

JOU 4930

Spring 2021

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Website: <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>

THIS COURSE WILL BE ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS TO START, WITH ZOOM LECTURES AT OUR APPOINTED CAMPUS TIME, WEDNESDAYS, 9:35 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Zoom link: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/93533771741>

MIDWAY THROUGH THE SEMESTER WE WILL START MEETING IN PERSON: [WEIM 3219](#)

Course Description: Media opinion writing is an important skill that combines analysis, research and persuasion to help readers think more thoroughly about the issues of the day. Essays, op-eds, polemics, and columns are flourishing in our online age, and the art of combining the skills necessary to formulate these media types can help you go forth with full command of the language and your ideas, allowing for important messages to make their way onto the pages of such outlets as The New York Times, TIME, The Washington Post, Vice and so many more. Learn how to write about your experiences and voice your opinions with the deft skill of a professional.

The course will go over the following types of writing: personal essay, researched personal essay, opinion writing, polemical writing, news-pegged analysis, column writing, satire and humor writing. We will work on the process of pitching stories, and delve into the aftermath of published pieces.

This course is designed to provide students new skillsets in digital storytelling, production, and analysis. In this course students will develop the skills to write and pitch creative media stories that will reverberate with the widest audience possible. Creating impactful stories will require a new understanding and thought process of how digital stories differ from those in print, radio and television. To do this, we will

look at the changing roles of stories in news, while discussing and analyzing media consumption habits for widest distribution.

Opinion writing will focus on three core concepts simultaneously: creativity, production and distribution. Through these three concepts, this course will enhance students' base knowledge of the new media landscape, culminating in the ability to see an idea, nurture it in an original way, and create unique, relatable content.

Course Objectives:

- **Describe the differences between writing opinion, essay, column, satire and polemic writing.**
- **Analyze examples of such stories, and review the public response to these pieces.**
- **Develop ability to come up with big, original ideas and creatively tell them to reach the broadest audience.**
- **Formulate a broad set of writing skills and engagement techniques to create and promote the construction and dissemination of messages**
- **Appraise and create writing in different formats, explain trending news and comment on it in intelligent ways for a public audience.**

Required Texts:

None, internet readings

Prerequisite knowledge and skills: a basic understanding of news writing, inverted pyramid.

Instructional Methods: This course will be taught entirely online this semester with prerecorded and live lectures. There will be at least one lecture a week. We may have additional live events during the semester.

Detailed descriptions of assignments in Canvas and overviews in course syllabus.

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance Policy: Students are required to watch all lectures and sign onto the course site at least once each weekday, Monday - Friday, to check for course updates in the announcements and discussion section of the site.

Late Work and Make-up Policy: Deadlines are critical to this class. All work is due on or before the due date. Extensions for deadlines will only be for preapproved emergencies. Minor inconveniences such as family vacation or minor illness are not valid reasons for extensions. Late work will be graded at a 10-point reduction per day. Assignments will be due on Monday nights, and the new lecture week begins on Mondays as well.

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

Grading: Your work will be evaluated according to the following distribution:

Personal Essay 10% – A story created through your lived experience, that recounts something that has happened to you, and how it has shaped your worldview or life.

Researched Essay 10% – A story based on your lived experience that integrates statistics, research, other news stories, broader implications to society, science or culture.

Review 10% – Your opinion on an album, show, movie, media, food, restaurant, concert, band, book, etc. Find an angle, or a narrative within this.

Evergreen Opinion Piece 10% – A take you have on an issue that will keep fresh throughout the seasons...as in, it is not tied to any particular news event.

Timely Op-ed 10% – An opinion piece tied to a news event that has just happened.

News Analysis 10% – A researched contextual piece about a news event that has happened that is less opinion than it is further important information that may be being overlooked. Depends heavily on angles.

Satire/Humor piece 10% – A piece that makes light of a situation in an intelligent way, that proves a point with humor.

