

# TNT21

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## Teaching News Terrifically in the 21st Century

a teaching ideas competition

Newspaper  
and Online News  
Division

2012 edition

# About TNT21

TNT21 was founded in 2009 by the Newspaper Division (now the Newspaper and Online News Division) of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication to publicly acknowledge good ideas for foundational journalism courses: newswriting, reporting and editing.

Ideas are accepted in three divisions:

- Full-time faculty members
- Adjunct professors
- Graduate-student instructors

The competition awards prizes of \$100 for the best teaching idea from each group.

Deadlines for contest entries typically are in the summer and are announced on the Newspaper and Online News Division listserv and on the JOURNET listserv. Teaching tips submitted should be suitable for use in newswriting, reporting or editing courses, though they may be tailored

for specific versions of those courses. For example, tips for teaching newswriting across media would be welcome, as would tips for teaching a specific type of reporting, such as public affairs reporting, business reporting or environmental reporting.

Tips can address practical skills or conceptual knowledge, showing, for example, how to teach students to report ethically or edit to avoid libel. Tips that help professors address the challenges of teaching in a world where technologies are rapidly changing are especially welcome.

Ideas are judged for their originality, innovative nature, ease of application, completeness, writing and whether they would work in more than one course and/or at different types of schools.

TNT21 has been administered since 2009 by Susan Keith, an associate professor in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies in the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J.

## 2012 judges

Dorothy Bowles, University of Tennessee emeritus  
Bonnie Bressers, Kansas State University  
Erin Coyle, Louisiana State University  
Emil Dansker, Central State University of Ohio (retired)  
Skye Dent, Fayetteville State University  
Mike Farrell, University of Kentucky  
Pamela B. Fine, University of Kansas  
Gilbert Fowler, Arkansas State University  
Bruce Gillespie, Wilfrid Laurier University - Brantford  
Kyle Heim, Seton Hall University  
Amber Hinsley, St. Louis University  
Rick Kenney, Florida Gulf Coast University  
David Loomis, Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
Craig Paddock, University of North Carolina Charlotte  
Bill Reader, Ohio University  
Jeannine E. Rely, University of Arizona  
Carol Schlagheck, Eastern Michigan University  
Cathy Stablein, College of DuPage

# Better media writing is just a click away

By Jennifer Brannock Cox  
Salisbury University

**Types of courses the idea could be used in:**  
newsriting, editing

**Target level:** freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors

## What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

Learning to write in AP style is integral to any media student's education, yet aspiring journalists and PR practitioners struggle with the knowledge of when to use the AP Stylebook and the interpretation and applicability of its entries. In response to critically low AP style retention in previous semesters, I implemented a routine of daily style and grammar activities where students interact using clickers. I created interactive PowerPoints using TurningPoint software that included quiz questions aimed at helping students practice AP style and grammar and helping me identify areas that needed more explanation during class.

## How does the assignment or exercise work?

Students purchase and register their clickers from the university bookstore for \$30-\$40. The instructor uploads the roster to each PowerPoint using the TurningPoint software, which allows the instructor to build clicker-friendly slides, as well as download students' responses for later analysis, granting the instructor the opportunity to see (in private) which individuals are struggling so more time can be spent with them outside of class.

Class begins with about 3-5 AP style and grammar drills (5 minutes). For example, a slide may read:

"Which of these is written in correct AP style?"

- 1) 123 West Maple Ave.
- 2) 123 W. Maple Avenue
- 3) 123 West Maple Avenue
- 4) 123 W. Maple Ave.

Students use their books to determine the correct answer. Once all students have responded (the number of responses are tracked and are visible to all), the correct answer is displayed along with the results of students' answers.

If several students missed the question, the instructor encourages all students to revisit the entry in the stylebook and explains the proper interpretation of the rule. Discussion may also ensue based on similar rules, such as the explanation of why "avenue" is abbreviated here and why "road" would not be abbreviated.

## How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists?

During my first semester teaching an introductory media writing class, I was frustrated by students' lack of retention of AP style and grammar. Students remarked they wanted more practice with the concepts during class, but a general review using PowerPoint slides or a dry-erase board made no impact. The following semester, I required students to use clickers and created the daily drills style and grammar drills. Students loved the interactivity and gained self-confidence seeing other students make the same mistakes as they did. Students' retention of the information and writing improved greatly, and they genuinely enjoyed learning AP style.

