

**Course Syllabus**  
**JOU 4308: Magazine & Feature Writing**

Section: 1B18 (16384)  
Term: Spring 2019  
Class number: 16284  
Time: 6:15 to 9:10 p.m. Mondays  
Room: Weimer Hall, Room 2056  
Instructor: David Schlenker  
Contact: dschlenker@ufl.edu, 352-274-0261

**Course Description & Objectives**

This is a challenging class that will focus on the craft of compelling, long-form journalism. Feature writing involves more reporting, time and personality than news reporting, thus students will learn essential components of writing effective and engaging stories. There will be a strong emphasis on structure, sourcing, reading, story ideas, critical analysis, narrative and voice.

**Communication:** We are in the communications business. Stay in touch. If you have conflicts or issues that may affect your class work, talk to me or send me an email. We will use Canvas for email communication and grading.

**Required Reading**

There is no textbook, but there will be required readings each week. Reading and analysis will be a critical part of this class, as well as part of your grade. Also, make a habit of reading newspapers and magazines. You will be asked to bring published works you feel are strong and worthy of discussion each week.

**Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory. Each student will be permitted one unexcused absence during the semester; each unexcused absence beyond that will result in a deduction of 5 points from your final grade. Absences for illness (with doctor's note), family emergencies or other urgent situations may be excused, at my discretion. When possible, talk to me prior to attendance conflicts.

Class will start promptly at 6:15 p.m.

**Cell Phones & Laptops**

Please turn the sound off on your phone. Do not use your phone in class. We'll have a short break in the middle of class. Some days will require in-class assignments, so keep laptops handy.

**Late Assignments**

Writing assignments are due at the start of class. Deadlines are critical in this business; contact sources early. Late assignments will incur significant point deductions, unless otherwise cleared in advance.

### **Submission Guidelines**

Assignments should be submitted in print (hard copy) and emailed in a Word attachment to dschlenker@ufl.edu. Use double-spaced 12-point font and include your name, the assignment title and a suggested headline.

Stories will need at least four human sources attributed in the body of the story, as well as their names and contact information at the bottom of the story or as a separate attachment. I will be randomly calling your sources to check for accuracy. Additional guidelines will be provided in class as needed.

### **Grading**

There will be no midterm or final exam. You will be graded on 500 points accumulated throughout the semester. Rubrics will be used for the primary writing assignments.

**Profile first draft:** 40 points

**Profile final draft:** 60 points

**Trend story first draft:** 40 points

**Trend story final draft:** 60 points

**Editor-generated story first draft:** 65 points

**Editor-generated story final draft:** 85 points

**Class participation:** 50 points

**In-class assignments (including AP and other quizzes):** 100 points

**A:** 450-500

**B+:** 435-449

**B:** 400-434

**C+:** 385-399

**C:** 350-384

**D+:** 335-349

**D:** 330-334

**F:** 299 and below

### **Deductions**

**Note:** We will use AP Style for all assignments.

**Other note:** No Oxford commas in this class. Here, there is no comma before the conjunction in a series.

- 2 points for punctuation, grammar and AP Style errors
- 5 for misused words
- 20 points for fact errors (name spellings, proper noun spellings, numerical errors)
- 500 for plagiarism (automatic fail)

I advise spending lots of time proofing. Read your stories out loud to yourself and have others (particularly students who know AP Style) proof, as well. Careless errors are costly in this class. Accuracy and clean writing are critical, as errors in print destroy a writer's credibility. NOTE: We often will read in-class writing assignments out loud. This gets you in the habit of reading your stories out loud to proof.

### **Extra credit**

I will add **5 points** to your overall grade on assignments published in credible publications (newspapers and magazines). Credit for publication on reputable websites may count as extra credit, but it will be at my discretion.

### **Course Schedule**

*Schedule is subject to change.*

Week 1

**Jan. 7** – Introduction and course overview. Syllabus review, with discussion of three writing assignments. Story structure review: Leads, anecdotes and nut graphs. Weekly reading assigned. Profile pitches discussed. Bring profile pitch for approval on Jan. 14.

In-class assignment: Interview a classmate and write a 250-word(ish) profile using a lead/nut graph structure.

Week 2

**Jan. 14** – Profile pitches due; profile first drafts assigned (due Jan. 28). Discussion: Reporting, interview techniques and observation. Reading discussion with story dissection.

**Jan. 21** – Holiday. Reminder: Profile first drafts due Jan. 28.

Week 3

**Jan. 28** – Profile first drafts due. The narcissistic adjunct – in-class writing exercise. Story dissection on weekly reading. Discussion: Interviews, sourcing, research, quotes, reporting, flow, rhythm and endings.

Week 4

**Feb. 4** – Individual conferences (20 minutes each) to discuss first drafts. Story dissection on weekly reading. Come up with five trend ideas in class. Map them out. Reminder: Profile final drafts due Feb. 11. Discussion of trend stories.

Week 5

**Feb. 11** – Final profile draft due. Guest speaker. Story dissection on weekly reading. Observation in-class assignment.

Week 6

**Feb. 18** – Conferences on final drafts. Podcast discussion and listening assignment. Story dissection on weekly reading. Idea roundtable for trend stories. Trend first draft assigned, due March 11.

Week 7

**Feb. 25** – Podcast discussed. Story dissection on weekly reading. Bring favorite works from recent newspapers and/or magazines. Discussion on trend stories.

Week 8

**March 11** – Trend first drafts due. Observation in-class assignment II. Bring trend stories from publications to discuss.

Week 9

**March 18** – Individual conferences (20 minutes each) to discuss first drafts. Guest speaker. Story dissection on weekly reading. In-class writing assignment. Bring favorite works from recent newspapers and/or magazines. Final trend drafts due March 25.

Week 10

**March 25** – Final trend drafts due. Story dissection on weekly reading. Discussion: Editor-generated features: Making Crappy Assignments Great. Editor-assigned feature assigned; first drafts due April 8.

Week 11

**April 1** – Conferences on trend final drafts. Story dissection on weekly reading. Finding sources for editor-assigned features. Interviewing.

Week 12

**April 8** – Editor-assigned first drafts due. In-class writing assignment. Bring favorite works from recent newspapers and/or magazines.

Week 13

**April 15** – Individual conferences (20 minutes each) to discuss first drafts. Guest speaker. Story dissection on weekly reading. In-class assignment. Final drafts due April 22.

Week 14

**April 22** – Final drafts due. Course review. Quiz.

### **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.

**Online Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.