

**IOU 4308: Magazine & Feature Writing**  
**Sections 1B18 + FW20**  
**Course Syllabus: Spring 2021**

**INSTRUCTOR:** *Yelena M. Alpert, M.A.*  
yelena.alpert@jou.ufl.edu  
*Office Hours: By Zoom Appointment*

**CLASSROOM:** Live Class (section 1B18): Weil 273  
Online sessions (section FW20) via Zoom  
MONDAY 6:15 PM - 9:10 PM [Period 11 - E2]

**WEBSITE:** *e-Learning:* <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This course will teach you about print and online magazine content, including front-of-book articles, essays and features. Each student will complete the semester with at least one solid pitch letter.

You will learn to:

- Identify section editors and pages open to freelancers
- Compose pitch letters (and to follow-up)
- Apply reporting and storytelling techniques to an article
- Edit articles

This class will be conducted like an editorial meeting. Consider yourself an assistant editor. Look at every story idea as something you would pitch to a real editor at your favorite magazine and/or website. Your goal is to recognize the voice of various publications, as well as to fine-tune your craft as a writer.

**REQUIRED READING**

**Writing to Persuade by Trish Hall**  
ISBN: 978-1-63149-305-8

**On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction by William Zinsser**  
ISBN: 978-0-06089-154-1

**Canvas:** Select magazine articles from publications like *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, *The Cut* and *Vogue*.

## RECOMMENDED READING

To write for magazines, not only do you have to understand magazine content, you have to understand how the content varies publication to publication to reach a diverse audience. Read your dream publications cover to cover.

## ONLINE CLASS FORMAT

This class will be conducted as follows:

- **Live Class:** Live classes will start a few weeks into the semester, prior to this, we will all meet online.
- **Pre-recorded lecture:** each Monday I will upload a class lecture that will be discussed the *following* week. You will also have to complete Discussion assignments posted on Canvas to prepare for the following week's "live" Zoom Discussion.
- **"Live" Zoom Discussion:** You are required to attend a weekly scheduled Zoom meeting that will start at 6:15 p.m. and will run to approximately 7:45 p.m. (though this can vary depending on class topic). During this time we will discuss the week's lecture as well as participate in writing/editing activities and prepare for upcoming assignments.

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance is crucial to the success of this class. You are required to watch all the recorded lectures and attended the "Live" Zoom Discussion session on Mondays at 6:15 p.m. In addition to lectures and discussions, periodic activities and peer-editing exercises will take place during class. This will count toward your participation points.

**\*Camera On\* Stipulation:** All Zoom sessions are recorded. It is important to have your Zoom camera "On" during the entire length of "Live" Zoom Discussion. Doing so demonstrates professionalism and engagement in the class. If you have privacy concerns or poor Wi-Fi connection that keeps you from keeping the camera on, please message me directly. Keep in mind, that even if your camera is "off" you are still expected to participate by speaking up and messaging questions via the Chat feature on Zoom.

## PUNCTUALITY

Class starts promptly at 6:15 p.m. Logging on once class already starts counts as a tardy—each student will be granted a one-time tardy of 10 minutes, or less. Each tardy thereafter will count against your participation grade.

## ASSIGNMENT POLICY

All assignments are due on the dates specified on Canvas. If Canvas assignments are not uploaded by the time specified, the upload function will no longer be available. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all (correct) files have been uploaded. Backup all files on Google Drive and/or iCloud. Please leave ample time to deal with technical issues, giving you the opportunity to upload using university computers, or to alert the instructor in advance. At the instructor's discretion, e-mailed assignments will be accepted if students communicate an uploading issue well in advance of the due date.

### **LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Deadlines are extremely important. Expect a **10 percent deduction for every day the assignment is late**, including Discussions. Late assignments should be emailed directly to the instructor.

If you are having problems with an assignment, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor and discuss possible solutions to ensure the assignment is on track. This should be done with sufficient time prior to the due date, not the day before. It is recommended that students make an appointment in advance to discuss questions during office hours.

### **MAKE-UP POLICY**

It is the student's responsibility to advise the instructor before class of any personal emergency that might affect his/her performance in the course. In the case of an emergency, or an extenuating circumstance that causes you to miss class over an extended period of time, please notify the instructor as soon as possible via e-mail, or phone. The student will be held responsible for missed class notes, handouts, and any announcements made in his/her absence.

No make-up opportunities will be offered without a valid excuse that is approved in advance. Excused absences include religious holidays, medical and/or family emergencies, and participation in extracurricular university events. Documentation is required, such as a dated and signed note from a medical center (i.e. Student Health Care Center).