Pitching 10% – Practice creating pitches that create interest in your work.

Participation 20% – Assignments not related to the above and live lecture attendance

The final grade will be awarded as follows:

A	100%	to	93%
A-	< 92%	to	90%
B+	< 90%	to	87%
B	< 87%	to	83%
B-	< 82%	to	80%
C+	< 80%	to	77%
C	< 77%	to	73%
C-	< 72%	to	70%
D+	< 70%	to	67%
D	< 67%	to	63%
D-	< 62%	to	60%
F	< 59%	to	0%

Assignments:

The value these assignments is that they are real. You will get to see people react. I can grade you, but I'm one person and to learn to write for an audience that includes more than your professor, you have to practice writing for that audience.

Participation:

We will have a live lecture in our Zoom classroom every week at our scheduled time on Thursdays, unless otherwise indicated.

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 encouraged to have your camera on during Zoom sessions. Note that lectures may be recorded for educational purposes. If you have extenuating circumstances or concerns about Zoom attendance, please see the instructor.

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

Our class sessions may be audio or 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.

Diversity:

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.

Personal Essay rubric:

Personal essay Rubric	90-100, Excellent	80-89, Good	70-79, Satisfactory	Less than 70, Unsatisfactory
Lede: 20%	Draws the audience in. Anecdotal, narrative, descriptive, quote-based.	Draws the audience in, but does not use a story-telling technique to do so.	A summary lede or a lede that tells rather than shows.	Lede missing story-telling elements, unclear, not strong.
Story structure: 30%	Tells a complete story in an interesting way that brings the reader along on a journey	Tells most of a story in a compelling way.	Attempts to tell a story, but lacks coherency in places	Story leaves audience confused as to purpose
Context: 30%	Story takes a specific event or occurrence and broadens it to resonate with a general public	Parts of the story broaden out to resonate with a general audience but other parts inaccessible	Interest not garnered beyond particular event	Little understanding of why anyone else would care about the story.
Writing mechanics 20%	Syntax, grammar and sentence structure understandable and clear	Syntax, grammar and structure clear enough to follow	Lapses in syntax, no clear style in places.	No style or syntax attempted

- **Researched Essay rubric**

Researched essay Rubric	90-100, Excellent	80-89, Good	70-79, Satisfactory	Less than 70, Unsatisfactory
Lede: 20%	Draws the audience in. Anecdotal, narrative, descriptive, quote-based.	Draws the audience in, but does not use a story-telling technique to do so.	A summary lede or a lede that tells rather than shows.	Lede missing story-telling elements, unclear, not strong.
Story structure: 25%	Tells a complete story in an interesting way that brings the reader along on a journey	Tells most of a story in a compelling way.	Attempts to tell a story, but lacks coherency in places	Story leaves audience confused as to purpose
Context: 20%	Story takes a specific event or occurrence and broadens it to resonate with a general public	Parts of the story broaden out to resonate with a general audience but other parts inaccessible	Interest not garnered beyond particular event	Little understanding of why anyone else would care about the story.
Research 25%	Statistics, research, studies, other news articles used and cited correctly to further a point	Some Statistics, research, studies, other news articles used and cited to further a point	An attempt to use primary and secondary sources seen	No research in essay

Writing mechanics 10%	Syntax, grammar and sentence structure understandable and clear	Syntax, grammar and structure clear enough to follow	Lapses in syntax, no clear style in places.	No style or syntax attempted
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Review rubric:

Review Rubric	90-100, Excellent	80-89, Good	70-79, Satisfactory	Less than 70, Unsatisfactory
Lede: 20%	Declarative, interesting, contextual, something that draws the reader in.	Draws the audience in, but does not use a story-telling technique to do so.	A summary lede or a lede that tells rather than shows.	Lede missing story-telling elements, unclear, not strong.
Review structure: 25%	Gives a strong point of view that is backed up by solid arguments	Gives a point of view with backup attempted.	Gives a point of view	No review attempted
Writing structure: 20%	Review flows from point to point seamlessly and with detail	Review flows from point to point with some hiccups	Review attempts cohesion	Review scattered and out of order

