will be lowered by 2.5 percentage points for each absence. Extreme emergencies requiring a student to miss class will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
Required textbooks:

*The New York Times* (physical paper, not online) required reading every weekday. Free copies are available at Wilder and in the Science Center.


*Telling True Stories*: A Non-Fiction Writers’ Guide from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, Mark Kramer, Plume, January 30, 2007


Grading: Participation drives the workshop. Doing the required reading, participating in classroom assignments and discussions, offering constructive criticism, and working effectively on team assignments and in simulations will account for 20 percent of your grade.

Students must adhere to basic rules of attribution and originality in all assignments. Your writing will be line edited for factual accuracy, style, spelling, grammar, syntax, and flow. Points will be awarded for original ideas and reporting.

Students should keep a hard copy and a computer back-up of any written work.

Late papers: Journalism operates on deadlines. Late papers will not be accepted.

Graded in-class assignments: There will be two quizzes on the textbook material. Each will account for 2.5 percent of your grade.

Graded take-home assignments will consist of:

- Three news/feature stories, 750 words minimum, 1,000 words maximum, each accounting for 20 percent of your grade.
- One longer-form news/feature or profile, minimum 1,500 words, accounting for 15 percent of your grade.

If you do the assignments, participate regularly in class, exhibit comprehension and use of the skills and news style you are being taught, you are likely to get a B.

If you show extra effort and initiative, have good story ideas and produce clean copy and engaging, well-written stories, your grade will be higher.
Honor Code:
Oberlin College requires that students sign an "Honor Code" for all assignments.

This pledge must be written out and signed on all take-home assignments:

"I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment."

For further information, see the student Honor Code, which you can access via Blackboard>Lookup/Directories>Honor Code. Please read the section titled “What sorts of behavior/activity constitute Honor Code violations?” carefully.

In professional journalism, plagiarism usually results in immediate dismissal of the plagiarist. In this class, any instances of plagiarism will be handled on a case-by-case basis. At Oberlin, plagiarism is a major Honor Code violation. Any plagiarism would have a serious deleterious effect on the final course grade and could result in suspension from Oberlin College.

Research:
If you need help finding information or conducting library research, you may wish to schedule an appointment with a reference librarian. Librarians can help you plan a research strategy, search databases effectively, and locate books, articles, quality web sites, data, and other resources for any type of research project. Fill out the form on the library's web site to get started. Drop-in research assistance is also available in all campus libraries.

Disabilities:
Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability is requested to speak with the professor no later than September 10.