## How do you overcome pitfalls?

Initially, it was difficult to get students to remember to register their clickers outside of class (despite regular email reminders) or to remember to bring their clickers. They also had some difficulty synchronizing their clickers to the classroom frequency. Within the first two weeks of the semester, these problems were worked out, and students came prepared with their clickers out and at the ready every day.

## What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

Not only did students with clickers appear to be more engaged in the AP style lessons, their scores reflected the enhanced learning. Compared to those of the previous semester, average scores on style quizzes improved by about 10-20 grade points. Students using clickers also received fewer AP style and grammar deductions on their assignments. Students with clickers reported feeling more comfortable with the material and felt they would retain the information a lot better in the future. Their absorption of the material made it easier for me to progress the class to more advanced concepts at a



Jennifer Brannock Cox is an assistant professor in the Communication Arts Department at Salisbury University. Her background is in newspapers and online journalism. She has worked as a reporter at several Florida newspapers, including The Orlando Sentinel, Treasure Coast Newspapers, and The Naples Daily News. She also worked as a multimedia intern at Washington-Post.com designing video, photo, and writing packages for The Loudoun Extra. At Salisbury, she teaches courses in journalism, public relations, and communicating online. Cox is working toward completing her doctorate from the University of Florida. She received her Master's degree from the University of Alabama and dual-majored in journalism and public relations as an undergraduate at Appalachian State University.

# Pressing politicians: Participation and writing for campaign press conferences



Robert N. Spicer is a doctoral candidate in Media Studies in the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University. He is also an assistant professor of communication at DeSales University where he has taught for three years. Spicer teaches courses in journalism, mass communication, pop culture and media law. His dissertation is a discourse analysis of deception in politics examining media coverage and legal issues surrounding the subject. Spicer's primary research interest is in political media and culture. His secondary research is in new media. His most recent publication is *Social net/work(ing) on Facebook: An analysis of audiences, producers, and immaterial laborers in the book Virtual Community Participation and Motivation*. He also writes for the Campaign Insider blog at *Campaigns & Elections* magazine.

**By Robert N. Spicer**  
Rutgers University/DeSales University

**Types of courses the idea could be used in:** newswriting, reporting  
**Target level:** freshmen, sophomores

**What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?**

There are three purposes for this project. First, it exposes students to participation in a press conference with multiple people asking questions as opposed to a one-on-one interview. Second, it requires them to write an article based on answers to their questions without the aid of a recording device. They have to think fast, take good notes and get the facts straight. Finally, it has three forms of feedback: students get a grade, feedback from their classmates and can compare their work to a published article.

**How does the assignment or exercise work?**

In 2006 I managed a state senate campaign during which my candidate gave a press conference announcing a policy position. For this assignment I come to class as a candidate in a suit for a mock press conference. I read the prepared remarks my candidate read. This is followed by a Q&A session in which the students play the part of reporters.

In the assignment description students are told they should challenge the politician on his assertions, his data and why he has taken his position. Students should bring a pen and paper to take notes during the press conference.

After the press conference students spend the remainder of the class time writing an article. They are told to bring a laptop to write it and that the "deadline" is the end of class.

In the next class session students bring their finished articles. They break into groups, read each other's work and compare it to the actual article the local newspaper published about the real press conference. After the small-group session the entire class exchanges ideas about the event and their coverage of it.

**How is the assignment innovative? What**

**makes this idea good for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century or preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists?**

There are two ways in which this assignment is designed for 21st Century reporting. First, this semester I am planning on encouraging students to find ways other than just pen and paper to take notes. They can bring smart phones or tablets with writing apps. Good old-fashioned pen and paper are still reliable, but this lets students experiment with new devices in a safe environment.

Second, students have to produce their work quickly. They "attend" the press conference and immediately turn around and write about it. Students "submit" their "article" right away simulating fast paced reporting.

**How do you overcome pitfalls?**

One stumbling block is getting the facts straight. I try to make the press conference as clear as possible. I repeat facts and answers to questions when necessary, and have patience for repeated questions. I still find errors in some submissions.