Context 25%	The art/ food/ venue/ person being reviewed is taken in a broader context than their particular genre or specifics	Some contextual detail given.	Contextual detail attempted	No context in review
Writing mechanics 10%	Syntax, grammar and sentence structure understandable and clear	Syntax, grammar and structure clear enough to follow	Lapses in syntax, no clear style in places.	No style or syntax attempted

4) **Evergreen opinion rubric:**

Evergreen opinion Rubric	90-100, Excellent	80-89, Good	70-79, Satisfactory	Less than 70, Unsatisfactory
Topic: 15%	Story chosen defines the issue, provides background and context and offers solutions or asks important questions of the reader.	Story chosen defines the issue, provides background and context and offers solutions or asks important questions of the reader.	Story chosen is either important or relevant	Story is not suitable for opinion writing

<p>Creativity: 25%</p>	<p>Story is engagingly told so that an audience can easily parse the meaning and importance of the message to you. They can see why it would be important to them or a target audience if they don't fall into the demographic you are writing to.</p>	<p>Story is engagingly told so that an audience can easily parse the meaning and importance of the message to you.</p>	<p>Story is fairly well told with some imagery but lacks in overall persuasiveness</p>	<p>Story is not creative or does not hold together. AND/OR lacks a persuasive message</p>
<p>Content 30%</p>	<p>Convincing message to influence audience to take action based on persuasive argument and factual support point made.</p>	<p>Convincing message to influence audience to take action based on persuasive argument.</p>	<p>Attempt at convincing argument</p>	<p>Story is not relevant to the type of story topics in the description.</p>
<p>Writing 20%</p>	<p>Written for web with essayistic and journalistic components. Includes appropriate syntax and grammar. Cites sources using AP style.</p>	<p>Written for web with some essayistic and journalistic components. Includes appropriate grammar.</p>	<p>Written for web. Includes attempt at appropriate syntax and grammar.</p>	<p>Essay not fit for web writing.</p>
<p>Publication value: 10%</p>	<p>Piece has elements that make it worthy of publication: timeliness, newsworthiness, touchstone, resonance, etc..</p>	<p>Piece could have those elements, at least in part.</p>	<p>Elements attempted.</p>	<p>Publication is not attempted</p>

5) Op-ed rubric:

Op-ed Rubric	90-100, Excellent	80-89, Good	70-79, Satisfactory	Less than 70, Unsatisfactory
Topic: 15%	Story chosen defines the issue, provides background and context and offers solutions or asks important questions of the reader.	Story chosen defines the issue, provides background and context and offers solutions or asks important questions of the reader.	Story chosen is either important or relevant	Story is not suitable for opinion writing
Creativity: 25%	Story is engagingly told so that an audience can easily parse the meaning and importance of the message to you. They can see why it would be important to them or a target audience if they don't fall into the demographic you are writing to.	Story is engagingly told so that an audience can easily parse the meaning and importance of the message to you.	Story is fairly well told with some imagery but lacks in overall persuasiveness	Story is not creative or does not hold together. AND/OR lacks a persuasive message
Content 30%	Convincing message to influence audience to take action based on persuasive argument and factual support point made.	Convincing message to influence audience to take action based on persuasive argument.	Attempt at convincing argument	Story is not relevant to the type of story topics in the description.
Writing 20%	Written for web with essayistic and journalistic components. Includes appropriate syntax	Written for web with some essayistic and journalistic components. Includes	Written for web. Includes attempt at appropriate	Essay not fit for web writing.

	and grammar. Cites sources using AP style.	es appropriate grammar.	syntax and grammar.	
Publication value: 10%	Piece has elements that make it worthy of publication: timeliness, newsworthiness, touchstone, resonance, etc..	Piece could have those elements, at least in part.	Elements attempted.	Publication is not attempted

