

## **JOU 4308 Magazine and Feature Writing**

**Fall 2017/Wed. nights/Period 10/Weimer Rm. 1092**

**Instructor: Miss Andrea Billups**

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**Office: Weimer Rm. 3024 (3rd Floor/inside the INC)**

**Office hours: 2-3:30 on Thursdays and by appt.**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This fun class merges reading, discussion and narrative writing. In it we will discuss the organization and creation of articles for general and special interest magazines and the development of story ideas and other feature-related content pitches for such publications. It will also include inductive analysis of contemporary magazine articles and critical review and discussion of non-fiction writing in books, magazines and online. This course examines what it means to be a great storyteller, and the writers and publications behind such stories. It is also my hope that this class will help students to develop more deeply their own writer's voice and to become strong content creators in feature writing and long-form narrative journalism.

## **COURSE GOALS:**

- Understand the characteristics of feature stories.
- Understand different kinds of features (i.e. profile, how-to, etc.) and how they work on different platforms.
- Identify differences in target audiences and understand how to tailor ideas to those specific audiences.
- Use a variety of research techniques while gathering information, including human sources, documents and web-based sources for strong, ethical reporting in the features realm.
- Use a variety of interviewing techniques to draw out useful/colorful information
- Integrate various non-fiction storytelling techniques into feature stories (i.e. anecdotes, colorful quotes, description, etc.)
- Soundly structure a feature story using those elements and tie them together with a clear and compelling focus.
- Write pieces that make our readers care — that shine a light on issues and people who matter and who need our help/are worthy of our attention.
- Prepare feature writers who are ready for freelance work/employment.

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

### **WRITING TOOLS - 50 ESSENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR EVERY WRITER**

ISBN: 978031601499 (available on Amazon)

Author: ROY PETER CLARK

**Reading website: <https://longform.org/>**

**Please bring your laptops to each class (as our  
room is not a writing lab)**

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### **Schedule:**

Aug. 23 — Introduction to class.

Lecture: Rethinking Writing: What Makes a Feature  
Story Interesting

Readings (in class) — A Facebook Story: A Mother's  
Joy and a Family's Sorrow

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-  
srv/special/metro/facebook-story-mothers-joy-familys-  
sorrow.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/metro/facebook-story-mothers-joy-familys-sorrow.html)

Dwyane Wade's Next Career Move & Why He Doesn't  
Care What You Say About His Style

**<http://oceandrive.com/dwyane-wade-on-miami-heat-fashion-choices-and-family-time>**

The Last Martin of Gilchrist County

**<http://www.jeffklinkenberg.com/2015/10/the-last-martin-of-gilchrist-county/>**

Aug. 30 — Guest speaker. First story assigned: PROFILE. Pitches due in class next week.

Sept. 6 — Interviewing for the profile. Review of pitch ideas — roundtable. Review of personal websites/content creation.

Reading: (In class): The Fighter, C.J. Chivers — long-form.org.

Reading: (Out of Class)

**<http://niemanstoryboard.org/stories/7-great-reads-this-years-asme-finalists-in-featureprofile-writing/>**

Sept. 13 — Lecture: Sourcing — How to Find Ideas, People and Get Them to Talk

Reading: (In class) Story Dust: Lessons Learned on Feature Writing

**<http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/writing/380008/story-dust-lessons-learned-on-feature-writing-from-lane-degregory/>**

Reading: (In class) A message from Roger  
[http://www.sptimes.com/2003/07/10/Southpinellas/A\\_message\\_from\\_Roger.shtml](http://www.sptimes.com/2003/07/10/Southpinellas/A_message_from_Roger.shtml)

Reading: (Out of class) Angels and Demons, Thomas French — <http://reprints.longform.org/angels-demons>

Sept. 20 — Writing from your senses. In-class exercise. Please bring your laptops.

Discussion: Angels and Demons

Reading: (In class) The Bravest Woman in Seattle  
<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/eli-sanders>

Sept. 27 — PROFILES DUE

Second story assigned — "Heroes Among Us"

In class writing: Proust Questionnaire

Oct. 4 — Lecture: "The Devil is in the Details — Why Real Reporting Sets a Feature Story Apart"

Readings: (In class) The Girl in the Window  
<http://www.pulitzer.org/winners/lane-degregory>

Hero pitches due — discussion/assigned

In class writing: Proust Questionnaire

Oct. 11 — NO CLASS

Oct. 18 — "Feature Writing and Celebrity."

