

JOU 6309 – Fall 2013

[“Reading maketh a full man; conference, a ready man; and writing, an exact man.”](#) — [Francis Bacon](#)

“Words are sacred. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones, in the right order, you can nudge the world a little.” — [Tom Stoppard](#)

“There is no such thing as good writing. Only good rewriting.” — [Robert Graves](#)

[Link to Weekly Assignments](#)

Link to this blog: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/>

Instructor: Dr. Ronald R. Rodgers, Associate Professor

Email: Because I find both the UF and Sakai email systems clunky, for this class let’s use my Gmail account only. It is rr194602@gmail.com

I will respond as soon as possible within 24 hours Monday through Friday

Email Policy

- The email should be as specific as possible.
- It should include your full name.
- You should also note that I check my email **once** in the morning and **once** in the evening Monday through Friday.
- I should also note that I do not read emails of more than half a screen long. If you have that much to say, then let’s have a conversation.

Meeting Times: Tuesdays 4:05-7:05 p.m.

Classroom: Weimer 1090

Office: 3058 Weimer Hall **Office phone:** 392-8847

Office Hours: See [Link to my schedule](#)

Favorite Saying: [東 \(east\) 問 \(question\) 西 \(west\) 答 \(answer\)](#)

INTRODUCTION

“The difference between literature and journalism is that journalism is unreadable, and literature is not read.” – [Oscar Wilde \(1891\)](#)

This course lies at the crossroads of journalism and literature. During the next 15 weeks we will explore the journalistic, historical and critical tangents that make up the notion of literary journalism as we read and analyze some of the best reportage ever written. In the process of reading the works of many fine journalists, we will weigh how form and content work together to create great factual literature.

This course will look back as far as the 18th century at some of the literary antecedents to what Tom Wolfe – and others before and after him – have called the “New Journalism.” We will then read and analyze the works of many different literary journalists and commentators on literary journalism from the 19th century to our present day.

If nothing else, I hope this course will disabuse you of Mr. Wilde's notion that journalism is unreadable. I know from my own experience – even as a former English Lit major – that these days I am more wont to read nonfiction than fiction. In fact, I know of one scholar who has noted that the [New York Review of Books](#) offers three reviews of nonfiction to every one review of fiction. Certainly, not all of that nonfiction would be classified as literary journalism, but this does show you that fact-based journalism is the 600-pound gorilla of genres.

What we are interested in here is content – namely the writing of nonfiction using the techniques of the fictionists – a radical – and, some would say, an ill-conceived departure from journalistic norms.

This course has a six-pronged approach. It is a smorgasbord of delectables – all, or any one of which, I hope, you will find tasty. We will explore:

1. Literary journalism's historical antecedents – or should we say founders?
2. Literary journalism's future in the age of the connected computer.
3. The criticism literary journalism has received from friend and foe alike.
4. The theory behind this genre.
5. The techniques that comprise and define this genre.
6. Ways of toppling the inverted pyramid in developing our own individual writing styles using the techniques of literary journalism.

Everything we do in this course – the readings, my minimal lecture, your maximal discussion, the analysis and the writing – are intended to give you a historical perspective of journalism in general and its importance in society – especially as an armature for democracy, and especially literary journalism's ability to connect the multiple subjectivities in a multifarious society.

So, how will we do this? The answer is simple, the doing is difficult.

By reading and writing and reading and writing. For more, if you agree to accept this mission, read on.

OFFICE HOURS

I am available to you this semester – and beyond – to talk about this class, to talk about journalism and communications, to talk about your career, or to just talk. My office hours are listed on my schedule:

- [Link to my schedule](#)
- Or just stop by – my door is pretty much always open, and if I am in and I am free, we can talk.
- You should also note that I check my e-mail once in the morning and once in the evening Monday through Friday.

A Note about Office Hours: As much as humanly possible, I will be available during my office hours. If you come by during office hours and I'm not in, look for a note – I'm very likely to be back in 5 minutes or less. If you cannot meet with me during my office hours, please make an appointment. If you make an appointment and then can't keep it, please call or email me as soon as possible to let me know. I have an answering machine on my office phone, and remember, if the answering machine picks up and you don't leave your telephone number or speak so rapidly that I can't decipher the number, I can't call you back!