6) News Analysis Rubric

News analysis Rubric	90-100, Excellent	80-89, Good	70-79, Satisfactory	Less than 70, Unsatisfactory
Lede: 20%	Summary lede that sets the thesis in motion, using colorful examples.	Summary lede that sets the thesis in motion	Narrative or soft lede.	Lede missing elements, unclear thesis, not strong.
Story structure: 25%	Sets up and thoroughly defends analytical take on a news story	Sets up and attempts to defend analytical take on a news story.	Sets up an analytical take on a news story	Analysis not attempted
Context: 20%	Contextualizes news peg with examples and	Parts of the story broaden out to resonate	Interest not garnered beyond	Little understanding of why anyone

	narratives that broaden appeal to general public	with a general audience but other parts inaccessible	particular news peg	else would care about the story.
Research 25%	Statistics, research, studies, other news articles used and cited correctly to further a point	Some Statistics, research, studies, other news articles used and cited to further a point	An attempt to use primary and secondary sources seen	No research in essay
Writing mechanics 10%	Syntax, grammar and sentence structure understandable and clear	Syntax, grammar and structure clear enough to follow	Lapses in syntax, no clear style in places.	No style or syntax attempted

7) Satire rubric:

Satire Rubric	90-100, Excellent	80-89, Good	70-79, Satisfactory	Less than 70, Unsatisfactory
Humor: 30%	It is funny, either in content or in style, while still having a point	The point lessens its humor.	The humor's point is unclear.	No humor attempted.

Story structure: 30%	Tells a complete story or reviews an event or opinion in an interesting way that brings the reader along on a journey	Tells most of a story in a compelling way.	Attempts to tell a story, but lacks coherency in places	Story leaves audience confused as to purpose
Context: 30%	Story takes a specific event or occurrence and broadens it to resonate with a general public	Parts of the story broaden out to resonate with a general audience but other parts inaccessible	Interest not garnered beyond particular event	Little understanding of why anyone else would care about the story.
Writing mechanics 10%	Syntax, grammar and sentence structure understandable and clear	Syntax, grammar and structure clear enough to follow	Lapses in syntax, no clear style in places.	No style or syntax attempted

8) Pitching

Pitching Rubric	90-100, Excellent	80-89, Good	70-79, Satisfactory	Less than 70, Unsatisfactory
What the story is: 25%	Story chosen has meaning and it is clearly stated. Audience has clear	Story chosen is important and relevant. Audience understands at	Story chosen is somewhat relevant.	Story is traditional with no digital creativity, not well explained

	understanding of message throughout.	least most of messaging.		
Why you should tell the story: 25%	Fully explains what you bring to the story that others don't. Interviews, research, tone, lived experience, etc..	Mostly explains.	Somewhat explains	No explanation attempted
Why that publication wants the story 20%	Shows that you have researched the publications and catered your pitch to them and their audience specifically.	Shows that you have researched the publications .	Not well researched, but still solid in tone	No specifics attempted.
Pitch mechanics 20%	No more than 4 paragraphs, PITCH used appropriately, slug enticing, clip list available, intro interesting	Solid attempts at the aspects outlined to the left	Some mechanics in place, but is missing some.	Misses several mechanics
Syntax: 10%	Precise syntax and superior usage of grammar, punctuation and spelling result in a coherent and intelligible piece of work	Syntax is clear and the relatively few grammar, punctuation or spelling errors do not impede understanding	Syntax is clear but contains multiple grammar, punctuation or spelling errors	Syntax is not always clear with grammar, punctuation and spelling errors noticeable. This may disrupt understanding

University Policies

University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities: Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Students with Disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. DRC is located in room 001 in Reid Hall or you can contact them by phone at 352-392-8565.

University counseling services and mental health services: Counseling and Wellness resources [http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/](http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx) Default.aspx 352-392-1575

U Matter, We Care:

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575.

