

JOU 4308: Magazine and Feature Writing

Spring 2023

Instructor: **Paulette Perhach**
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Office hours: Book virtually [here](#). If you need help sooner than a date available, please just email and we'll set up a time.

Preparation of features and articles for publication in newspapers and magazines coordinated with study of magazine editing problems. Supervised marketing of pieces produced.

Prereq: JOU 3101.
Class #14253

M | Period 6
(12:50 PM - 1:40 PM)
[WEIM 3020](#)

W | Periods 6-7
(12:50 PM - 2:45 PM)
[WEIM 1090](#)

Required textbooks:

- [The Best American Science And Nature Writing 2022](#)
- [The Best American Magazine Writing 2022](#)
- [Story Craft, Second Edition: The Complete Guide to Writing Narrative Nonfiction](#)

Class dates: 01/09/2023 - 04/26/2023

Please let me know if you have a name or preferred pronouns that differ from the class roll information.

Tentative class calendar

Note that the following topics and readings are subject to change at the instructor's discretion. This calendar is meant to provide a rough idea of how the class will proceed, and I reserve the right to change it up as needed. I provide a [Google Calendar](#) (which you can overlay over your own if you use it.) It will be updated as we go along.

Week No.:	
1	<p>Monday, Jan. 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions and Syllabus Review
	<p>Wednesday, Jan. 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VIRTUAL • Why feature stories matter • Discussion of curiosity interviews • Bring a magazine to analyze
2	<p>Monday, Jan. 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class – MLK day
	<p>Wednesday, Jan. 18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event and issue-based features, people stories, & personal narratives • Workshopping pitches (1/2): Each person will read their pitch, receive feedback, and bring it back the next week. • Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 1
3	<p>Monday, Jan. 23:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Craft: Chapters 1, Story & 2, Structure ○ The Comedian's Comedian's Comedian ○ Drunk, Disorderly, Dead (Prof to provide scan)
	<p>Wednesday, Jan. 25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the right structure for the story • Workshopping pitches (2/2) • Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 2
4	<p>Monday, Jan. 30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Craft: Chapter 3, Point of View ○ Best American Magazine Writing: The Games We Play ○ Best American Science and Nature Writing: Thriving Together: Salmon, Berries and People
	<p>Wednesday, Feb. 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being reader-oriented • Workshop Story 1: Short feature (1/3) • Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 3

5	<p>Monday, Feb. 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Craft: Chapters 4, Voice and Style, & 5, Character ○ “Frank Sinatra has a cold,” by Gay Talese ○ Best American Magazine Writing: The Original Cowboys
	<p>Wednesday, Feb. 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generating story ideas • Workshop Story 1: Short feature (2/3) • Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 4
6	<p>Monday, Feb. 13:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Craft: Chapters 6, Scene, & 7, Action ○ Best American Magazine Writing: Bodies on the Line ○ Jail with a chance of drowning. (Prof to provide scan)
	<p>Wednesday, Feb. 15:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering the raw material • Workshop Story 1: Short feature (3/3) • Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 5
7	<p>Monday, Feb. 20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Traveling on Assignment. Class TBD • Story Craft: Chapter 8, Dialogue • Best American Magazine Writing: Twenty Years Gone • Best American Science and Nature Writing: Your Face Is Not Your Own
	<p>Wednesday, Feb. 22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Traveling on Assignment. Class TBD • Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 6
8	<p>Monday, Feb. 27:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Traveling on Assignment. Class TBD • Reading Quiz 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Craft: Chapter 9, Theme ○ Best American Magazine Writing: Put on the Diamonds ○ Best American Magazine Writing: What Do We Do About John James Audubon?
	<p>Wednesday, Mar. 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing things for yourself. Discussion of Field Reporting and Case Study: Baja XL • Due:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 7
9	<p>Monday, Mar. 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading Quiz 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Craft: Chapters 10, Reporting, & 11, Story Narratives ○ On the Hunt in Tokyo for Authentic Denim ○ Best American Science and Nature Writing: What Slime Knows
	<p>Wednesday, Mar. 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prof. Traveling. Class TBD ● Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 8
10	Mar. 13 & 15 – SPRING BREAK
11	<p>Monday, Mar. 20: Literary techniques</p>
	<p>Wednesday, Mar. 22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshop Story 2: Profile (1/3)
12	<p>Monday, Mar. 27:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading Quiz 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Craft: Chapters 12, Explanatory Narratives ○ Best American Magazine Writing: We're Already Barreling Toward the Next Pandemic
	<p>Wednesday, Mar. 28:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interviewing ● Workshop Story 2: Profile (2/3) ● Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 9
13	<p>Monday, Apr. 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prof. Traveling. Class TBD
	<p>Wednesday, Apr. 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leads and closes ● Workshop Story 2: Profile (3/3) ● Due: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Curiosity interview 10
14	<p>Monday, Apr. 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading Quiz 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Craft: Chapter 13, Other Narratives ○ Best American Science Writing: Finding Freedom in the Natural World ○ Best American Science and Nature Writing: Too Big for the Universe
	<p>Wednesday, Apr. 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workshop Story 3: Longer feature (1/3)
15	Monday, Apr. 17:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Story Craft: Chapter 14, Ethics ○ Best American Science Writing: To Be a Field of Poppies ○ Best American Magazine Writing: These Precious Days
	<p>Wednesday, Apr. 18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop Story 3: Longer feature (2/3)
16	<p>Monday, Apr. 24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Quiz 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading Assignment TBD
	<p>Wednesday, Apr. 25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop Story 3: Longer feature (3/3)