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

### **EMAIL POLICY**

Please allow 24 hours for a response to emails sent between Monday and Friday. I will do my best to reply in a timely manner. Students should not have the expectation that I will reply to questions about assignments the night before they are due.

### **GRADING POLICY**

Grading rubrics will be posted with assignments/exercises, so that students have a clear understanding of how assignments are scored. Students are welcome to schedule a zoom meeting with the instructor to discuss questions or concerns regarding assignments, grading policies or their specific grades.

<b>COURSE GRADES</b>	<b>POINTS</b>	<b>% OF TOTAL</b>
<b>"Mini" Magazine assignments</b> <i>(10 points each)</i>	<b>50</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Pitch Letter Roundup</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Service Story + Pitch Letter</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Reported Essay + Pitch Letter assignment</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Reported Feature assignment</b> <i>1<sup>st</sup> Draft Pitch Letter + Feature</i> <i>Final Pitch Revision+ Feature</i>	<b>100</b> 50 50	<b>20%</b>
<b>Edit Test</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Participation</b> <i>Discussion Posts (5 points each)</i> <i>Attendance/Participation</i>	<b>100</b> 50 50	<b>20%</b>
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100%</b>

- **"Mini" Magazine assignments:** Five 10-point activities will take place during class throughout the semester. If you are absent or come in late, you miss the activity (and the points). These assignments will focus on imitating specific articles and magazine styles.
- **Pitch/Query Letter Roundup:** Three pitches to editors, each outlining an idea for Service, Feature and Essay). *Due 2/8*
- **Service assignment:** A 300-word service story selected from your pitch letters. This story must have one interviewed source. *Due 2/22*
- **Reported Essay assignment:** A 750 to 1,000-word first-person essay (supported by research/data) on the topic of your choosing. *Due 2/29*
- **Reported Feature assignment:** A 1,000 to 1,200-word feature with two interviewed sources. *1<sup>st</sup> Draft Due 3/22; 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft Due 4/19*
- **Edit Test:** Take-home test that will resemble a real Edit Test given by editors during the interviewing process. You will have two weeks to complete this. *Due 4/12*
- **Discussions:** Eleven weekly discussion posts that will reflect readings and/or recorded lecture content—I will drop the lowest grade.
- **Attendance:** Think of this class as a professional editorial meeting. You are to log in on time and participate in "Live" Zoom discussions. Please respect your colleagues i.e. don't check your phone or eat dinner during class.

## GRADING SCALE

<i>LETTER GRADE</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>	<i>POINTS</i>
A	93 - 100%	465 - 500
A-	90 - 92%	450 - 464
B+	87 - 89%	435 - 449
B	83 - 86%	415 - 434
B-	80 - 82%	400 - 414
C+	77-79%	385 - 399
C	73-76%	365 - 384
C-	70-72%	350 - 364
D	60-69%	300 - 349
E	Below 60%	Below 299

Grades will not be rounded up. Students must earn the minimum whole number associated with each letter grade to qualify for that grade. See current UF policies for assigning grade points here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Unless noted otherwise, all assignments must be **UPLOADED** via Canvas—do not send me Google Docs. Assignments for peer-editing should be emailed to classmates prior to class start time.

If I ask to email Word documents, please follow this format:

Each FILE NAME should include your name, assignment and draft number (YelenaAlpert\_FOB\_1).

Each Word document should include your name, assignment title, and date.

Ex. Yelena Alpert  
Front of Book Draft 1  
1/16/21

Please use 12-point font and double-space your work.

### EXTRA CREDIT

Your goal is to write publishable stories. Should you sell at least one of your assignments from this course, you will get **15 points** toward your grade on any assignment published in a student-run publication (e.g. *Alligator*, *HerCampus*), and

**25 points** on an assignment published in any other local or regional magazine, newspaper or website.

If you sell your story to a national magazine or website you'll earn **50 points**. You'll have to show an assignment letter confirming acceptance, or bring in published work **before April 20**. If you're unsure how your target publication ranks (e.g. local/regional or national), check with the instructor before pitching.

### **CELL PHONES**

As a courtesy, please put away your cell phones and turn off the sound during the "Live" Zoom Discussion.

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

**January 15:** Last day to add/drop classes without penalty

**January 18:** Martin Luther King Jr Day (no class)

---

## **UF POLICIES**

### **DIVERSITY STATEMENT**

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications Department of Journalism embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

EVERYONE in this class demands respect, human dignity and common courtesy. Please exercise this class principle as you engage with your fellow classmates and professor throughout the semester. I expect no less.