We go over those in the editing session, compare the errors across articles and discuss what was said in the speech and how to get the facts straight and improve their writing. Also, not all students have laptops. I allow those students to write on pen and paper and submit a typed version via email by that afternoon.

**What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?**

The assignment gives students three forms of feedback. First, they receive a grade from the instructor. Second, they have the feedback of a peer reacting to their article. Finally, they get to look at what an actual newspaper wrote about the event.

Along with feedback for improving their writing this assignment opens up discussions of perspective in reporting. The differences in the articles show the students how a group of people, together in a room, covering the same event, can make different choices about what aspects of it to write about and how to write about them.

## Alternative approaches to the assignment

I realize that my experience as a campaign manager is not universal, it may not be common for everyone to have real press conferences to draw from for speeches and they will thus not have real articles to use for feedback and comparison. So I have also done this exercise by finding articles on other types of stories (i.e. crime, fires, car accidents), presented the facts from those articles in a mock press conference as a police chief, following the same writing procedure and then comparing student work to the real article during the editing session.

## Student learning outcomes

I have had a great deal of success with this exercise in all of its forms. Some semesters I have only done one mock press conference. In those semesters I have received course evaluations with students suggesting that more mock press conferences be added to the course. Other semesters I have included two or three such exercises and received feedback from students saying, for one example, "The writing of articles and the mock interviews and press conferences were very beneficial to me."

Students are always engaged in the exercise, asking questions, and challenging my mock politician. They ask for clarifications on statements and definitions of terms they do not understand. The days I do mock press conferences are always lively class sessions.

I also think students get something out of our discussion of perspective, facts and reporting. I attempt to steer them away from trite discussions of ideological bias that are burdened by partisan perspectives that can get off track. Instead we stay focused

*First place, adjunct faculty division*

# Using Twitter to teach story pitches

**By Paul Atkinson**  
Arizona State University

**Types of courses the idea could be used in:** newswriting, reporting

**Target level:** freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors

**What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?**

Teaching students to pitch a story idea is easier said than done. Often students don't know what the story is about or lack the ability to articulate a focus. This exercise helps resolve that by using a popular social media tool. By using Twitter and its limit on the number of characters displayed, students can learn how to more precisely explain the story and why it is worth pursuing.

**How does the assignment or exercise work?**

You have students create a Twitter account where all posts must be done in 140 characters or less. All students follow each other as well as the professor's account. All submit story ideas via Twitter prior to the next class. The professor and other students can ask questions or make suggestions--all in 140 characters or less. Students will Tweet the final story idea at the beginning of class followed by discussion where more information is drawn out. This can be done via computer, laptop or smart phone. The final product is a polished pitch for a story idea.

**How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists?**

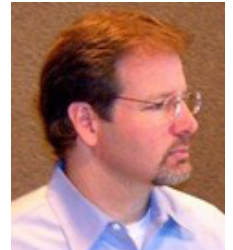
The assignment uses a popular form of social media to teach student about brevity and focus. It's free and easy to use and can be done with any computer or smart phone. Plus, what students learn can also be applied to how students use Twitter in the future. And, it will help student learn to present ideas in a brief, less wordy way that editors would prefer.

**How do you overcome pitfalls?**

It requires explanation at the beginning of the course as well as an in-class live demo.

**What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?**

I've found students have a difficult time figuring out what makes a story a story. I truly believe this practical use of social media will help students better grasp what a story is and how to pitch it. Plus, the experience on Twitter can only be helpful for when they use it professionally.



Paul Atkinson is communications director at the Arizona State University School of Criminology in Phoenix and an adjunct professor at the Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. He reported and produced radio and television stories and programs for more than 20 years in local TV news and public television and public radio.



# Covering class: Tweeting to practice social media skills



Amanda Sturgill holds the B.A. from the University of South Carolina; and the M.S. and Ph.D. from Cornell University. She has professional experience in newspaper reporting and multimedia producing and teaches classes in news reporting and writing and in multimedia storytelling at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Her research focuses on new technologies and communication, particularly for ideological and historically disenfranchised groups. She is past head of Religion and Media Interest group for AEJMC and present Midwinter conference chair for the Communication Technology division.