Whereas news tends to shout, feature stories tug on the sleeve of the world and point: *Look at that.*

The reporting chops you’ve developed — how to talk to people, how to get information — will be essential. In this class, we’ll add on style, narrative, and creativity. (Thank goodness.)

This class will be workshop based. That means you’ll read your work out loud to the class and we’ll all discuss it. Storytelling and editing are about opinions, what makes a story tick. As a writer, you need to be able to defend your decisions or remain open to the opinions of others. Editing the work of your peers can be some of the best education in thinking through a story.

I’m so excited to teach what was my favorite class when I attended UF.

Accuracy and clarity will still be essential.

You will practice identifying and reporting the critical, minute details and anecdotes that often provide feature stories with their color; you will write and revise, then revise again to familiarize yourself with the feature editing process; and ultimately, you will (hopefully, at least) exit this class with an appreciation for why human-interest stories are worth telling, and the ability to tell them yourself.

Success will require three main traits:

1) **Curiosity.** The best ideas, in terms of stories and how to tell them, come from looking into the world (often, as a form of habit) and asking what, who, how and — especially — why. That’s why you’ll be doing curiosity interviews. You’ll do 10 20-minute interviews with people you find interesting.

2) **Determination.** Feature writing takes a willingness to call sources three or four times to get every necessary detail, and the humility to accept criticism throughout the revision process. It means pitching a story over and over and over. You don’t have that many grades in this class, so you have to make each one count.

3) **Participation.** Stay engaged — with the reading, with the lectures, with the guest speakers

and, certainly, with the reporting/writing process. In this class you will learn how to workshop the work of your peers, which is an essential skill as a writer and an editor. You will get a grade based on the quantity and quality of your comments.

Course Objectives

This class will combine lectures, guest speakers, readings, short writing assignments and longer writing assignments, all geared toward teaching you to tell rich, emotional, nuanced stories. The course is designed to force you to habitually read, write and think about the stories you want to tell and how you want to tell them. If you follow along, then by semester's end, you'll hopefully not only be ready to publish your own feature stories, but know how to get them published, too.

Here's a sampling of some ideas/topics we'll discuss:

- How to find interesting story ideas
- How to pitch your ideas to editors
- Writing for a specific audience
- Leaning into your unique voice
- Feature story structure
- Asking the right questions
- The many types of features
- Receiving and offering constructive criticism
- Fact checking
- Fairness vs. balance

Prerequisites

Reporting (JOU 3101) or instructor approval. I welcome anyone who has interest in learning to write and report human-interest stories as long as they can demonstrate writing/reporting competency, whether through completion of Reporting or through prior experience at student publications, internships, etc.

Minimum technology requirements

The University of Florida expects students to acquire appropriate computer hardware and software. For this class, you must have video chat capability, a smartphone or a recording device, and access to Google Docs.

Readings

This is a reading-intensive class. As an introductory course, this class will expose you to the possibilities of feature writing and bring you to a level of competency. The only way to do that is for you to read, read, read. Readings will form the basis of our class discussions and will often preface guest speakers, so you'll get credit for doing them in the form of reading quizzes, worth 20 points each. If you read the work carefully, these will be simple, with questions such as "What was the dog's name?"

Assignments/Grading breakdown

Assignment	Words	Points
Pitch:	250 words	50
Story 1: Short feature	300-500 words	100

Story 2: Profile	1,500 words	150
Story 3: Longer feature	2,500	300
Curiosity interviews	-	100
Participation	-	100
Reading Quizzes	-	200
		1,000

About the professor

Paulette Perhach's writing has been published in the *New York Times*, *Vox*, *Elle*, *Slate*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire*, *Yoga Journal*, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *Hobart*, and *Vice*. She's the author of two million-reader viral essays.

Her book, [Welcome to the Writer's Life](#), was published in 2018 by Sasquatch Books, part of the Penguin Random House publishing family, and was selected as one of *Poets & Writers' Best Books for Writers*.

She blogs about a writer's craft, business, personal finance, and joy at welcometothewriterslife.com and leads meditation and writing sessions through [A Very Important Meeting](#).

