

Magazine and **Feature Writing** (JOU 4308)
University of Florida-Summer B 2013

Class meetings:

3:30-6:15 p.m.

Mondays, Wednesdays

Period 6 and 7

Weimer 3028

Office hours:

Tuesday: 11:00-noon or by appointment (on Mondays and Wednesdays)

Office location: Weimer G044

Instructor:

Erica Newport (Osvath, pronounced osh-vat) Note: Please call me Erica.

E-mail: ericanewport@ufl.edu

Course Description:

Magazine and **Feature Writing** is a course that teaches students how to write long-form feature articles, which (should) lure readers in page-by-page, unfolding the magic of strong storytelling and skilled writing. For this course, students will be introduced to the “elevator” pitch (or a one-to-two sentence headline for a story idea), the feature story pitch, including its placement into a formatted query letter, and the draft and rewrite of a feature story. Under the instructor’s guidance, students examine how to properly research for a particular feature story, conduct interviews, and review exemplary feature stories. Upon completion of this course, students should have honed the skills and collected relevant writing resources to write accurate, thrilling, entertaining, and informative feature stories. The course relies heavily on discussions and in-class practice activities, which means that attendance and punctuality are of utmost importance.

Course Objectives:

This course aims to:

- Differentiate feature writing from other writing types
- Follow the basic rules of news feature writing (e.g. AP style, attribution, writing in the third-person)
- How to pitch a story (over the phone, in person and via e-mail)
- Develop a compelling lede, write a convincing nut graph, thoughtfully organize a story, effectively use anecdotes, produce satisfying endings
- Pace a story (e.g. create a rhythm, use effective transitions)
- Conduct comprehensive research
- Distinguish between good and bad sources
- Understand how to extend a feature article from a print edition to an online edition

Required Textbook:

Blundell, W. E. (1988). The art and craft of feature writing: based on the Wall Street Journal guide. New American Library.

Not a Required Textbook:

Zinsser, W. (2006). *On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction*. HarperCollins.

A Typical Class:

- 1. Inspiration**
- 2. Open discussion**
- 3. Education**
- 4. Application**

Deadlines:

Deadlines for all assignments are firm. As a class, we will decide on a pre-deadline, which will offer each of you an opportunity to show me a draft of the assigned project, receive my feedback/suggestions (not to edit your work), allowing for a few days to tweak and submit by the set deadline.

Assignments:

Quizzes: 20% of class grade

Quizzes (5 questions or so) will be administered during the second part of each class starting week two. Students are expected to arrive on-time, following the class break to take the quizzes and will be unable to make-up the quizzes, unless the absence is excused.

Note: Quizzes (five questions) will be open-book and open-note based on the first part of each class (or prior classes), prior to class break.

Feature article I (800-1000 words): 40% of class grade

A profile piece, which includes an elevator pitch (What's the story in a sentence or two?), written and verbal pitch, query letter to editor, and draft/re-write of final.

Note: A grading rubric will be provided for above assignment.

Feature article II (800-1000 words): 40% of class grade

An in-depth piece, which includes an elevator pitch (What's the story in a sentence or two?), written and verbal pitch, query letter to editor, and draft/re-write of final.

Note: A grading rubric will be provided for above assignment.

Tentative schedule: *revised starting week two*

Please note that the final agreed upon schedule is subject to change at any time. The professor will notify you via the e-mail.

Monday, July 8, 2013

Review: What is a feature story?
How do I come up with an idea?
Examining ledes and strong openings
Open-note/book quiz

Wednesday, July 10, 2013

Skillful, intentional, empathic interviewing
What's newsworthy?
Middle heart of story – organizing and writing the story – what to include, and what to cut
Descriptive/narrative writing
Open-note/book quiz

Monday, July 15, 2013

Pitches: How do I pitch a feature story?
Planning and outlining a story
Descriptive/narrative writing
Open-note/book quiz

Wednesday, July 17, 2013

Query letters: How do I write a query letter?
Sourcing and researching
Identifying good quotes
Descriptive/narrative writing
Open-note/book quiz
Note: Feature story I draft may be submitted for review on Friday, July 19, by midnight.

Monday, July 22, 2013

Note: Feature story I full packet due by midnight, Tuesday, July 23. Packets will be returned to students a week later.
Extra help will be offered in class for feature story I
Writing mechanics – simple no clutter
Open-note/book quiz

Wednesday, July 24, 2013

Review: How do I come up with an idea?
Review: Examining ledes and strong openings
Review: Pitches: How do I pitch a feature story?
Review: Descriptive/narrative writing
Open-note/book quiz

Monday, July 29, 2013

Review: Skillful, intentional, empathic interviewing
Review: What's newsworthy?
Review: Middle heart of story – organizing and writing the story – what to include, and what to cut

Review: Descriptive/narrative writing
Open-note/book quiz

Wednesday, July 31, 2013

Review: Planning and outlining a story
Review: Query letters: How do I write a query letter?
Review: Sourcing and researching
Review: Descriptive/narrative writing
Open-note/book quiz

Note: Feature story II draft may be submitted for review on Friday, August 2, by midnight.

Monday, August 5, 2013

Who do you authorize as your journalism role model?
Expanding from print to online
Review: Identifying good quotes
Open-note/book quiz

Wednesday, August 7, 2013

Note: Feature story II full packet due by midnight, Thursday, August 8. Grades due Saturday, August 10, 2013.

Extra help will be offered in class for feature story II
What's next: Does my story make the cut, and what are some possible publication(s) for me to pitch/query my features?
Last day of class party

Evaluation:

Quizzes	20%
Feature Story I	40%
Feature Story II	40%

Grading:

A	100.00-93.00
A-	92.99-90.00
B+	89.99-87.00
B	86.00-83.00
B-	82.99-80.00
C+	79.99-77.00
C	76.99- 73.00
C-	72.99-70.00
D+	69.99-67.00
D	66.99-63.00
D-	62.99-60.00
F	59.99-0

Absence Policy:

Course attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to show-up on-time for class meetings, as outlined in this syllabus. Students are responsible for making up any material missed due to absences. If you are absence for any acceptable reasons, a note from the Dean of Students Office will be requested. (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/supportservices/>) According to the Registrar's Office at the University of Florida, an acceptable reason for an absence is outlined below:

“In general, acceptable reasons for absence from class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, and professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved.”

Source: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences>

Additionally, it is important to note that four absences will result in lowering your grade by an entire letter grade. Six absences will result in lowering your grade by two entire letter grades, and you will fail if you are absent eight times.

Academic Integrity:

All students are expected to abide by rules for academic integrity. Students are expected to attribute any work they did not produce. Students are expected to work individually on exams, and no electronics may be used at any time. Academic dishonesty will result in a zero on the assignment, and could lead to failure in the course. The professor will report any violations of the Honor Code to the Dean of Students Office, in accordance to the University of Florida policy.

Students with Disabilities:

All students with disabilities will be accommodated, after the professor receives a letter from the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). Please feel free to approach the professor should you have any special needs.