

Yearbook – 2nd period  
Yearbook/Newspaper Editors – 3rd period  
Newspaper – 4th period (B lunch)  
Journalism – 6th period  
Psychology / Sociology – 7th period  
Conference – 1st and 5th periods  
Tutorials: After school Mon through Thurs, or by appt.

Mr. Birnbaum  
Plano East Senior High School – Room B4-201  
[mike.birnbaum@pisd.edu](mailto:mike.birnbaum@pisd.edu)

## Journalism I Syllabus

### 1. **Course Overview:**

Journalism is an elective course that covers everything you wanted to know about Journalism and then some, including, but not limited to:

1. Purposes of Journalism
  - a. To inform the masses
  - b. To keep the government transparent
2. History of Journalism (especially in America)
  - a. Colonial Period
    - i. The 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment
  - b. Yellow Journalism
  - c. Change of the Medium with Technology
3. Types of Journalism
  - a. Print
    - i. Leaflets
    - ii. Newspapers
      1. Tabloids vs. Broadsheets
    - iii. News Magazines
  - b. Radio
  - c. TV
    - i. Local Affiliates
    - ii. Broadcast Networks
    - iii. 24/7 Cable Networks
  - d. Internet/Blogs
  - e. Social Media
4. **How to Write like a Journalist**
  - a. Succinct, Just the Facts, the 5 W's and H, and the Inverted Pyramid
  - b. Plagiarism, Libel, and Slander – the Law
  - c. Active vs. Passive Voice
  - d. The Copyeditor's RED INK
5. Types of Newspaper Articles
  - a. News, Features, Editorials, Sports, Columns, and MORE
  - b. **The Secrets to UIL Journalism Competition**
    - i. **News, Features, Editorials, Headlines, and Copyediting**
6. Print Writing vs. Broadcast Writing
7. How Journalism Coverage Has Evolved
  - a. From Biased to Neutral to Biased, and Outright Gossip
  - b. Slanted Appeal for Your Audience?
  - c. Fake News?

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As students of Journalism, you will not only learn the in's and out's of the craft, you will also greatly improve your overall writing abilities, a skill that will be invaluable as you apply what you have mastered to other disciplines.

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### 2. Class Policies:

#### Attendance/Assignments:

- Make-up work is to be completed in a timely manner. A student has the same number of days to complete make-up work as he/she missed from school (Example: Absent 2 days: you have 2 days to turn in or make up work).
- Check **GOOGLE CLASSROOM** for missing assignments.
- If you know you are missing an assignment, but you do not see it attached to Google Classroom, there may be copies in the folders in the hanging red pockets; come see me for assistance.
- It is **your responsibility** to consult with me at an appropriate time (before or after school) – NOT AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
- **I will rarely remind you to turn in your makeup work; you are responsible.**
- Make-up tests/quizzes will be given during pre-arranged times, by appointment only.
- Feel free to communicate with me via email if you are absent, or know you will be absent in order to receive your assignments.

#### Multimedia Policy:

Computers are for classroom assignment use only and not for other non-school related business. Any misuse of computer equipment will result in an automatic exclusion from computer privileges in the classroom for the remainder of the current deadline cycle. Students' grades will reflect any work that is not submitted.

Using multimedia for digital communication (i.e., text messaging, social networking, etc.) or gaming of any kind is prohibited from the classroom unless directed otherwise by the adviser.

Students will have access to digital cameras later in the course. Because the equipment is fragile and extremely expensive (**often thousands of dollars**), students take responsibility to make sure that it is used properly and returned undamaged. Digital cameras left unattended or lost may result in the loss of privileges for that student. At any time throughout the year, students are welcome to use their own digital cameras rather than borrowing school equipment.

**If a school-owned camera is damaged or lost while in the students' possession, that student will be responsible for the partial or full cost of replacing the equipment (based on an appropriate retail value).** When a student has the camera signed out, only that student should be using the camera and only pictures appropriate for the class should be taken.