Readings (In class): I Wanna Be Your Love: Prince  
Nelson Rogers Finds His Purple Reign  
<http://hollygleason.com/articles/2016/4/21/i-wanna-be-your-lover-prince-nelson-rogers-finds-that-purple.html>

The Agony and Ecstasy of Kanye West  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/10/t-magazine/kanye-west-adidas-yeezy-fashion-interview.html>

My Buddy Sam Shepard —  
<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/my-buddy-sam-shepard>

Oct. 25 — Lecture: "The Art of the Interview." — Rewriting the Proust Questionnaire.

Hero stories due

Readings (Out of Class):

[https://www.ted.com/talks/marc\\_pachter\\_the\\_art\\_of\\_the\\_interview?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/marc_pachter_the_art_of_the_interview?language=en)

Reading: (Out of class) —

<http://www.bravotv.com/inside-the-actors-studio/season-20/videos/matthew-mcconaughey-biggest-personal-moment>

<http://www.bravotv.com/inside-the-actors-studio/season-21/bryan-cranston>

Nov. 1 — Guest speaker — TBD

Final story pitches due/discussion/assignments

Reading (Out of class) —

[https://www.cjr.org/first\\_person/new-york-post-reporting-lessons.php](https://www.cjr.org/first_person/new-york-post-reporting-lessons.php)

Nov. 8 — Lecture: Writing for different places and spaces — how feature content thrives across the spectrum. Infographics, memes, videos, guides, lists, event reviews, product reviews, opinion posts (blogs and editorials), how-to's, podcasts.

Extra Credit: Assignment: "10 Things About ..."

Nov. 15 — Lecture: Criticism, Reviewing and Commentary (film, music, drama, art)

In class reading: Rolling Stone Reviews:  
<http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews>

Nov. 22 — No class — Happy Thanksgiving, kids!

Nov. 29 — Final stories due — Presentation of stories in class.

Fall semester classes end Dec. 6.

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**Guidelines:** This class meets once a week for three hours. Please attend class. If you miss, it will be hard to keep up, and attendance counts as part of your class participation grade because we will have some graded assignments that occur in class. If you cannot come, please give me the courtesy of letting me know **in advance of the class you must miss**. This way, I can make sure to let you know what we are covering and what you are responsible for. I frequently deviate from the syllabus. Deadlines for stories are crucial. Missing deadlines can result on a zero grade. Please adhere to those. Work like a professional.

**Assignments:** In addition to in-class assignments, you will do three main feature stories in this course of var-

ied length. Your stories, which will be typed double-spaced and **turned in during class** (unless otherwise specified, and **typically NOT emailed**), must follow course rules on length and sources. The specifics for each story will be reviewed in class. All stories **MUST** contain three sources minimally — most will include more. **None of those sources can be UF students or students at any other universities.** All work must be original. You must use Associated Press style in all class assignments and proper grammar. Failure to do so will significantly impact your grades. Please include at the bottom of each story a list of contacts for those you interviewed **with name, email and phone number.** This source list is **mandatory for your story to be graded** — no exceptions.

You will also create and maintain a website for your writing. We will discuss this in class. All assignments must be posted after they have been edited and graded. This professional quality website is a part of your grade.

### **Grading:**

Weekly/in-class assignments: 15 percent

Website creation and maintenance: 10 percent

Story 1: 25 percent

Story 2: 25 percent

Story 3: 25 percent

You may receive extra credit for publishing your stories in a credible place. There may be other extra credit opportunities as the semester unfolds.

Stories will be graded on quality of writing — including strength and execution of pitched ideas, content, mechanics and AP style, relevance to assignment. Failure to follow stated guidelines (for ex: use of proper sources, missing deadlines) may result in stories not being graded at all. All stories that receive a C grade or below may be rewritten for a better grade with permission of the instructor. This option must be discussed in person prior to the re-submission. The goal is to get your stories in the best shape for publication that they can be. These types of longform stories will require significant editing, so be prepared for revisions. Everyone will do revisions and this collaboration is crucial. We want you doing your best work EVAH! And adding quality content to your portfolios.

### **Grading Scale:**

A 90-100%

B+ 87-89%

B 80-86%

C+ 77-79%

C 70-76%

D+ 67-69%

D 60-66%

F 59% and below

### **Students with disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) ) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.