The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength.

In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

****Netiquette: Communication Courtesy:** All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. <http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf>

Class Demeanor:

Mastery in this class requires preparation, passion, and professionalism. Students are expected, within the requirements allowed by university policy, to attend class, be on time, and meet all deadlines. Work assigned in advance of class should be completed as directed. Full participation in online and live discussions, group projects, and small group activities is expected.

My role as instructor is to identify critical issues related to the course, direct you to and teach relevant information, assign appropriate learning activities, create opportunities for assessing your performance, and communicate the outcomes of such assessments in a timely, informative, and professional way. Feedback is essential for you to have confidence that you have mastered the material and for me to determine that you are meeting all course requirements.

At all times it is expected that you will welcome and respond professionally to assessment feedback, that you will treat your fellow students and me with respect, and that you will contribute to the success of the class as best as you can.

Getting Help: For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Sakai, please contact the UF Help Desk at: # Learning-support@ufl.edu # (352) 392-HELP - select option 2 #<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

** Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Other resources are available at <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help> for:

Counseling and Wellness resources <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
352-392-1575

Disability resources

Resources for handling student concerns and complaints

Library Help Desk support

Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please visit <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints> to submit a complaint.

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/>.

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 <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." 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."

For more information about academic honesty, contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1261.

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/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2018/08/The-Orange-Book-Web.pdf>

The University of Florida Honor Code reads as follows:

The Honor 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 by abiding by the Student 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.”

ACADEMIC HONESTY All graduate students in the College of Journalism and Communications are expected to conduct themselves with the highest degree of integrity. It is the students’ responsibility to ensure that they know and understand the requirements of every assignment. At a minimum, this includes avoiding the following:

Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when an individual presents the ideas or expressions of another as his or her own. Students must always credit others’ ideas with accurate citations and must use quotation marks and citations when presenting the words of others. A thorough understanding of plagiarism is a precondition for admittance to graduate studies in the college.

Cheating: Cheating occurs when a student circumvents or ignores the rules that govern an academic assignment such as an exam or class paper. It can include using notes, in physical or electronic form, in an exam, submitting the work of another as one’s own, or reusing a paper a student has composed for one class in another class. If a student is not sure about the rules that govern an assignment, it is the student’s responsibility to ask for clarification from his instructor.

Misrepresenting Research Data: The integrity of data in mass communication research is a paramount issue for advancing knowledge and the credibility of our professions. For this reason any intentional misrepresentation of data, or misrepresentation of the conditions or circumstances of data collection, is considered a violation of academic integrity. Misrepresenting data is a clear violation of the rules and requirements of academic integrity and honesty. Any violation of the above stated conditions is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program and will result in revocation of the degree if the degree previously has been awarded.

Schedule

Week 1 Introduction

Monday, January 11 – Sunday, January 17

Lecture: Explanation of syllabus and course, overview of effective storytelling and persuasive messaging.

Introduce yourself in the discussion section, tell us what type of writing you are most interested in and why. DUE TUESDAY, January 19 11:59 p.m.

READING FOR NEXT WEEK:

[How personal essays conquered journalism and why they can't cut it](#)

[What editors want in a personal essay](#)

[Tips for writing a personal essay](#)

[Should journalists consider the personal essay](#)

[How to write a personal essay: 8 common mistakes to avoid](#)

Week 2 Personal Essays

Tuesday, January 19 – Sunday, January 24

Lecture: What makes a personal story interesting to other people? What writing styles can we use to illustrate events that have happened to us to get across a greater point? How serious or important do these have to be? Avoiding exploiting yourself or others for a byline. Based on last week's readings for preparation.