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit.

It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion and culture.

Furthermore, I would like to create a learning environment for my students that support a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences. To help accomplish this:

- ❖ If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official records, please let me know.
- ❖ If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class or if something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- ❖ If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, Joanna Hernandez, CJC director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can email her at [jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu).

Reporters tell the stories of a community and all individuals who make up a given community. These expectations during field work will also be carried into this classroom.

The craft of journalism strives to be objective. However, gathering of information for reporting purposes could be from subjective sources that are historically built on subset of privileged voices. Furthermore, we often find ourselves relying on information about historically important events that were mostly framed through the perspectives of a segment of our society.

You *will* encounter ideas and thoughts you do *not* agree with, but understand that this is one of the central purposes of this course. Sometimes, we need to feel uncomfortable in order to step outside of our worlds and enter the realities of others. I am committed to creating an inclusive environment in which all students are respected and valued.

I will not tolerate disrespectful language or behavior on the basis of age, ability, color/ethnicity/race, gender identity/expression, marital/parental status, military/veteran's status, national origin, political affiliation, religious/spiritual beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or other visible or non-visible differences.

Exposure to different perspectives, values, ideals and experiences will make us all better, more compassionate and understanding journalists. I am always open to suggestions regarding class content and reading materials.

## **ZOOM PROFESSIONALISM**

Please be mindful of maintaining a professional appearance and conduct via our remote lecture meetings. Consider your wardrobe and hygiene just as you would were we all in the same room, as well as your audio and visual backgrounds.

You are strongly encouraged to have your camera on during Zoom sessions. If you go to black screen for a significant amount of time, points could be deducted from

your attendance/participation score at the instructor's discretion. Note that lectures will be recorded for educational purposes.

***Virtual backgrounds***

You are encouraged to use virtual backgrounds for Zoom if you want to protect the privacy of your environment or surroundings.

***For online course with recorded materials:***

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded for students in the class to refer back and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.

For additional information please refer to the *U.S. Department of Education Protecting Student Privacy* site: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/faq/what-ferpa>

If you have extenuating circumstances or concerns about Zoom attendance, please see the instructor.

***For any face-to-face interactions, please refer to the following COVID related practices:***

- ❖ You are required to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings. Following and enforcing these policies and requirements are all of our responsibility. Failure to do so will lead to a report to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
- ❖ This course has been assigned a physical classroom with enough capacity to maintain physical distancing (6 feet between individuals) requirements. Please utilize designated seats and maintain appropriate spacing between students. Please do not move desks or stations.
- ❖ Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.

- ❖ Follow your instructor’s guidance on how to enter and exit the classroom. Practice physical distancing to the extent possible when entering and exiting the classroom.
- ❖ If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms ([Click here for guidance from the CDC on symptoms of coronavirus](#)), please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class. [Click here for UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms](#).
- ❖ Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. [Find more information in the university attendance policies](#).

**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING 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.

**UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:** Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

**THE HONOR CODE:** UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, *“We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.”*

On all work submitted for credit by students 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.”*

The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/> ) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.

All individual, or group, work submitted for academic credit should be the original work of the individual, or individuals, seeking credit.

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.

2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

### **ACEJMC Objectives**

#### **Professional values and competencies:**

University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communication is accredited by the [Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication](#) (ACEJMC). The ACEJMC has identified several [core values and competencies](#) that journalism and mass communication students ought to possess upon graduation:

- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- ❖ Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- ❖ Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
- ❖ Think critically, creatively and independently.
- ❖ Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- ❖ Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

*— These examples were adapted and are from various resources, including the UF Instructor Guide by the University of Florida Center for Teaching Excellence; Brown University; CJC Harrison Hove's RTV 4301 TV News Reporting syllabus; and CJC Rachel Grant's Race, Gender, Class and Media syllabus*

## **GETTING HELP**

### **Health and Wellness**

*U Matter, We Care*: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352 392- 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

*Counseling and Wellness Center*: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

*Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)* Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

*University Police Department*, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

<http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

### **Academic Resources**

*E-Learning technical support*, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to [Learningsupport@ufl.edu](mailto:Learningsupport@ufl.edu). <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

*Career Connections Center*, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://career.ufl.edu/>

*Library Support*, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

*Teaching Center*, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

*Writing Studio*, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

*Student Complaints On-Campus*: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honorcode-student-conduct-code/>

*On-Line Students Complaints*: <http://distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process/>

## **ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/> . Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/> . Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>