

## MMC 6936: HEALTH/SCIENCE WRITING

### PROFESSOR

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### OFFICE HOURS

By appointment  
or drop-in

### REQUIRED READING

*The Sports Gene: Inside the Science of Extraordinary Sports Performance*, David Epstein, 2013.  
*The Best American Science and Nature Writing*, Deborah Blum (ed.), 2014.

One of the following books by Mary Roach:

*Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal*, 2014  
*Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife*, 2006  
*Packing for Mars: The Curious Science of Life in the Void*, 2010  
*Bonk: The Curious Coupling of Science and Sex*, 2009  
*Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*, 2004

### RECOMMENDED READING

*Writing Tools*, Roy Peter Clark, Little, Brown

### OBJECTIVE

In this course, we will explore the elements of strong health and science writing—focusing on how media and the science industry can best communicate ideas, science, and trends to various audiences. Because of the cross-discipline nature of this course, we will work from both sides—the media and science side, depending on your goals. Our main mission will be for each student to produce an effective, compelling and in-depth piece of health/science communication.

### GRADING

You will be graded on a 1,000-point scale:

A: 925–1000	C: 725–774
A-: 900–924	C-: 700–724
B+: 875–899	D+: 675–699
B: 825–874	D: 625–674
B-: 800–824	D-: 600–624
C+: 775–799	E: 0-599

## ASSIGNMENT BREAKDOWN

Class Presentation:	150 points
Book Analysis:	100 points
Main Project:	350 points
Short Project:	150 points
Team Project:	150 points
Attendance/Participation:	100 points

## ASSIGNMENTS

### **Class Presentation (150 points)**

Choose a piece and a writer from *The Best American Science and Nature Writing*. You will do a 30-minute presentation/discussion about the writer and that piece. If you want to choose a writer not represented in the book, you may request it, but you will have to provide link/copies of a piece to the class. Two students will present each class on 2/4, 2/11, 2/18, and 2/25. First come, first serve. Email me your choice of writer and date.

### **Book Analysis (100 points)**

Write a five-page, double-spaced paper about the Mary Roach book you read. Identify and analyze techniques she used. What makes her writing and reporting effective? What lessons can you take from her work to apply to your own? Due: 3/25

### **Attendance/Participation (100 points)**

Excused absences include religious holidays and documented medical excuses. Unexcused absences will result in an automatic deduction of 25 points for each absence. Lateness to class can also result in a point deduction at instructor's discretion.

### **Main Project, Short Project, Team Project (650 points)**

TBD

The majority of your work for the course will fall into three assignments, but here's the catch: I don't know what they will be. We will determine these together based on your career interests and goals. The rough sketch of these will be that you'll do one shorter piece (think a smaller news item), one longer piece (an in-depth magazine-style piece), and one team project (where all of us are working together to produce some kind of larger package). I'm open to all kinds of ideas—writing, multimedia pieces, etc... They have to have some kind of communication element, and we have to be able to identify potential publication avenues, whether in traditional media or internal communication departments. As the ideas evolve, you will be given parameters about expectation, deadlines, grading, etc....

## **READING DATES**

By 1/28: Read all of Sports Gene

By 3/25: Read Mary Roach book choice

Readings handed out a week before presentations

## **CLASSROOM NEEDS**

Students requesting special classroom needs must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide the documentation to instructor.

## **HONOR CODE**

Violation of the honor code includes plagiarizing material from other sources or fabricating material, as well as other forms of cheating. Violations will result in a failing grade, and you will be dismissed from the journalism program and reported to the Honor Court. See the Department of Journalism web site for specific outline of honor code violations.

## **PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

This is a workshop-style class in which we will all contribute ideas and critiques of other writers' work and ideas. Please use professional courtesy. Turn cell phones off. No texting (or checking your phone) in class. If you need to, please leave the room to do so.

## **THE INSTRUCTOR**

Associate Professor Ted Spiker is the interim chair of the UF department of journalism and has overseen the department's magazine courses since he arrived at UF in 2001. A graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and a former articles editor at *Men's Health*, Spiker has had work published in *TIME.com*, *Esquire.com*, *Outside*, *O the Oprah Magazine*, *Fortune*, *Men's Health*, *Women's Health*, *Runner's World*, *Reader's Digest*, *Best Life*, and many others. He is also the author of *DOWN SIZE* and the co-author of a dozen books, including the national bestselling *YOU: The Owner's Manual* series. Twitter: @ProfSpiker. Web site: [www.tedspiker.com](http://www.tedspiker.com).