

→ **Syllabus for Foundations of Journalism (Spring 2024):**

→ **Instructor:** Ashtyn McAdams

→ **Tutorial Hours:** Available after-school

→ **Email:** [ashtyn.mcadams@dcsms.org](mailto:ashtyn.mcadams@dcsms.org)

when needed.

→ **Classroom:** D10

→ **Lecture:** 2:11-3:45 PM,

→ **Grades:** 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

Monday-Friday.

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→ **Course Description:**

Foundations of Journalism is an English elective course. It's intended as a general course to enhance students' communication and media literacy skills. It is a prerequisite for subsequent journalism courses. This course is designed to help students produce a factual, journalistically-sound piece of writing from interviews they conducted. By the end of this course, students should be able to produce a factual, journalistically-sound piece of writing from interviews they conducted. Students should also be able to create at least one accompanying visual element (photo/video) and publish their work (story + visual) to the web. Students' stories may be published in *The Pony Express*, Center Hill High School's student newspaper or in Center Hill's student literature magazine, *inkstained*.

→ **Learning Outcomes:**

Throughout this course, students will...

1. *Develop an awareness of the history and role of journalism in Mississippi and in American society*, by exploring the relationship between a free press to a democratic society, by tracing the historical development of media through American history, by identify famous Mississippi journalists/newspapers and their historical significance, and

discovering careers related to the field of journalism and new media.

2. *Be able to gather and evaluate information* from a variety of sources and analyze the reasoning, relevancy, and sufficiency of the information gathered.
3. *Develop the journalistic writing skills* necessary to communicate in print media with emphasis on writing, interviewing, observing, reporting, reacting, and synthesizing.
4. *Develop an understanding of the legal and ethical principles associated with practicing media*, by examining the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, identifying and analyzing major court decisions relevant to student media, and investigating the legal parameters of libel, slander, and copyright law.
5. *Develop the skills necessary to demonstrate the use of video, photography, and design in media*.
6. *Understand the world of digital publishing and linking*, by examining the ways online content differs from print content, by publishing stories in a digital format, and by inserting links into online stories that add context or depth to coverage.
7. *Understand the role of advertising in communications media* and produce sample advertisements for local business.

→ **Classroom Policies & Expectations:**

As a student in this course, you should be RESPECTFUL.

1. ***Respectful*** to your classmates, the classroom, and most importantly yourself.
2. ***Engaged***. Stay focused and attentive. If you need to stand up, stretch, use the restroom, or

step outside the class for a minute, do so in the least disruptive manner possible. Keep distractions to yourself and your classmates to a minimum by keeping laptops and personal devices away during instructional time.

- a. With the exception of lecture time or when you are taking a test, if you need to leave the room to use the restroom, you may place your phone on my desk and write your name on the board. One student per bathroom may leave at a time (2 students max out of the room). Quietly retrieve your phone and erase your name from the board upon your return.
3. ***Striving for success.*** Try your best and try your hardest. “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.” Don’t let success pass you by because you decide not to try. Everyone—your peers, your friends, your family, your teachers—wants to see you reach your full potential and achieve your goals.
4. ***Prepared for class.*** Bring your supplies and yourself every day, ready to learn, interact with your peers, and try something new. Please bring your laptops (and chargers) to every class, charged to ensure you’re able to participate fully in the day’s activities.
5. ***Excited to learn.*** You might not find every lesson or activity as exciting, fun, and interesting as your peers. Find ways to connect your own interests, hobbies, and other enjoyments into the lessons and activities. Share with your teacher and peers ideas on how to make the lesson more exciting for you. You will learn best when you’re having fun and enjoying yourself, and as your teacher, I want to collaborate with you so you’re learning and excited about it.
6. ***Communicative.*** Participate in classroom discussions by speaking up, speaking clearly, and speaking loudly. Ask questions, make observations, advise your peers, and answer

challenges. Everyone in this classroom is an individual, with a unique life experience and a unique point of view. Your voice matters, and I want to hear it.