**By Amanda Sturgill  
Elon University**

**Types of courses the idea could be used in:**  
news writing, reporting

**Target level:** freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, graduate students in professional programs

**What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?**

Students learn how to synthesize information on the fly and to communicate it to others, using the constrained format of Twitter. They also learn about successful approaches to computer and social media use in professional settings. Finally, students get the opportunity to review important concepts from class through the tweets of others.

**How does the assignment or exercise work?**

Students in classes at my university sometimes have the desire to take class notes on a laptop, but are challenged to have the self-control not to have off-task activities at the same time. On the first day of class, students are given a copy of the course laptop policy (attached), stating that in order to use a laptop in class, they must request permission (form attached) and agree to cover class sessions via Twitter. This means that they will, tagged with the hashtag #instructorcoursenumber (fictitious example: #StevensJOU100), post a minimum of 8 or 12 important items from each class session. This helps to discourage laptop use from some students and to keep the ones who do use laptops concentrating on what we are learning in class. The students who don't tweet still benefit from the practice, as they can look at the tweets for a summary of what went on in class that day. I check the tweets after class, and bring up important ones for discussion in the next day's class, both for content and for assessing the quality and value of the tweet in telling the story.

**How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists?**

This is a way for me to address new media skills throughout the semester, to check students' understanding of what happens in class and to handle the

laptop problem in a way that students find palatable because they have control of whether they can use a laptop or not.

**How do you overcome pitfalls?**

Although most students are competent at using social media, many of them have difficulty composing messages for Twitter, so the quality at the start of the semester is lacking. I find myself addressing tweet quality with students individually at the beginning, and also bringing examples into class for discussion more frequently during the early weeks.

**What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?**

Since I started having this policy, I find that I get greatly improved student attention during class, and this benefits them in understanding the material. The inherent review found in covering class sessions helps with retention and also helps develop a habit of checking Twitter as an information source.

**From the course syllabus**

From the course syllabus: Laptop policy – Students who wish to use a laptop to take notes during class may do so, provided that a) care is taken to not interfere with or distract the other students, b) the student requests permission in writing and abides by the Twitter rule and c) there is not a guest speaker in class on that day. I reserve the right to restrict laptop use if it becomes a problem.

**Laptop application**

I would like to use a laptop during nameofcourse. I agree to the following requirements:  
-- I agree to tweet a minimum of 8 important pieces of information from each class session relevant to the class with the hashtag #Instructorcoursenumber  
-- I understand that my tweets are publicly available and that Professor Instructor may display and comment on my tweets in front of the class.  
-- I understand that if I use a laptop and fail to provide the required number of tweets, I will lose my laptop privileges.

Twitter user name:

Signature:

Name (printed):

Second place, full-time faculty division (tie)

# Sidewalk-level teaching about truth, quotes and plagiarism

By Michael Longinow  
Biola University

**Types of courses the idea could be used in:**  
newswriting, reporting  
**Target level:** freshmen, sophomores

## What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

This assignment helps students overcome fear of the initial encounter in doing deadline news interviewing, forces them to think through the lede of a relevant story, and gets them crafting narrative from their interview in ways that sharpen their thinking and helps them see the difference between targeted questions and vague, un-targeted ones. It also teaches persistence and perseverance as, in some initial attempts, students are rebuffed in their request for a spontaneous interview. By a series approach, students gain mastery of their question-crafting, their social/encounter skills, and their deadline writing skills.

## How does the assignment or exercise work?

The class for which this exercise was designed meets in a computer lab. Students are greeted at the opening of class with the context of the story they are pursuing (usually tied to a breaking news event.) They are told the time frame (usually 20-30 minutes) and in the early going are instructed that they must approach someone of the opposite gender and either of roughly their same age (or in follow-up exercises, someone older.) They must get the person's name (spelled correctly), age, and verbatim quotes. In early exercises they turn in their notes. Once they return to the lab, they have 10-15 minutes to craft a paragraph that puts the quotes into an inverted pyramid style narrative centered around the reaction of the person they interviewed related to the news. The paragraph is graded for mechanics of writing and inclusion of the quote. Paraphrasing is allowed.

