

JOU3741: Literary Journalism

“Literary journalism isn't about literary flourishes, it isn't about literary references. Literary journalism at its best asks the questions that literature asks: about the nature of human nature and its place in [the] cosmos.”

— Ron Rosenbaum

Contact information

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Welcome

Welcome to JOU3741: Literary Journalism. This course focuses on narrative writing. The goal of this course is to introduce you to literary elements that you can use to improve your stories. We will spend time reading and discussing some of the best examples of literary journalism. These include books as well as stories published in magazines and newspapers. We will discuss the content and how the literary elements were used to engage readers and advance the narrative. The main goal is to encourage you to use these elements in your own writing. You will work on one in-depth story throughout the semester. The story must have a strong narrative, and we will have plenty of time for critiquing and discussing your work.

This course will also cover several of the literary journalism pioneers as well as examine the work of current literary journalism authors. You will learn why some of these techniques are a departure from typical news writing and understand why this style has been criticized. As you gain practice in identifying literary elements, you will be encouraged to apply these to your own writing. My hope is that you emerge from the course a keener observer and a better writer.

Because we meet online, you will need to post your thoughts to the discussion board. I will clarify what I would like you to write about before each discussion post is due. I advise you to compose your thoughts in a Word document so you can check the spelling, and then copy and paste your information onto the site. That step may save you from losing your thoughts in case there is a glitch with the site.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- "Next Wave: America's New Generation of Great Literary Journalists," edited by Walter Harrington and Mike Sager
- "Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Essays" by Joan Didion
- "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men" by Walker Evans and James Agee
- "The Right Stuff" by Tom Wolfe

PLUS, CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- "In Cold Blood" by Truman Capote
- "Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America" by Barbara Ehrenreich

Will I be able to learn in this online format?

As with any class, the more effort you put into it, the more you will get out of it. You are required to do the readings on time. You will also need to participate on the discussion board, complete writing assignments that you'll submit through Sakai, and critique your classmates' stories.

Weekly Expectations

The beauty of this online class is that you can learn throughout the week. I will post lectures on **Mondays**. You will be expected to post your response to the discussion question(s) by **11:55 p.m. Tuesdays**. You must respond to at least two other classmates by **11: 55 p.m. Thursdays**. The quizzes will be available on Fridays and due by Sundays.

A regular routine should make it easier for you to become accustomed to our online format.

How do I navigate the site?

Below is a brief description of what you'll find under each link.

HOME – this is where you'll find the syllabus. This includes my expectations for you as well as the points and grading scale.

COURSE SCHEDULE – this lists the topics we'll cover each week and the required readings and due dates.

BLOGS – you have your own blog in Sakai. **On my blog, I will post the lectures.** Each Monday, there will be one main topic covered, and sometimes I might update throughout the week. If I do, I will send out an announcement. **The blog is where you should always look for my instruction and tips, and you should always scroll down to make sure you've read all the most recent postings.**

You will be posting your rough drafts on your blog so that we can leave you feedback in your comment section.

DISCUSSIONS -This is the online forum that we will use for discussions. This feature is important to help us get to know each other and allows you to post your thoughts. This really helps me get a grasp on what you understand and if you are learning. You will have weekly required postings that are graded. The initial postings will be due each Tuesday, with your responses to others due each Thursday. **To earn a high grade**, you need to completely answer each question and demonstrate that you have put time and thought into your posting. You also need to read all of your classmates' postings and respond to at least two of them. This is the minimum requirement – you can respond to more. This is an area where you don't want to fall behind because these weekly grades add up.

ANNOUNCEMENTS – I like to post reminders about due dates and other important information in the announcements. These are saved to the site, so you can look back through them. When I post an announcement, I also have the option to have a copy delivered to your UF email account. I will do this for the urgent announcements that I want to make sure you read. (Of course, read ALL announcements.) I expect that you are reading them as part of being in the course.

CALENDAR - I will put due dates on the calendar as another way to remind you of what you should be completing each week.

ASSIGNMENTS - This is where you will submit your assignments for a grade. Yes, you will also be posting your story to your blog, but I want a Word document that I can open and edit. This means you'll be uploading your rough drafts and final versions to this Assignment space. You'll also be able to receive my feedback through here. You won't see anything until an assignment due date approaches, and I make the submission link active.

TEST & QUIZZES - This is the link you'll click on to find the quizzes on the readings. You won't find anything there until the quiz has been made active. You'll have a limited amount of time to complete the quiz. These dates will be announced in advance so you can plan for them.

MAIL – We also have an email function within Sakai. This provides an easy way to contact me. Unfortunately, it doesn't notify me when an email has been submitted UNLESS YOU CLICK A LITTLE BUTTON, so if you don't hear back from me quickly, then send a note to my gmail account. I am constantly on that email, so you'll get a faster response if you email me at **reneemk@gmail.com**. I also have a UF email: **rmartinkratzer@jou.ufl.edu**. If I don't respond to your email within 24 hours during the week or 48 hours on the weekend, send me the email to reneemk@gmail.com again or text me at 573.356.2346.