7. **Timely.** Be in the classroom before the bell rings. Turn in your assignments by their deadlines.
8. **Forethoughtful.** Plan ahead for possible disruptions, distractions, or emergencies (like your internet going out, missing class for a doctor's appointment, etc). Life happens and sometimes gets in the way of learning. When it does, contact your teacher as soon as possible and let me know so I can plan on how to accommodate your situation. Waiting too long to bring me into the loop limits the options available to me to help you.
9. **Understanding.** Everyone has bad days, and everyone learns and creates at their own pace. Be mindful of others still working if you have finished an assignment early. Keep volume down and find something productive to work on during free time (reading a book, working on assignments for another class, completing extra credit assignments, playing chess, completing a logic or sudoku puzzle, drawing and/or creating a free write, etc). Be encouraging and helpful—do not dismiss, ridicule, or demean a student for taking longer than you on an assignment or when grasping a concept.
10. **Listening.** You should be listening and open to receiving and responding to the messages in your environment. This includes listening for the teacher's instructions, for peers in need of a helping hand, for questions and answers you needed but did not voice yourself, and for encouragement by your teacher and peers.

→ **Phone Policy:**

Students will be given opportunities numerous times throughout the semester to use their phones in an academically appropriate and engaging way. During lessons, groups, and

independent work, students should put their phones away (on silent and not on their desks) unless otherwise instructed. The following guidelines are copied directly from their CHHS student handbook:

1. **1st Offense**—First offense will result in confiscation of the device with parental contact. The electronic device will be returned at the end of the school day to the student or his/her parent/guardian as determined by the building principal.
2. **2nd Offense**—Second offense will result in confiscation of the electronic device and a mandatory parent/administrator conference. The electronic device will not be returned directly to the student; parent/guardian must meet with a school-level administrator to collect the electronic device.
3. **3rd Offense**—Third offense will be considered repeated and/or flagrant and the penalty for such acts will be determined by the building administrator. The phone will be confiscated, and penalties could include, but are not limited to the following:
  - a. Check-in/Check-out procedures for the electronic device during the school day (1-10 days)
  - b. ALC/In-School Suspension (1-3 days)
4. **4th Offense**—Fourth offense will result in school suspension (1-3 days), and a loss of electronic device privileges pending reinstatement by the building principal.
5. **Unauthorized use of an electronic device will be treated as an insubordination issue by teachers and administration.**

→ **Assigned Seats, Teacher-Selected Groups, and “Free” Time:**

Students will choose their own seats at the beginning of the semester and remain there during lecture time. During group assignments and independent work time, students may move around the classroom, select their own partners, and move to different desks.

Repeated disruption to the learning environment by a student or group of students will result in the teacher switching the student-selected seating chart around. The teacher will try to rearrange the students who have not engaged in the disruptive behavior as little as possible while also addressing the need to separate the group disrupting. If student-selected groups show to not be productive, on task, and engaged with activity at hand, the teacher will hand-select groups to keep individuals involved and learning.

Students who complete their work in a timely manner will be allowed to participate in free time. Students may read, play chess, draw, free-write, do independent research on their laptops, solve logic and sudoku puzzles, and quietly interact with peers who have also completed their work. If the majority of the class has completed an assignment, and there is no other activity prepared (i.e. all students finish a test and the next lesson starts tomorrow), students will be allowed to get out the board games.

→ **Late-Work & Make-Up Work Policies:**

All assignments turned in late will receive a deduction of 5 points (out of 100). Exceptions will be made on an individual basis. You must be timely and forethoughtful when notifying your teacher and requesting reasonable time accommodations to an assignment's deadline. Do not wait until after the assignment's deadline to inform your teacher of an issue with the due date.

→ *As a general rule of thumb, I allow all electronic assignments to be completed by the end of the day—11:59 PM—to allow students time to finish at home.*

When a student is absent from school, the number of days allowed to complete any required make-up work is commensurate with the number of days missed. For example, if a student is absent from school for one (1) day, he/she has one (1) day to complete the required make-up assignments. If the student is absent for five (5) days, he/she will have five (5) days to complete his/her make-up work. Additional time to complete any makeup assignments may be allowed on a case-by-case basis.