Two follow-up exercises take the same approach; in one of them students use a flip-cam to capture video clips of the interview. Discussion in class after each exercise gets them talking about how it felt to step into the space of another and what made for success

(or didn't) in the encounter.

## How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists?

The assignment is crucial for this generation of social-media-driven late teens who are not accustomed to approaching strangers to get answers to questions about news. Deadline-writing is a crucial wake-up call to students that fact-driven writing aimed at real audiences involves news-gathering from real people and not merely a search engine. The exercise also illustrates how difficult it is to get quotes into one's notes, and how easy it is to fabricate those quotes under deadline pressure. The deadline writing also shows students that tight deadline pressure can help them put cogent narrative together faster than they imagined.

## How do you overcome pitfalls?

Fear of encounter in this exercise is overcome by introducing it fast and sending them out immediately. The action of an entire class rising from their seats draws the hesitant ones along with the group like vacuum behind a truck. Delay in the encounter (asking too many questions) is overcome by docking students points for not making deadline. Lazy self-editing is overcome by the ten-run rule. (More than ten errors and it's a mandatory rewrite.) Recovery from rebuffs comes in follow-up exercises. Students who need remedial (or ESL) help are forced to see they must seek that out.

## What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

Students are uniformly shocked by this assignment, but most love it by the end of the sequence of exercises. They love being forced to encounter strangers for quotes (even when rebuffed,) they say they feel like real journalists, and they like having to write fast, driven by the adrenaline of the encounter. They become convinced that accurate quotes matter, and they see the power of the interview as few knew it previously. If they are good writers, they love being able to shine; if they're not strong writers, they're shown that writing matters in journalism (a crucial moment of truth.)



Michael Longinow, chair of the Department of Journalism & Integrated Media at Biola University, has been teaching full time since 1989. He did daily newspaper reporting in Illinois and Georgia before teaching journalism and writing at Asbury University in Kentucky for 16 years. He was program director for journalism there, launching a cross-disciplinary photo workshop and helping students launch a bilingual newspaper aimed at migrant workers and their families. His doctoral research at the University of Kentucky examined the role of the religious press in the growth of undergraduate Christian higher education.

# Comparing coverage: You be the judge



Sue Burzynski Bullard teaches editing, reporting and multimedia classes at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Before joining academia, Sue held a variety of editing positions at *The Detroit News*, including three years as managing editor. During her career, she worked as a reporter and editor at newspapers in Michigan and New York. In 2011, Sue wrote *Everybody's an Editor: Navigating Journalism's Changing Landscape*, an e-textbook She serves on the executive committee of the American Copy Editors Society. Sue has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Michigan State University and master's degree in administration from Central Michigan University.

**Sue Burzynski Bullard**  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Types of courses the idea could be used in:**

newswriting, reporting, editing

**Target level:** freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors

**What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?**

By comparing coverage (stories, headlines and photos) of the same news event on two different websites, this assignment forces students to think critically about content. Students answer specific questions to draw informed conclusions in their comparisons. They think about what works, what doesn't and why. They begin to understand why certain headlines and leads draw them into stories and others don't. They learn why story structure matters, particularly on the Web. They see how editing decisions about what to include or omit can affect readers' understanding of an issue. They learn how photo choices enhance or detract from stories.

**How does the assignment or exercise work?**

The assignment has two parts. First, students are divided into groups of four. Each group is given links to two stories (covering the same news event or feature) at two different news outlets. For example, two newspapers cover the governor's proposed budget cuts. Each group gets links to the stories from both newspapers and a list of questions about the coverage. Groups meet in class to discuss the stories and to formulate questions. After they've agreed on answers, the groups report out in a class discussion. Although some groups will draw similar conclusions, the answers typically are not all the same. The class debates differing views. Why did one group find one story's lead more enticing when a different group came to the opposite conclusion? The debate gets lively as students argue the merits of stories.

In the second half of the assignment, students undertake a similar exercise but this time they formulate answers individually. Their answers are submitted in writing and are graded. Allowances are made for valid but differing conclusions. Grades are based,

largely, on how well students support their conclusions. They also lose points for sloppy writing.