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### **Content:**

\*\*\*Please note... when it comes to Journalism, **controversial news topics will occasionally be covered**. Topics, such as politics, particularly at the national level, are inescapable in today's environment. When it comes to writing editorials, for example, your opinion as the journalist is required. Such opinions on topics can often cause tempers to flare. **Maturity AND respect** for your classmates will be **REQUIRED** at all times. Anyone who disrespects a classmate by making verbal attacks will be reprimanded, including the possibility of permanent removal from the class.

As your teacher, I have final say in what is appropriate to cover and what is not. While I can appreciate a young journalist's yearning to go after a big story, we must remind ourselves that we are in an academic setting and with that comes certain responsibility and parameters.

### **Email Etiquette:**

When communicating with teachers and/or other adults via email, you are to use professional etiquette at **ALL TIMES**.

Proper email etiquette is how we maintain a respectful, appropriate and professional tone. When communicating with adults, you as the student, are **NOT** communicating with your best buds or boyfriend/girlfriend. Your messages should be constructed accordingly.

This means the following:

1. Use correct grammar
2. Use correct spelling
3. Proofread BEFORE sending
4. Address the reader with correct titles (Mr, Mrs, Dr.)
5. Use a proper salutation (Dear, Good Afternoon, Hello, Good Evening)
6. Correctly spell the reader's name (if you don't know it, look it up!)
7. Identify oneself within the first line or two
8. Be clear about your needs or requests
9. ALWAYS write a subject line
10. Double-check any attachments
11. NEVER "Reply All," unless it is something the entire group needs to know
12. Always reply within 24 hours
13. Don't use all capital letters (no need to SHOUT)
14. Avoid using exclamation marks... unless it's an actual emergency
15. Avoid negativity; if you have a complaint, express it in a constructive and professional manner
16. Don't forget a proper closing (Sincerely, Best Regards, Thank You)
17. Never Ever make any obscene or vulgar remarks
18. Never use any profanity

The Key thing to remember is this—**always be professional AND appropriate**. Ask yourself if this text or email can be considered offensive or inappropriate in any way whatsoever BEFORE SENDING.

## Journalism I Syllabus

### **Basic Classroom Rules:**

**Read your Student Handbook. All Plano East Senior High School rules MUST be followed.**

- Be in your seat and working on the Bell Ringer **before** the tardy bell rings.
  - Sit up in class. Be attentive.
  - No sleeping. Those who violate this rule are subject to possible humiliation—you've been warned (insert evil laugh here). 😊
  - No food or drink in class, except water... unless given approval by your teacher.
  - All cell phones and/or electronic devices should be silent **and** put away
    - You may use the hanging pockets for your device, especially if you cannot trust yourself
    - If students abuse this cell phone privilege, more stringent rules will be applied and enforced, including the possible confiscation of said devices
    - During a test, all cell phones must be turned off and placed in hanging pockets with no exceptions
  - **YOU** must take responsibility for your decisions, actions, and future.
  - If you need tutoring/assistance, I am here every day (except FRIDAYS) after school until at least 4:45 (often later).
  - I can also come in early before school if you arrange it with me ahead of time.
  - You may **NOT** see me during lunch, unless approved for a specific occasion.
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### **3. Grading:**

#### **Formative Grading (40%):**

- Daily Assignments / short articles
- Quizzes
- Bell Ringers

#### **Summative Grading (60%):**

- Tests
- Formal Written Assignments (Articles, Articles, Articles, and Scripts)
- In-Depth Feature Piece (involves research)

#### **Summative Assignments:**

All major graded assignments will be accepted as follows (MLA Guidelines):

- They must be typed (double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with standard one-inch margins)
  - \*\*\*Some assignments may be neatly hand-written, at teacher's discretion
- Any assignment of two or more pages must be stapled together

