

## L 2013JOU 4930 - 1122 Special Topics: Opinion Writing. (FALL 2014)

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**Office Hours: The best way to reach me is by my cell number or by my gmail account. We can arrange for a phone or Skype conversation.**

### Course description:

This course will:

- examine the role of newspaper editorials in American public policy and debate.
- provide an opportunity to engage with contemporary American editors and writers.
- help develop skills to write effective opinion pieces.

### Goals:

In this class, students will:

- become familiar important editorials in American history.
- learn more about the role of contemporary opinion writer.
- analyze various editorials and columns.
- routinely write opinion pieces.

### Required text:

Gartner, Michael and Newseum. *Outrage, Passion & Uncommon Sense*. National Geographic. 2005.

*Outrage* will serve as a road map for the course and provide many of the topics for the writing exercises.

**Additional readings:** Additional required reading materials will be posted on Sakai and/or emailed to students.

**\*\*\*\* However, in numerous cases, students will be expected to do their own independent research and/or reporting to fulfill the obligations of many assignments.**

**Additional resources:** Assignments also could include video or audio clips.

**Books not required, but worth having for this and other courses:**

- Blundell, William. *The Art and Craft of Feature Writing*. Penguin Books.

- Clark, Roy P. *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*. Little, Brown and Company

Both of these books are worth having in your collection. We will occasionally draw from them during this course.

**Specific assignments will be posted on Sakai.**

**Grading:**

Grading for the course will be done quantitatively and will be based on:

- Weekly writing assignments. 70 percent.
- Final writing assignment. 30 percent.

**Midterm exam:** There is no mid-term exam.

**Final exam:** There is no final exam. However, there is a final writing assignment worth 30 percent of the total grade.

**Deadlines: Assignments are due at 9 a.m. Eastern Time on day of deadline.**

Failure to meet a deadline will mean major reductions in a score. You will lose .5 points for every three hours you are late.

Assignments turned in more than one day after the deadline will receive zero (0) points.

If there is some mitigating circumstance that will prevent you from turning in an assignment on time, please contact your instructor PRIOR to the deadline.

**Assignments:** The length of an assignment is 750 words.

**Plagiarism; Cheating or other Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism is a serious issue in the classroom and in the newsroom. All students are bound by the university's Honor Code Policy at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php>.

**Anyone who violates the policy in this course will receive a failing grade in this course and face further sanctions from the college and university.**

**Special needs:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting an accommodation. This course conforms to all requirements of the ADA and handles with sensitivity all matters related to gender, race, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability. Please alert the instructor if any issues arise.

**Syllabus Changes:** The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus or course schedule as the need arises.

**Tips for learning (and for getting good grades):**

- Do not wait to the last minute to tackle an assignment.
- Ask questions.
- Read all of the required material and scan, if not read, the optional material.
- Treat the course seriously.
- Follow instructions regarding format and specific elements to be included in the work.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1. Monday, Aug. 25.**

Introduction.

**Readings:** Gartner: 15-22. Material posted on Sakai.

**Exercise:** Write about your passion. 750 words.

**Due:** Aug. 29.

**WEEK 2. Tuesday, Sept. 2**

Contemporary Opinion Writing.

**Readings:** Material posted on Sakai (Idea Bank). Independent research.

**Exercise:** Analyze an opinion piece of your choosing. 750 words.

**Due:** Sept. 8.

**WEEK 3. Monday, Sept. 8.**

Blogging and Bloggers.

Building Blocks.

**Readings:** Material posted on Sakai. Independent research.

**Assignment:** Profile a blogger or blog. 750 words.

**Due:** Sept. 12.

**WEEK 4. Monday, Sept. 15.**

Historical Context.

**Readings:** Gartner: 26-43. Material posted on Sakai. Independent research.

**Assignment:** Write an opinion piece about Edward Snowden or Julian Assange. 750 words.

**Due:** Sept. 19.

**WEEK 5. Monday, Sept. 22.**

War.

**Readings:** Gartner: 46-64. Material posted on Sakai. Independent research.

**Assignment:** Write an opinion piece about the use of drones in warfare. 750 words.

**Due:** Sept. 26.

**WEEK 6. Monday, Sept. 29.**

Death. (Obituaries)

**Readings:** Gartner: 69-83. Material posted on Sakai. Independent research.

**Exercise:** Write an obituary on Steve Jobs. 750 words.

**Due:** Oct. 3.

**WEEK 7. Monday, Oct. 6.**

Race.

**Readings:** Gartner: 89-109. Independent research.

**Major Assignment:** Write an opinion piece about immigration. 750 words.

**Due:** Oct. 10.

**WEEK 8. Monday, Oct. 13.**

University of Florida.

**Readings:** Independent research and/or your own reporting.

**Assignment:** Write an opinion piece about the university. Topic of your choosing. 750 words.

**Due:** Oct. 17.

**WEEK 9. Monday, Oct. 20.**

**No Assignment.**

Begin research on three-part series assignment (Final) due Dec. 10.

**WEEK 10. Monday, Oct. 27.**

Politics.

**Readings:** Gartner: 115-134. Independent research and/or your own reporting.

**Assignment:** Write an opinion piece about Florida's gubernatorial race. 750 words.

**Due:** Oct. 31.

**WEEK 11. Monday, Nov. 3.**

**No Assignment.**

Research on three-part series assignment (Final) due Dec. 10.

**WEEK 12. Monday, Nov. 10.**

Passions.

**Readings:** Gartner: 157-173. Independent research and/or your own reporting.

**Major Assignment:** Write an opinion piece about a topic of your choosing. 750 words.

**Due:** Nov. 14.

**WEEK 13. Monday, Nov. 17.**

Opinion as Criticism. (Reviews)

**Readings:** Material posted on Sakai. Independent research and/or your own reporting.

**Assignment:** Write a review of a movie, TV show, CD, concert, gallery opening, restaurant, exhibit, athletic team or game, artistic performance, play, consumer product, book, or line of clothing (fashion.) 750 words.

**Due:** Nov. 21.

**WEEK 14. Monday, Nov. 24.**

**Thanksgiving Week – No class.**

**WEEK 15. Monday, Dec. 1.**

The Human Spirit.

**Readings:** Gartner: 141-150. Independent research and/or your own reporting.

**Assignment:** Write an opinion piece about the human spirit. 750 words.

**Due:** Dec. 5.

**WEEK 16, Monday, Dec. 8.**

Your Campaign.

**Readings:** Independent research and/or your own reporting.

**Assignment:** Write three-part series about one topic of your choosing. 750 words per piece.

**Due:** Dec. 10.