**How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists?**

Today, more Americans get their news online than from print newspapers. Yet not all news found on the Web is of equal worth. Students must know how to critically evaluate stories so they can better understand what story elements are essential. As a nation of news scanners, what makes us read a story from start to finish? What makes us lose interest? What kinds of writing styles work online? How does that differ from print? They also need to know how to evaluate headlines for the Web, including understanding search engine optimization.

**How do you overcome pitfalls?**

If you ask students a general question, 'which story do you like better,' you may not get a very thoughtful answer. But asking specific questions such as 'which story has the most compelling quotes and what are they,' or 'which headline works best for search engines and why' students start to think more deeply about the stories they are reading. The group portion of this exercise also helps students understand the assignment before they tackle it individually. They learn to think more critically by evaluating stories within their groups and then debating the answers with the class as a whole.

**What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?**

After this assignment, students begin to read news stories more critically. They learn to dissect stories, identifying news, impact, voice and context. Understanding what makes a story work helps them become better writers and editors. They have a better sense of what's missing from a story. The assignment also provides an opportunity to talk about the differences between stories in print and on the Web.

By evaluating stories found online from two different news sources, they get a better sense of how photos, headlines and the stories themselves worked on a digital platform.



Third place, full-time faculty division (tie)

# Using social media in your news stories

By Jennifer Kowalewski  
Texas Christian University

**Types of courses the idea could be used in:**  
newswriting, reporting

**Target level:** freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors

## **What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?**

We discuss how to use social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, in journalism. We talk about how reporters/editors could use social media to find potential sources, as well as to disseminate important breaking news events. After discussing social media use in class, I have created an assignment using social media to help my students understand how to use Twitter in a breaking news event. My students like discussing social media, and respond well to having an exercise that reiterates the class discussions. My students learn how to use these important tools in their future careers.

## **How does the assignment or exercise work?**

We take one class to discuss how to use social media in journalism. I give my students specific examples about how a major news organization uses Twitter to release information during a breaking news event. The following class, I have an exercise on using Twitter in a breaking news event to reiterate the information from our class discussion.

I have former students “play the part” of university officials during a “press conference” about a fictitious breaking news event on campus. My current students will “tweet live” from the press conference to show they understand what important information should be released via social media.

Since I do not want students tweeting live from the event, especially a fictitious one, students use their cell phones to text directly to my email account. Texts are similar in length to tweets. Also, some students might not have tweeted before, but they have texted. Therefore, texting simulates tweeting live from a breaking news event. I also tweet from the event, and I give them my tweets after the exercise.

In the following class, we discuss the exercise, including going over the specific tweets to help drive home the point of using social media in journalism.

## **How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century journalists?**

Social media has increasingly become important in journalism. News organizations use social media to release information, to find sources to interview, to let the audience to comment and to allow the audience to post their own information about events. Twitter, which launched in 2006, has more than 200 million users while Facebook, which launched in 2004, has 750 million users worldwide. We need to teach our students how to use these tools to help them when they are working in the field. Our students need to understand how to use these tools for something other than keeping up with friends.

## **How do you overcome pitfalls?**

Students use social media, sometimes even in class when they are not supposed to; but for them, they often do not understand how to use these tools in journalism. The class discussion and exercise helps with this. Having the discussion prior to the exercise, as well as giving them concrete examples of how news organizations use these tools, help them understand how social media has become important for journalists. After the exercise, we discuss what they tweeted from the event versus what I tweeted to show them what information they should use, especially with only 140 characters.

## **What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?**

Not only do students learn the principles behind how to use social media, I found the Twitter exercise assists students with overall story writing. Since Twitter allows 140 characters, we discuss how each tweet is similar to a news lead, with students understanding more about what important information they should give their audience. We also discuss how social media reinforces the inverted pyramid format, with each tweet or post similar to graphs in their news stories.



Jennifer Kowalewski has taught courses in news-editorial journalism, as well as political communication and communication theory at Texas Christian University. She joined the faculty in 2009 after completing her doctorate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Prior to her graduate studies, she worked for 10 years as a newspaper reporter and copy editor. While studying for her graduate degrees, she taught at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Ohio University. She also worked as the editorial assistant of *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.