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- Proper heading must be used (in upper **Left-Hand** corner):
  - o Your Name                      Ex: John Doe
  - o My Name                         Mr. Birnbaum
  - o Class—period #                Journalism-6<sup>th</sup> Pd
  - o Date                                October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024
- Assignments turned in between 9:00 a.m. –4:30 p.m. on the due date: **NO PENALTY**. All assignments are due on the specified date, unless you are absent.
  - o After 4:15 p.m. on due date:
    - **One day late = Highest possible grade is a 90%**
    - **Two days late = 70%**

### **Retest Policy:**

If a student scores a **69 or below** on an exam, they have the option of taking a retest

- The student will be given one week to attend a tutorial session and take the retest
- The teacher will determine the date/time of tutorials and retest
- The student **must come to a tutorial session** with questions
- If a student fails to attend the tutorial, they will not be able to take the retest.
- If the student does not show up on the assigned time and date for the retest, they forfeit their right to retest.
- **The highest grade possible for a retest is a 70.**

### **Cheating and Plagiarism:**

- If caught plagiarizing **ANY WORK**, you will receive a “0” for that assignment and your parents/guardians will be notified.
- If you plagiarized **another student’s assignment**, both you and that student will receive a “0.”
- If you are caught cheating during a test, you will receive a “0,” and your parents/guardians will be notified.

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#### **4. Contests:**

Journalism Competitions:

Students enrolled in this class should expect to compete in various academic journalism (including UIL) and photography competitions throughout the year. Winning awards looks stellar on a college application.

Students who participate in UIL journalism competitions will need to surrender a few Saturdays (mostly in the spring semester). In the past, I have taken three different students to State in Austin. If you are serious about UIL competition, I will do my best to get you to that same level.

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The standard UIL Journalism categories apply:

1. News Writing
  2. Feature Stories
  3. Editorials
  4. Headlines
  5. Copyediting
- 

### 5. Mr. Birnbaum's Background:

As your instructor, I look forward to sharing my wealth of knowledge and skill set with you, no matter what your initial abilities may be. I have spent 12 years teaching various aspects of journalism, photojournalism, yearbook, English and Social Studies. Prior to my time as an educator, I spent five years as a publicist, and seven years working as a news writer for CNN in Atlanta.

I will make every effort possible to keep in contact with parents/guardians, especially if I have specific concerns about student progress. If at any time there are questions or concerns, please email me. My email address is [mike.birnbaum@pisd.edu](mailto:mike.birnbaum@pisd.edu)

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### 6. Course Objectives:

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should:

1. Have a greater appreciation for the **News Business**
  2. Possess a vastly **improved writing skill set** that is transferable to all disciplines
  3. Be able to **cover any newsworthy topic** in a **succinct, well-written** manner, that **captures the reader's attention**
  4. Exhibit a **logical arrangement of ideas** in writing
  5. Acquire an **increased knowledge of current events**
  6. Become proficient in **research techniques**, including internet research and primary research (interviews)
  7. **Differentiate between fact, opinion**, and fact-driven opinion
  8. Develop **critical thinking skills** and the ability to look at **both sides of an issue**
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### 7. **Materials:**

**\*\*ALL SUPPLIES NEEDED BY MONDAY, AUGUST 19<sup>th</sup>\*\***  
**(See me *after class* if this is an issue)**

You must be prepared for class and have the following with you on a DAILY basis:

- A **College-ruled**, spiral (**NOT shorter composition book**)
  - **Your Chromebook (fully charged)**
  - A **pen or pencil**
  - **SD Card**
  
  - The following are *recommended, but NOT* required:
  - A 3-ring binder
  - A box of blue or black pens
  - A 3-ring pencil pouch (to store your pencils and pens—what a concept!)
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### 8. **Syllabus Acknowledgement Form:**

In order to be a successful journalism student for the 2024-2025 school year, students must complete the syllabus acknowledgement form in the Google Form (the link below is available to click on in Google Classroom) with their legal guardian(s) and submit it to the teacher.

<https://forms.gle/W5ipABQ4axAskMqR9>