REQUIREMENTS FOR CLASS

Tools

- A laptop computer with a fully charged battery – bring to every class.
- Set up a free WordPress.com blog for **JOU 6309 Journalism as Literature** class using the Twenty Twelve theme (<http://theme.wordpress.com/themes/twentytwelve/>).
 - When you set up blog, make sure the comments do not have to be moderated by you before anyone else can see them.
 - Put a test post on your blog so that my reader will accept your RSS feed. Include some biographical background on yourself, your research interests, and your future goals.
 - Send the url for your blog to me through email. Be sure to activate the link. **Deadline:** By end of first class.
 - Here is an excellent WordPress worksheet from Prof. Mindy McAdams on the basics of setting up a blog: http://www.jtoolkit.com/bloggng/wp_tips.html

Books

- **Book 1:** *Hiroshima* by John Hersey. (Due Week 4)
- **Book 2:** *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote. (Due Week 8)
- **Book 3:** *Pulphead* by John Jeremiah Sullivan

Two Reviews of Pulphead

[REALITY EFFECTS: John Jeremiah Sullivan's essays.](#) A review by the most excellent New Yorker critic James Woods.

[Pulphead – By John Jeremiah Sullivan - Book Review – NYTimes.com](#)

- **Book 4: Class Anthology:** *The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism*, Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda (editors), Simon & Schuster, Touchstone Books, 1998. Abbreviation: **AOF**
- **Book 5: A Book on Writing Nonfiction:** *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers' Guide from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University*. The country's most prominent journalists and nonfiction authors gather each year at Harvard's Nieman Conference on Narrative Journalism. *Telling True Stories* presents their best advice – covering everything from finding a good topic, to structuring narrative stories, to writing and selling your first book. More than fifty well-known writers offer their most powerful tips
- Other selected readings, to be handed out in class, by web links or through [Sakai](#). If you are unfamiliar with Sakai or have any questions, check out the [e-Learning FAQs](#). If you encounter a problem while using e-Learning, you should immediately contact the Help Desk for assistance.

Links

- **Here are some links to cheap books:** abebooks <http://www.abebooks.com/> & half.com by ebay <http://www.half.ebay.com/>

Also, as a writer you should familiarize yourself with:

1. Nieman Storyboard at www.niemanstoryboard.org
2. Nieman Storyboard’s deconstruction of great writing – Why’s This So Good? <http://www.niemanstoryboard.org/category/whys-this-so-good/>
3. Notable Narratives at www.niemanstoryboard.org/category/notable-narratives/.
4. Essays on Craft at www.niemanstoryboard.org/category/essays-on-craft/.
5. Narrative at <http://www.narrativemagazine.com/>
6. longform.org – a curated collection of great *longform* pieces formatted for single-click saving into Instapaper (but you can read on browser).
7. SportsFeat: Great sportswriting, handpicked at <http://www.sportsfeat.com/>
8. [Nearly 100 Fantastic Pieces of Journalism](#) This is largely a list of magazine articles, but you could use this to find book-length projects by any one of these writers.

Follow my Tumblr blog INTERSECTIONS at <http://litj.tumblr.com/>

Finally, log in to the e-Learning Support Services web site at <http://lss.at.ufl.edu>

HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

This course will be conducted as a reading seminar, one of many you will encounter as a graduate student. We are also going to run this class like a writing workshop. So you must first be here and then also be prepared to participate in the class discussion and writing workshops. Lack of preparation is reflected in your participation, and in my book, lack of preparation is nearly the same as being absent from class and will be graded in the same way. By the end of 15 weeks, I will have a pretty good handle on who participates and who does not. It is essential that you complete all the assigned readings for each class meeting. We may not discuss every reading in class, but you will be responsible for all the readings.

