

JOU4308: Magazine and Feature Writing

Course Syllabus: Fall 2022

Instructor: Ashley Ross

Email: ashbrooke@ufl.edu

Office Hours: By Zoom Appointment

Class Time: Tuesdays 6:00pm to 8pm

Class Location:

Zoom via Canvas

Course Objectives: This course will teach you about magazine and feature writing. You will learn how features differ from news stories and what kinds of features exist in the expanding media world in print, online, on social media and more. You'll learn the basics of pitching to editors and how to craft a profile, reported personal essay and longer feature. You will meet visiting professionals who have experience pitching, writing, reporting, editing and fielding pitches.

Some basics we'll cover include (and are not limited to):

- Developing feature ideas and where to find ideas
- Researching and reporting a feature
- Getting sources and making use of the time you have with them
- Understanding your voice and style, and how that applies to what you write and for where
- How to use anecdotes, color and imagination in your writing
- How editing works and how to get published

Reading: A good writer is only as strong as what they read. We will have weekly required reading assignments and weekly recommended reading assignments. Sometimes, these recommendations may even come from you. We'll be discussing work from the books below, but buying them is not required.

Recommended books:

[Writing Tools by Roy Peter Clark](#)

[The Ones We've Been Waiting For: How a New Generation of Leaders Will Transform America by Charlotte Alter](#)

[Crazy Salad & Scribble Scribble: Some Things about Women & Notes on the Media by Nora Ephron](#)

Attendance: Attendance is required for the success of this class. Also, please come because it will be fun! Each class will vary in length, depending on lecture topic, class discussion and speaker. You are expected to be on time for class and to attend each class. It's your responsibility to advise me via email or Slack before class of a circumstance causing you to miss class. If something has come up, talk to me. Life happens. Let's work it out together.

Cameras On: All classes are recorded. It's important to have your camera on during class to keep our communication and engagement strong. Everyone will get more out of the class if we're more connected.

If you have privacy concerns, poor Wifi, anxiety about being spotlighted or other concerns, please message me directly and we'll work it out together.

Attention and Participation: Remote learning makes it easy to look at other windows and tabs while we're in class. If you're eager to look at another website, I get it. I won't try to lecture anyone about doing this, but please know that you'll get out of this class what you put in. Your participation grade will be based on how much you engage with our class discussion and peer workshops and assignments.

Assignments and Deadlines: Assignments are expected to be completed and turned in by deadlines discussed in class. You will lose 5% of total points for each assignment for every day it's late. If you're having trouble with a source or an assignment, communicate with me and we'll discuss a solution. Each student gets one deadline extension to be used on only one assignment throughout the semester.

Accuracy and Honesty: You are expected to report and write original and factual work. You are expected to gather information from diverse sources. Please try to conduct interviews in person or on the phone. If a source is only willing to conduct an interview via email, communicate with me before agreeing to this. Plagiarism, fabrication, and conflicts of interest will not be tolerated. You are expected to abide by the UF Honor Code.

Email and Slack Policy: Please allow 48 hours for a response to emails and Slack messages sent between Monday and Friday. Emails or messages sent on Saturdays and Sundays will not be answered until Monday.

Submission Guidelines: Unless noted otherwise, all assignments should be uploaded to Canvas via a link to an *editable* Google doc. Please make sure to provide edit access to me before uploading to Canvas. Each Google doc should be named LASTNAME_FIRSTNAMEASSIGNMENTDATE, ie. Rodrigo_OliviaReportedEssay100122

Grading:

You'll be graded out of a 2,000 point scale. Each assignment will be graded on the quality of your work, reporting, story structure, incorporation of feedback on final drafts, style, creativity and sometimes more. You will be writing a short profile (about 200), reported essay (up to 1,000 words) and feature story (about 1,500 words). Each will require a first draft and final draft that will be weighed equally on your grade. We'll discuss grading rubrics for each assignment as each is assigned. Deadlines in journalism are important! You will lose 5% of total points for each assignment for every day it's late.

You'll also be graded on participation, which includes attendance, Slack activity and class discussions about weekly readings and weekly lectures.

There will be surprise quizzes and assignments throughout the semester for extra credit. Plus, if one of your stories for class gets published, you will receive 5% added to your grade for that story.

You are welcome to schedule private meetings with me to discuss grades.

Comments on your work will be delivered either via comments in Google docs or voice notes.

Assignment	Points	Percent of Grade	What Will Be Graded
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Short Assignments	500	25%	Mini peer profiles, finding a great lede, short writing assignments and more
Reported Essay	500	25%	Ideas, outline, first draft, final draft
Feature Story	500	25%	Ideas, outline, first draft, final draft
Edit Test	100	5%	Completion
Participation	400	20%	Class Discussion and Reading Assignments

CLASS SCHEDULE

The schedule below is fluid and may change

Date: 8/30

Lecture Topic: Introductions, syllabus review. What is a feature? What kind of features are there? Different types of features, when to write them, for who and why.

Homework: Sign up for Slack and a student subscription to the NYT. Read [A Camden Address With a Link to Martin Luther King Jr.](#) and count how many sources are in it. Then write at least two paragraphs about what other kind of feature you'd write based on this story and why. Include who you'd interview and why.

Date: 9/6

Lecture Topic: Organizing a feature. Reworking the inverted pyramid and setting up stakes.

In Class Activity/Discussion: Breakout rooms to discuss Camden Address article homework + give each other feedback. Reorganizing AP stories.