Reading:

[The crane wife](#)

[That time I tried topless housekeeping](#)

[The fourth state of matter](#)

[My family are the rule-breaking, lockdown flouting, entitled Americans you've heard about during the coronavirus pandemic](#)

[Fuck the bread, the bread is over](#)

[Cat person](#)

[Finding forgiveness in a ziploc](#)

Assignment 1: Rank the above readings in order from your favorite to least favorite—best to worst in your opinion, post in the discussion area. Be prepared to defend your reasoning as to why they are where they are on the list. DUE TUESDAY, JANUARY 26

Assignment 2: Brainstorm 3 possible personal essay topics and points you'll make within them. DUE TUESDAY, JANUARY 26

Week 3 Personal Essay Critique

Monday, January 25 – Sunday, January 31

Lecture: Discussing examples of personal essays for good and poor elements, examining the braided narrative, word choice and structure for better or worse. Discuss students' essay topics.

Assignment: Write your personal essay. DUE TUESDAY, FEB. 2

Week 4 Researched Essay

Monday, February 1 – Sunday, February 7

Lecture: How to broaden your personal experience through research, statistics and reportage.

Reading: [Looking outside the self for personal essays](#)

[Creative Non-fiction](#)

ESSAY EXAMPLES:

[I am not Pocahontas](#)

[The Exploitation of Martin Luther King Jr. Day by White Supremacy](#)

[Black girls don't get to be depressed](#)

[I have the scary breast cancer mutation, when should I get my breasts removed](#)

Assignment 1: Find the research in each of the four essay examples. List it completely. Some will be harder to find than others. Explain how it is research, if necessary. DUE TUES., FEB. 9

Assignment 2: Come up with two researched essay ideas, and outline the research you will use to complete them. DUE TUESDAY, FEB. 9

Week 5 Researched Essay Critique

Monday, February 8 – Sunday, February 14

Lecture: Examine the previous essay examples and discuss how research was used to enhance the point. Discuss student essay topics.

Assignment: Write your researched essay. DUE TUESDAY, FEB. 16

Week 6 Reviews

Monday, February 15 – Sunday, February 21

Reading:

[How to write a review](#)

[Writing Reviews](#)

REVIEW EXAMPLES:

Movie:

[The King of Staten Island returns Pete Davidson to anonymity](#)

[King of Staten Island review: Pete Davidson triumphs in blissful comedy](#)

Television show:

[Snowpiercer review: steampunk Law and Order is a trashy treat](#)

[Snowpiercer is slow to leave the station](#)

Book:

[In Curtis Sittenfeld's 'Rodham,' Hillary doesn't become a Clinton. And Donald Trump isn't president.](#)

['Rodham' asks, who is Hillary without Bill?](#)

Restaurant:

[At Dadong in Midtown, modern art and lame duck](#)

[At Midtown's glitzy new DaDong, the signature dish is overshadowed by the spectacle](#)

Lecture: How to review art, literature, movies, shows, culture, travel, destinations, etc.

Assignment: Pick a category of review and compare and contrast the coverage for that category. Write a discussion post about it, and comment on two other students' posts. DUE TUESDAY, FEB. 23

Week 7 Review Discussion

Monday, February 22 – Sunday, February 28

Lecture: Discuss each category of review and the techniques used within them.

Assignment: Write your review, DUE TUESDAY, MARCH 2

Week 8 Opinion Writing

Monday, March 1 – Sunday, March 7

Lecture: How to create a persuasive piece that uses journalistic tenets to support a specific point or agenda.

Reading:

[A history of opinion writing](#)

[Opinion journalism drives subscription traffic, McClatchy finds, so it's expanding](#)

META OPINION

[Op-ed: Bias is good, it just needs a label](#)

[Opinion journalism vs. objective news reporting](#)

EXAMPLES:

[I wish I'd had a late-term abortion instead of having my daughter](#)

[Volcanologist: Why Hawaii's volcano is in danger of going ballistic](#)

[Facebook's not listening through your phone, it doesn't have to](#)

[So you want to talk about lynching? Understand this first](#)

Assignment: Find the opinion in the four examples above. Quote the opinion language, and talk about where it is located in each piece and how effective it is. DUE TUESDAY, MARCH 9

Assignment 2: Think of three opinion pieces you'd like to write DUE TUESDAY, MARCH 9

Week 9: Opinion critiques

Monday, March 8 – Sunday, March 14

Lecture: Discussion of effective opinion writing techniques: cherry picking, tone and word choice, first-person, declarative sentences, empathy, etc.

