

I chose the OER "The American Journalism Handbook: Concepts, Issues, and Skills - 1<sup>st</sup> Ed. for my COMM 320 Reporting class for the fall 2025 semester. I traditionally have not used a text in this course because most journalism texts are outdated by the time they make it to print. This text was appealing to me because it was very current and being updated frequently.

## **METHODOLOGY**

I teach using the Introduction, Reinforcement, Mastery pedagogical approach in my courses. The students in COMM 320 took my COMM 205 Writing for Communication and COMM 224 Media Writing classes. My goal with using a text was to reinforce the student learning outcomes (SLOs) specifically:

- Students will be able to produce broadcast-quality news packages, demonstrating proficiency in research, interviewing, scriptwriting, voice-over narration, and editing on a smartphone as multimedia journalists.
- Students will develop a critical understanding of ethical and legal considerations specific to broadcast journalism, including libel, slander, privacy, and responsible use of social media in news gathering and dissemination.

I administered a 10-question pre-test on Brightspace on the first day of class that asked questions specific to the above SLOs. I administered a post test with the same questions on the last day of class. Please keep in mind that I never overtly lectured the material in class. Instead, I referenced the material and terminology during class.

Here is a sample question that ties to the SLO regarding law:

Multiple Choice Question, 6 choices

Which law(s) govern journalists' access to public records and meetings at the federal level?

- A. The Freedom of Information Act
- B. Government in the Sunshine Act
- C. The First Amendment
- D. The Citizens Rights Act of 1970
- E. Both the Freedom of Information Act and the Government in the Sunshine Act
- F. All of the above

## RESULTS

The class average on the pre-test was 70.1 percent.

The class average (minus one student who was absent because of sickness) was 82.73 percent.

**Thus, the pre-test and post-test data indicated the text was helpful to students.**

Because data can only tell me so much, I included an open-ended question to the post test:

Question: What do you believe the benefit of having an OER (Open Educational Resource) is for a college student? Did you read? Did it encourage you to read because you didn't pay for it? Please be specific with your answer. Thank you

Full disclosure: I will be using your answers (without identifying information) in my report to the library committee that supported the class getting the free text.)

No student indicated that having the OER was negative, and they all agreed that they read the text. I've included a few of the students' responses below:

\* The benefit of having OER was the different ways you could access it. I liked that I was able to download it as a PDF so I always had it on my computer no matter where I was. I did read it when I was assigned a certain reading. I would have read it no matter what but the accessibility was way better. I also really enjoyed the book we had. It was clear, concise and easy to read. It was easier than bringing a big book to class every day.

\* The OER text was a valuable resource. Because it was online and free (not through a rental service) I can have access to it far beyond this class. I will say personally I wish printing it out wasn't so expensive, as I tend to retain information better when it's right in front of me, but that's not an issue with the book. For college students in general, it was incredibly accessible, as everyone can get access to a laptop or computer on campus.

\* I believe there are many benefits to OER. I enjoyed the articles we read, and I think it encouraged me to read more because not only did I not have to pay for it I wasn't overwhelmed by a large textbook.

\* I think the benefit of having an OER for a college student is that it encouraged me to read the material because I didn't have to pay for it or go through a bunch of hoops and websites to have to get a pdf or online version of it. Having an OER also took the stress off of finding the book online , saving

up money to pay for it or having to split the cost and book with someone in the class. Not having to split the book with someone in the class gave me the flexibility to be able to read and do my assignments when I had the chance to and to do them on my own schedule.

\* The benefit of having the Open Education Resource is maintaining financial stability while having easy to access materials. I was able to open it whenever I wanted across different devices. Yes, I read the assigned chapters. I found this book easy to read because of the format. It did not encourage me to read it because I did not pay for it, I would be more likely to read a book that I paid for. I am more likely to read a book I paid for because I feel more of an obligation, since it cost me. However, if all materials were free, I would read any of the ones that I wanted and found beneficial.

\* The benefit of having OER as a college student has helped my broaden my critical thinking skills when reading. I enjoyed this resource because it gave me the opportunity to learn about things I never did before. This resource helped encourage me to read more because of the unique things on there and plus the fact that it is free.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the data and my students' anecdotal responses, I believe that using the OER in this class was successful, and I will continue to use it if the author continues to update the material. I am also considering using OERs in COMM 205 and COMM 224.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity. Respectfully submitted,

Kim Pavlick, Ph.D.