Hugo House, a nationally recognized writing center in Seattle, awarded her the Made at Hugo House fellowship in 2013. In 2016, she was nominated for the BlogHer Voices of the Year award for her essay, "A Story of a F*** Off Fund," which is anthologized in *The Future is Feminist* from Chronicle Books, along with work by Roxane Gay, Mindy Kaling, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Caitlin Moran, and Audre Lorde. In 2021, she was selected as a Jack Straw Fellow. In 2022 she celebrated a nomination from Barrelhouse for Best of the Net.

She shared the honor of a 2021 Washington State Book Award for the anthology *Alone Together: Love, Grief, and Comfort in the Time of Covid-19* as a contributor.

Class policies of note

On plagiarism and professionalism: Like in every other class at the J-School, plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you are caught plagiarizing (stealing someone's work or ideas, verbatim or not, without attribution), fabricating (making up people, quotes, anecdotes, etc.), or engaging in conflicts of interest (using as sources your parents/roommates/people to whom you have some personal connection in a non-personal story), then you will receive an automatic failing grade, no question about it.

If you're struggling, just talk to me and we'll work something out. No amount of pressure is worth engaging in these practices. Additionally, you are expected to be accurate, and your prose should be in accordance with the most up-to-date AP Stylebook. You will lose points for errors.

On deadlines

This industry doesn't tolerate lateness, and I won't tolerate patterns of tardiness in this class. Submit your assignments on time, and we won't have any problems. If you need an extension for whatever reason, I'm happy to consider it if you come talk to me; I've often found that as important as deadlines are in our industry, learning to negotiate them is also a valuable skill. However, if you turn

in an assignment late without consulting me at least 24 hours before it's due, you will lose one letter grade for each day it's late.

On diversity and inclusivity:

At its best, our industry thrives when diverse viewpoints, backgrounds and experiences are represented consistently and thoroughly across publications. Conversely, one of our industry's greatest threats to credibility is presented by being clueless, misguided or out of touch with the people we write about. For that reason, prioritizing diversity is vital both in terms of your reporting, and in terms of the parameters of this class.

The key word here is empathy, meaning, at its most basic, "understanding another." This sounds simple on its face, but it often means delving into contexts and communities you've never encountered.

We'll discuss how to do that effectively over the course of the semester, but for now, just keep in mind that you'll be expected to incorporate diverse, relevant sourcing into your reporting. Our job as reporters is somewhat unique in that we're not only a reflection of society, but we present that reflection back to society, and it ought to be as thorough and as accurate as possible. This becomes impossible if we ignore important cultural context and relevant voices. In order to be fair, we must be empathetic, and we must be thorough. That's the way it should be — and also the way that makes the work most fun and rewarding. As retired sportswriter Gary Smith once said, "Judgment just closes off so many possibilities and doors and windows. So, the more you open to what created the human in any given moment, the richer the terrain you as a writer have to explore. It's in the ambiguities, the paradoxes of human beings, where truth lies."

As far as this class goes, I fervently believe that our differences — be they race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, religion, nationality, disability, or culture — make us better reporters and better human beings. Our differences make us who we are, and by embracing our own unique backgrounds while also recognizing and trying to understand the unique experiences of others, as reporters, we're able to better serve the communities we cover. The same applies to our relationships in this class. We're all better off when we work hard to understand each others' viewpoints, and I expect that you will do so throughout our time together. I, in turn, will strive to do the same. I've tried to incorporate a range of voices and experiences into our reading selections, and by giving each of you the chance to choose one story for us to read, I've empowered you to do so as well.

You are encouraged to give feedback to let me know if any material in the course falls short of the expectation of fostering understanding of diverse peoples and cultures, and how our role as reporters impacts that understanding in others. If you feel more comfortable, feel free to contact Professor Joanna Hernandez, CJC director of inclusion and diversity, at jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu.

UF 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 that 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 Conduct:

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 honesty 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. 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 or TAs in this class.

Communication Courtesy:

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy during, before and after class, in all email messages, threaded discussions, and chats.

Getting help

Technical Difficulties:

For issues with technical difficulties for Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu>
- (352) 392-HELP (4357)
- Walk-in: HUB 132

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues should be accompanied by the ticket number received from the Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You should e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the

technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Health and Wellness:

- U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit umatter.ufl.edu to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit counseling.ufl.edu or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit shcc.ufl.edu.
- University Police Department: Visit police.ufl.edu or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room/Trauma Center: For immediate medical care in Gainesville, call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; ufhealth.org/emergency-room-trauma-center.

Academic and student support:

Career Connections Center: 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services career.ufl.edu/.

- Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask
- Teaching Center: 352-392-2010 General study skills and tutoring: teachingcenter.ufl.edu/
- Writing Studio: 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers: writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/

Course Evaluations

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/publicresults/>.

Thanks to fellow lecturer Ethan Bauer for providing verbiage and ideas for this syllabus.