Assignment: Write your opinion piece DUE TUESDAY, MARCH 16

Week 10 Timely Op-ed

Monday, March 15 – Sunday, March 21

Lecture: How timely op-eds use the news cycle to create importance.

Reading:

[I am a Black American, I had to get out](#)

[How Florida Republicans are talking about impeachment](#)

[In defense of rioting](#)

[America, this is our chance](#)

[Tom Cotton: Send in the troops](#)

Assignment: Come up with three timely op-ed ideas for your next assignment in a discussion. What news is it tied to? What is your opinion? How will you combine those? Will you use story or personal experience? Comment on two peers about your favorite of their ideas and why you like it. DUE TUESDAY, MARCH 23

Week 11 Op-ed critiques, Intro to News Analysis

Monday, March 22 – Sunday, March 28

Lecture: Op-ed discussion, news analysis differentiation.

Assignment: Write op-ed DUE TUESDAY, MARCH 30

Week 12 News analysis

Monday, March 29 – Sunday, Apr. 4

Reading:

[Personal essays scrape the bottom of the barrel](#)

[Tom Cotton's Whitewashing](#)

[What the Times got wrong](#)

[Cotton letters to the editor](#)

[The Tom Cotton Op-ed and the cultural revolution](#)

[NYT opinion editor resigns](#)

[NYT staff revolt against Tom Cotton Op-ed](#)

[Tom Cotton op-ed and the tired old snowflake defense](#)

Assignment: Discussion post: Should the NYT have run the op-ed? Why or why not? Should they have fired their opinion editor over it? Why or why not? Respond to two classmates' posts. DUE. TUES. APRIL 6

Week 13 News Analysis Discussion and critique

Monday, April 5 – Sunday, April 11

Reading: [A five-step guide to writing a perfectly satirical article for the Onion](#)

[How to use satire in literature, pop culture, and politics](#)

[How to write humor: funny essay writing tips](#)

Reading

EXAMPLES:

[Andrea Askowitz invents new level of whiteness](#)

[A note regarding the coronavirus outbreak from your university's vice president of academic affairs](#)

[Every story I have read about Trump supporters in the past week](#)

[The amazing thing about the '80s is they were much longer ago than you realize](#)

[I regret to inform you that my wedding to Captain Von Trapp has been cancelled](#)

[Presidential Trolley Problems](#)

[Unemployment high because people keep blowing their job interviews](#)

[How to make small talk with someone you used to have sex with](#) – This one is full of swears and can get uncomfortable, so it is optional

Assignment: Pick your three favorite humor pieces of the above list and have three reasons why each of them works for you in a discussion post. In that same post, link a humor piece you found on your own, and comment on what makes it a good piece in your opinion. Comment on two classmates' posts. DUE TUESDAY, APRIL 13

Week 14 Satire / Humor / Pitching

Monday, April 12 – Sunday, April 18

Lecture: What makes satire a form of opinion writing. The different ways to use humor to make a point. The different voices, emphasis, types and history of humor writing.

Assignment: Write your own humor piece. Due TUESDAY, APRIL 20

Monday, Dec. 7 – Wed. Dec. 9

Lecture: Satire discussion and pitching introduction

Week 15 Pitching

Monday, April 19 – Wednesday, April 21

Lecture: How to effectively pitch. What is the story, why are you telling it, why do they want it, why is it important right now, who are you interviewing, what experience do you have with it, who are you.

Assignment: Choose a piece you wrote this semester to send to publications. I will give you the contact information. Write effective pitches to these publications and try to get published. DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 23

Disclaimer:

This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.