→ **Incomplete & Missing Assignments:**

You will have **one week after the deadline** to finish any incomplete or missing assignment. After a week, I will put a “1” in the gradebook to show the assignment has not been turned in. Students may still turn in their missing assignments to receive *full credit with a late deduction* after the “1” has been put in. On a student’s progress report, I will highlight and mark any missing assignments or work that has received a failing grade. After a week, assignments listed on the progress report as missing will no longer be accepted for full credit and will be given either *half-credit* or a *zero* on a case-by-case basis.

→ *No makeup work will be accepted during the last week of school.*

→ **Academic Honesty:**

Students are expected to be academically honest, and those who engage in academic dishonesty should expect serious consequences. Cheating on assignments or tests, inappropriate

or unauthorized collaboration as defined by the teacher, or committing plagiarism will not be tolerated.

All definitions of plagiarism for final papers apply to drafts as well. All ideas, words, or written work that is wholly or partially not one's own must be cited and referenced appropriately. As a rule of thumb, a student using more than three consecutive words from a source should place the words within quotation marks and provide the appropriate citation. Summaries and paraphrased material when the original work has been significantly modified also require citations according to the style used in the course. Students should be aware that individual homework assignments, take-home-test, and other outside projects should not be completed with other students. The sharing of ideas verbal or written on these assignments may result in answers that bring into question the issue of academic dishonesty.

→ *Note:* Cheating on tests, exams, and assignments are Level II disciplinary offenses and, regardless of other punishment, will result in a grade of "0" on the assignment. Consequences for Level II disciplinary offenses will result in (*at minimum*) an Administrator Conference/ALC/mandatory student-parent-administrator conference and (*at maximum*) school suspension (one to three days).

→ **Grading Scale:**

- A → 90-100%
- B → 80-89%
- C → 70-79%
- D → 65-69%
- F → 0-64%

→ **Grading Weight:**

- **Exams:** 20%
- **Tests/Projects, Labs/Quizzes:** 50%
- **Daily Grades/Homework:** 30%



→ **Exemption Policy:**

Students in grades 9-12 may be exempt from end of course and final exams (not attendance) if the following criteria are met:

1. The student has a **ninety-five (95) or above semester average** in the course.
2. The student has an **eighty-five (85) or above semester average** and does **NOT** have more than **four (4)** days/periods unexcused absences for final exams.
3. Student has **NOT** been assigned to an **Alternative Learning Center (ALC)** for more than five (5) days, has **NOT** been suspended and/or placed in **DeSoto County Alternative Center (DCAC)** or the **Juvenile Detention Center (JDC)** at any time during the semester (August-December or January-May).
4. *Excused absences* will **NOT** impact course exemptions.

→ **Extra Credit Opportunities:**

Various opportunities will be given to all students throughout the semester to earn extra credit. Extra credit points will be distributed to assignments at the *end* of each nine weeks. Any unused extra credit points will carry over to the next nine weeks. Tests/Projects are prioritized when distributing extra credit points. Extra credit points **cannot** be applied to final exams.

**Syllabus Acknowledgment Form Foundations of Journalism (Spring 2024)**

This form **MUST** be filled out by a parent/guardian, signed by both a parent/guardian and the student, and returned to Ms. McAdams by **MONDAY, JANUARY 08, 2024**.

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**Student Information**

**Student's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student's School Email** \_\_\_\_\_@dcsms.org

**Student's Grade**  *9th grade*  *10th grade*  *11th grade*  *12th grade*

**Parent's/Guardian's Phone** \_\_\_\_\_  Cell  Landline

**Parent's/Guardian's Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Best Time to Contact Parent/Guardian** \_\_\_\_\_

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By signing my name below, I acknowledge I have **received a copy of the syllabus** for Ms. McAdams's Foundations of Journalism class and **understand its policies and expectations** of my child as an **active participant** and **student** in the class.

**Parent's/Guardian's Name (please print)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent's/Guardian's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Student's Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_