MORE ON SEMINAR DISCUSSIONS

You are expected to participate in this class. That means you submit your essays with discussion question and your reading group responses each week, offer your ideas about the subject in class, allow other people to express their views, respect others’ opinions and exchange ideas that will make us better readers and writers. Seminar discussions require a fine balance. On the one hand, you do not want to take over the conversation. On the other, you do not want to let others do all the talking. If you go on and on (and I am often guilty of this, too, as my passion for a subject will over-ride my self-editor), I will politely cut you off.

Grading

Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Activity	Maximum Points
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Class Participation	5%
Leading Class Discussion	10%
Blog Essays on Week's Readings	20%
Responses to Essays	20%
Short Writing Assignments	10%
Story Proposal / Presentation	5%
Story Rough Draft	5%
Final Story	25%
Total	100%

Final grades will be based on these standard break-points:

A	93.6%+	C	73.6-77%
A-	90-93.5%	C-	70-73.5%
B+	87.1%-89.9%	D+	67.1%-69.9%
B	83.6-87%	D	63.6-67%
B-	80-83.5%	D-	60-63.5%
C+	77.1%-79.9%	E	59.9% or lower

The following website provides a chart showing UF's policy regarding the grade points earned for each letter grade designation: <https://gradschool.ufl.edu/catalog/current-catalog/catalog-general-regulations.html#grades> Click on the Grades link

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

No assignment can be late under any circumstances. Work turned in late will not be accepted unless you have a legitimate and documented excuse. **THIS IS NOT NEGOTIABLE, SO PLEASE PLAN AHEAD!**

ATTENDANCE

Class attendance is required. More than one unexcused absence will result in a minimum deduction of one letter grade from your attendance and participation grade. More than two will result in the same deduction from your overall grade. Hey, this class only meets once a week. Arriving or leaving early will be considered an absence. Excused absences include documented medical excuses and religious observances (with advanced notice). Please

contact me before class. University-approved absences must be documented (in advance, if for an approved university activity) according to official university policy. Obtaining written verification for an excused absence is your responsibility, as is arranging to complete any missed work.

Common courtesy: For heaven's sake, turn off your cell phone! And close your laptops if we are not using them for class! Professionals treat each other with courtesy and mutual respect. You can demonstrate those qualities by putting cell phones away during class and not signing on to Facebook or any other such social media venues. In other words, turn off all communicative devices and stow them away. Use of same during class will be noted in the participation section of the grade book.

BE GOOD

And I have to say this as part of our contract: You need to conduct yourself in a courteous manner both in and out of class when it comes to dealing with fellow students or your instructor. That means any rude, obstructive or aggressive behavior will not be tolerated, and manifestations of same will mean your ouster from the class. I have a zero-tolerance policy on this. Here is a link to the UF Counseling and Wellness

Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/default.aspx> The Center is located at 3190 Radio Road and the phone number for Appointments & After-Hour Assistance is (352) 392-1575.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Please let me know immediately if you have any kind of problem or disability that would hinder your work in this course. I will do my best to help you. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) as early in the semester as possible. The center will provide documentation so appropriate accommodations can be made. The center is in Reid Hall, 392-8565.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Commit yourself to honesty and integrity if you haven't already. If you engage in any form of academic misconduct, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and aiding and abetting, the penalties could be severe, including dismissal from this class.

A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

Begin by listening to this: [Who Makes Stuff Up, And Why They Do It](#)

You are required to read both the UF [Academic Honesty](#) policy and the Journalism Department's [Academic Honesty](#) document, which was written by Prof. Dave Carlson. I will work under the assumption that you have done so.

For the communications professional, there hardly exists a graver crime than plagiarizing another writer's work. In short, it is YOUR responsibility to make certain you understand what constitutes plagiarism and to ensure that you give proper credit any time you draw on someone else's writing.

- **Do not rely on what you think you've learned before.** Prof. Mindy McAdam has put together an excellent guide: <http://www.macloo.com/cheat/index.htm>.