GRADEBOOK - Grades will be posted online to your gradebook. You can tally your grade as we progress through the course.

RESOURCES - Before you can link to files in Sakai, you first have to upload them to the Resources folder. When you post your image on your blog, you will first upload your photo and then link it. I have to do this for all the documents I share. You don't need to access this link, but that's the reason it's there.

STUDENT FAQ - This is where you should turn when you feel lost navigating or using the site. This has answers on a variety of problems that might pop up in Sakai. Turn here first to try to find an answer, and then email me if you still have problems.

That concludes our tour of Sakai! It may seem daunting now, but soon you'll be used to navigating the site.

How to earn a good grade

To earn a high grade, you not only need to do well on your final story, but you should also do the following:

1. Complete the weekly readings
2. Participate in the weekly online discussion, read postings from your classmates and write thoughtful replies. You want to show that you understand the literary works we are reading, so you might want to cite these works in your answers.
3. Put effort into all assignments and complete them on time
4. Demonstrate a mastery of grammar, AP style and reporting and writing techniques
5. Pursue original stories that are worthy of publication

How do I earn participation points?

The participation points are earned by logging in, reading postings and making meaningful comments. You also earn points by showing me that you have put time and thought into the peer assessments of stories (also known as story workshops). I also have the expectation that you participate in any other assignment that comes up throughout the semester. **You will LOSE points by being late, by failing to participate and by acting unprofessional or by putting in little effort on assignments.**

Plagiarism and academic honesty

The statement below, written by Professor David Carlson, has been endorsed by the Department of Journalism faculty. Consider it the law of the department.

It is expected that you will exhibit ethical behavior in your classes. Students are expected to do their own work, use their own words in papers and to reference outside sources appropriately. Students are further expected to observe intellectual property rights and to comply with copyright laws. That means you must obtain written permission to use copyrighted materials in any work you submit for a class. It also means you will not plagiarize the words, designs, concepts or ideas of others.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or accidental, has become easier to commit since the advent of the Web. Plagiarism is defined as "...taking someone's words or ideas as if they were your own." Source: Dictionary.com.

That means you cannot take even a single sentence from another Web site without attribution. It means you cannot take someone else's design and replace the words and pictures with your own. It means that if you use even a few of someone else's words verbatim, you must put quotation marks around them and cite the source.

Georgetown University offers a useful tutorial on plagiarism. It says:

"If you use someone else's ideas or words, cite the source.

"If the way in which you are using the source is unclear, make it clear.

"If you received specific help from someone, acknowledge it."

If you find yourself wondering whether you have crossed the line of plagiarism, you almost assuredly have. When in doubt, ask the professor.

It is true that students sometimes plagiarize unintentionally or by accident. That is neither a defense nor an excuse. To avoid accidental plagiarism, it is extremely important to keep careful notes about what came from where, especially when doing online research. If you are cutting and pasting paragraphs from Web sites to your notes, you are in very risky territory; save the citations along with the material.

Your work will be checked for plagiarism, so just don't do it. **Failure to uphold the standards of academic honesty will result in a failing grade for the course and, potentially, other serious disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.**

If you are aware of a climate that promotes academic dishonesty, please notify the instructor or contact the Student Honor Court (392-1631) or the Cheating Hotline (392-6999).

Honor Code

When you enrolled at the University of Florida, you agreed to the following 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."

Review UF's academic honesty guidelines at:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>

The Writing Assignment

During the semester, you will focus on ONE story. You should try to identify a topic early. You will want to choose a topic that is worthy of a long-form story. You may want to focus on a person, a place or an issue. In this paper, you will be expected to use many of the literary elements that we discuss. You will need to get your story idea approved. Throughout the semester, you will receive feedback on your story from me and your peers. I want everyone to get their stories published.

Specific details (including word counts) will be handed out in class.

Source List

You are required to submit a source list with your story that includes names and contact information for the people that you interviewed.

Late assignments

Meeting deadlines is an essential skill for a journalist to master, so **10 points PER DAY** will be deducted from your final story grade if either the drafts or final versions are late.

Points

Keep track of your points as the semester progresses:

Weekly discussions: 150 points

Reading quizzes: 100 points

Final story: 150 points

Participation: 50 points

Total points: 450 points

Grading scale

A: 93-100% (372-400 points)

A-: 90-92% (360-371 points)

B+: 88-89% (352-359 points)

B: 83-87% (332-351 points)

B-: 80-82% (320-331 points)

C+: 78-79% (312-319 points)

C: 73-77% (292-311 points)

C-: 70-72% (280-291 points)

D+: 68-69% (272-279 points)

D: 63-67% (252-271 points)

D-: 60-62% (240-251 points)

F: 59% and below (239 points and below)