What's Due: MLK assignment, Slack, NYT

Speaker: Carly Breit, UF Grad and Platforms Editor at PEOPLE

Homework for next week: Come to class with general ideas and topics for what you'd like to write about this semester. About yourself, about life, about Gainesville, anything. What matters to YOU?

Reading for next week: [What If a Women's Magazine Editor Edited a BBC News Story About Syria? By Sarah Miller for The Hairpin](#) and The Falling Man by Tom Junod (see in Canvas files and Slack)

Date: 9/13

Lecture Topic: What we'll be writing this semester and how to juggle it all

In Class Activity/Discussion: Review writing assignments for the semester + discuss The Falling Man

What's Due: Ideas for what interests you

Speaker: Jared Misner, UF Grad, freelancer and writer at Eat Just, Inc.

Homework for Next Week: Write out 2-3 thorough ideas for your personal essay. Include what you're writing about, why now, and what your angle is for it. What kind of reporting will you include, whether that's from sources, research, or both (which is preferable). Also bring ideas to class for your reported feature. Just the start of ideas.

Reading for next week: [The Age of Instagram Face by Jia Tolentino for The New Yorker](#) and [Thank you for Ruining Me by Jared Misner](#)

Date: 9/20

Lecture Topic: Find your voice

In Class Activity/Discussion:

What's Due: Ideas.

Speaker: Charlotte Alter, Senior Correspondent at TIME

Homework: Write a first draft of your personal essay + start reporting it. Come to class with an update on the entire project. Who have you reached out to, what roadblocks are you running into?

Reading for Next Class: [Once a Janitor, Now the Bar Mitzvah Photography King of Montreal](#), [Rah-Rah, Bitches by Bobby Finger for The Cut](#), [How Goop's Haters Made Gwyneth Paltrow's Company Worth \\$250 Million by Taffy-Brodesser Akner for the New York Times](#) and [Talking With Tucker Carlson, the Most Powerful Conservative in America by Charlotte Alter for TIME](#)

Dates: 9/27 and 10/4

No class for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Homework: Submit a first draft of your personal essay on 9/28 and come to class on 10/11 incorporating my feedback

Date: 10/11

Lecture Topic: What's a profile? How will we be writing profiles?

In Class Activity/Discussion: Interview each other during class and set up a follow-up interview for this week! In person if possible.

What's Due: Personal essay (second draft incorporating feedback)

Homework: Write your profile

Reading for next week: [A Second Life by Charles Butler for Runner's World](#)

Date: 10/18

Lecture Topic: Writing great ledes. How to find and use your voice.

In Class Activity/Discussion: Find your voice.

Speaker: Abby Gardner, Freelancer writer, editor and consultant formerly of Cosmo, Glamour, Allure and more

What's Due: First draft of your profile. Updated Feature ideas. Come to class with updated ideas on your feature with more reporting.

Homework: Update your profile

Reading for next week: [What Bobby McIlvaine Left Behind by Jennifer Senior for The Atlantic](#)

Date: 10/25

Lecture Topic: Outlining and process. Storytelling. Anecdotes. Color.

In Class Activity/Discussion: Writing with your senses + Outlining

What's due: Profiles (second draft)

Homework: Find a great lede to review next week. Final feature idea with reporting, sources, and an outline.

Reading for next week: [Watch Your Lapels: These Great Ledes Are Coming for Them](#)

Date: 11/1

Lecture Topic: When sources and reporting fall through. When a story isn't a story or the story you planned.

In Class Activity/Discussion: Review ledes. Share your outline with the class. Share issues and questions around outlining/finding sources for features. Brainstorming around how to tell and organize your story.

What's due: Great lede to review. Final feature idea with reporting, sources, and an outline.

Homework: Write the first draft of your feature!

Reading for next week: [I Accidentally Uncovered a Nationwide Scam on Airbnb by Allie Conti for Vice](#)

Date: 11/8: No class, office hours as needed and scheduled. Take the extra time to work on your features.

Date: 11/15

Lecture Topic: Open class discussion. What problems are you running into with your feature? What questions do you have about features? Pitching? Revising?

What's Due: First draft of your feature

Homework: Continue working on your feature

Reading for next week: [87 Ways to Feel Healthier at Home by Jessie Van Amburg for Apartment Therapy](#), [How to Roast a Chicken by Amiel Stanek for Bon Appetit](#) and [You Know He Got That Big Dick Energy by Allison P. Davis for The Cut](#)

Dates: 11/22

No class for the week of Thanksgiving

Homework: Extra credit opportunity! Read [Through a Lens, Documenting Indigenous Culture](#) and write at least one paragraph about how you'd redo this story in a different feature format. Include what multimedia you'd incorporate and how you'd suggest showing it on social media.

Date: 11/29

Lecture Topic: How editing works. How to get published.

In Class Activity/Discussion: What's an edit test?

Speaker: Alexis Benveniste, Freelance Writer for the NYT, WaPo, Elle and more

What's Due: Feature draft incorporating edits

Homework: Continue to edit your feature

Reading for next week: [The Price of Nice Nails by Sarah Maslin Nir for the New York Times](#)

Date: 12/6

Lecture Topic: Final class! Why feature writing matters

In Class Activity/Discussion: Feature writing careers (in journalism and out of journalism)

What's Due: Final draft!

Homework: Edit test

Date: 12/13

Edit test due

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.

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 a 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.

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/) 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-honorcode/>) 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. v 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 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. <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/studenthonorcode-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/>