

JOU4308: Magazine & Feature Writing

Summer B 2016

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Virtual office hours: Available via gchat/FaceTime/Skype by appointment

Welcome to Magazine & Feature Writing. As part of this course, you will:

- Learn about different types of feature stories (i.e. profile, how-to, trend story, etc).
- Formulate ideas for long form feature stories, collect sources, conduct in-depth interviews, prepare your story, edit for appropriate grammar and AP style issues, and market your piece for publication by crafting a query letter
- Understand the differences between different types of feature stories, different target audiences and markets
- Learn how to incorporate narrative and storytelling techniques: imagery, anecdotes, descriptions, quotes, and more
- Read a variety of feature pieces from various decades to learn the historical context of feature-writing as a journalistic art
- Do proper research to write a feature story and incorporate a variety of sources: live sources, documents, and online sources
- Collect pieces for your professional portfolio and potentially get published

Prerequisites: To enroll in this course, you must have completed JOU3101 (Reporting) with a C or better.

Required & recommended text: Access to an AP Stylebook (or the app) is necessary for this course. If you don't have a copy of "The Elements of Style" by Strunk & White, consider buying a copy. In lieu of a textbook, we will review and critically discuss the following long form feature stories from a variety of genres: Fashion, sports, food, science/medicine, politics/social justice, pop culture, music, and more. These readings will be posted on the Canvas site.

Canvas: Since this is an online course, keeping up with our Canvas site is essential. I'll use Canvas to post announcements, grades, readings, and other items of interest to the course. You'll use Canvas to post your drafts and final stories in order to receive feedback from your classmates and me.

Email policy: Please email me using an official UFL account, not from your personal email address, and not from the Canvas email function. Please mention JOU4308 in the subject line. I do work fulltime, but I respond to emails within 24-48 hours. I am located in Los Angeles, CA, so please be mindful of the 3-hour time difference ☺

Late work: Deadlines are crucial in journalism. Assignments are due on the date indicated in the syllabus. If your assignment is late, 10 points will be deducted per day that it is late.

Students with disabilities: The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. For more information: www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

Academic honesty, accuracy & plagiarism: Your work will be checked for accuracy and plagiarism. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/SCCR/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

- *When in doubt for how you should attribute information and/or a source, ask your instructor. Once the assignment is turned in, it is too late. Ignorance or accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism and will be treated as such. Failure to uphold the aforementioned standards will result in automatic failure of the course and may result in serious academic disciplinary action.*

On-campus resources: These resources are available to you as a student: Division of Student Affairs (352-392-1261); Counseling & Wellness Center (352-392-1575); Disability Resource Center (352-392-1261); Knight Division for Scholarships, Career Services and Multicultural Affairs (352-392-0289); Career Resource Center (352-392-1601); SNAP (352-392-7627).

Course evaluations: Your evaluations of my instruction and feedback will be conducted online at <http://www.evaluations.ufl.edu>. You will receive an email reminder during the last couple weeks of class to complete the evaluation.

Description of assignments: You will write two feature stories over the course of the semester (each story worth 40% of your overall grade). Each feature story must be 800-1,200 words.

There will be four quizzes (worth 20% of your overall grade), which will be based on our classroom discussions and my lectures. Quizzes will be on Canvas, and make-ups for quizzes will not be provided unless the absence is excused.

Source list: Each story must be accompanied by a source list. Your story will not be graded without it. In the source list, you'll include the first and last name, title, and contact information (email and/or phone number) of the people that you interviewed for your story. I reserve the right to contact the sources you list on your source list for any reason.

Proofreading & AP style: It is your responsibility to check your work for proper use of AP style, grammar and punctuation before submitting. I award two grades for each written assignment – a content grade and a mechanics grade. The content grade reflects the overall structure, how well you covered your chosen topic, newsworthiness, style, etc. The mechanics grade reflects spelling errors, grammatical errors, fact errors, and AP style errors. Fact errors are -25 points each.

Assignments & grading:

Feature Story 1 – **40%**

Outline 5%

First draft/peer critique 15%

Final draft/query letter 20%

Feature Story 2 – **40%**

Outline 5%

First draft/peer critique 15%

Final draft/query letter 20%

Quizzes & online participation – **20%**

General grading standards for content of writing assignments:

A = outstanding work that demonstrates originality, excellent story structure, and meets professional publishing standards.

B = good work but still needs additional revising; achieves the objectives but lacks some elements that would make it an outstanding piece.

C = acceptable but requires significant revising; story meets minimum requirements but may have problems with story structure, with appeal to target audience, mechanical and/or AP style errors.

D = unsatisfactory; work does not display a grasp of basic writing skills; story has significant problems with structure and mechanics or appeal to target audience.

E = unacceptable; story has flaws in research, structure, basic reporting, writing elements, and comprehension of target audience. (*Any plagiarism or falsification of information earns an E and a failing grade for the course.*)

Grading scale:

- A 100.00-93.00
- A- 92.99-90.00
- B+ 89.99-87.00
- B 86.00-83.00
- B- 82.99-80.00
- C+ 79.99-77.00
- C 76.99- 73.00
- C- 72.99-70.00
- D+ 69.99-67.00
- D 66.99-63.00
- D- 62.99-60.00
- E 59.99 and below

How to be successful in this course:

- Keep up with the assigned readings. Print them out, highlight them, underline them, write in the margins—anything that helps you connect and engage with the piece. Pose questions as if you were getting the chance to talk to the author. Make note of what worked and what you might've done differently.
- Don't procrastinate. When you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail. Assume that sources will lag in getting back to you about interviews or possibly fall through altogether, and plan accordingly. Have backup plans in mind. Finally, **a lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.**
- Immerse yourself. Writing feature stories is not like writing news articles. We will work together this semester to ensure you understand the art and craft of feature writing.
- Read constantly. Reading is how you will learn how to become a more effective writer. Practice writing almost every day. *"Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good—it's the thing you do that makes you good."* - Malcolm Gladwell
- Communicate with your instructor. As much as I wish I were, I am not a mind reader. If you have a situation you'd like feedback on, please contact me in a reasonable time frame so I may help and offer suggestions.

Course schedule TBA - will be sent to you via email before the start of class