- If you're still not certain you understand what's acceptable and what isn't, check out this oft-cited website: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>
- **If you have questions, ASK ME!** There's no penalty for asking questions, but the penalties for plagiarism are severe, including **dismissal from the program**.
- **Treat Internet sources like any other book, journal article or other print source.** Make CERTAIN you copy down citation information when you copy material from a website, EVEN if you're paraphrasing.
- **Upload ALL papers to the e-learning site and know that I will submit them to Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.** I'll also want hard copies of all your papers.
- **DO NOT turn in to me ANY work you previously have submitted to another instructor or that you plan to submit for any other class at UF or any other institution.** If you want to write on a topic you've worked on before, that may be acceptable IF you discuss it with me and get permission IN ADVANCE.

Please see the UF Office of Student Judicial Affairs website for definitions of academic dishonesty (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>). The violations most likely to be potential problems for students in this class include plagiarism, misrepresentation and fabrication. It is YOUR responsibility to understand what kinds of actions are prohibited. If a situation ever arises in which you think something you're contemplating MIGHT constitute one of these types of academic dishonesty, ASK BEFORE YOU DO IT. Apologies after the fact are extremely unlikely to resolve the problem for anyone.

CAVEAT

Sometimes a class such as this will deal with controversial topics, so be warned that words that may be considered offensive or ideological may be spoken in the context of the subjects we are discussing. As a teacher, I have no political or social agenda, so do not try to answer in a way you believe might comport with what I want to hear or read. Feel free to advocate any position as long as you remain respectful of others' opinions, and always be able to defend your point of view.

A Note about Office Hours: As much as humanly possible, I will be available during my office hours. If you come by during office hours and I'm not in, look for a note – I'm very likely to be back in 5 minutes or less. If you cannot meet with me during my office hours, please make an appointment. Unless you have made an appointment in advance, please respect the fact that I need to attend to other tasks – research, writing, planning for class, grading papers, meeting with other students, conducting committee work, etc., etc., etc. – during my non-office hours. So please do not be offended if you drop by unexpectedly and I ask you to make an appointment or come back during office hours. If you make an appointment and then can't keep it, please call or email me as soon as possible to let me know. I have an answering machine on my office phone, and remember, if the answering machine picks up and you don't leave your telephone number or speak so rapidly that I can't decipher the number, I can't call you back!

Class Evaluations: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of

the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

Assignments

1. Class Participation

Because student involvement is vital to the success of this course, you are expected to play an active part in shaping this course and keeping it focused on the broad objectives. Obviously, this means you are expected to attend class regularly, to be in the classroom by the time class begins, to contribute to identifying relevant readings and other resources, and to participate meaningfully in class discussions. In addition to being physically present in class, I expect you to be mentally present. That means you will NOT be texting, emailing or using your laptop or phone to Web-surf, work on assignments for another class or interact with any social networking site during class time. Unless there's a specific need for someone in the class to get online, leave your laptop closed and your phones turned off during class.

Here is part of how I also think about and evaluate your class participation re discussion:

- You add significant, insightful content to each class discussion. But you do not dominate the conversation.
- You speak from time to time, but look for more opportunities to add to our discussions.
- Your perspective is important and makes up a significant part of your grade. I'd like to hear more from you!

2. Leading Class Discussion of Readings

One or more students will be assigned each week to lead discussion of a close reading of that week's readings. You can draw on the assigned readings, previous lectures and/or discussion, from posts to [INTERSECTIONS](#), from Discussion Questions in the blog essays, or from videos or other visuals you know of that might be relevant.

3. Short Writing Assignments

Throughout the course, you will be given several short assignments in and out of class. Post to your blog by deadline (your blog will time stamp the post). Also, bring to class hard copies of your writing – enough for each member of class. We will briefly [workshop](#) these. **Note:** To understand how your writing will ultimately be graded, review: [General Grading Criteria for Nonfiction](#)

4. Blog Essays With Deep-Thinking Discussion Questions at End.

Essay: These are your explorations of all readings for the week with anything you have read earlier both inside and outside class informing your essay. They should be 600 words at a minimum.

This needs to reflect your deep thinking about the readings. Points off for being superficial; overly long, complex, and convoluted; or redundant to fill space. Sometimes you will need to do some research to respond fully on these essays. Here is a link to [library resources](#).

My Questions to you: I will also, at times, post some questions with the reading assignments about the readings that you need to briefly answer below your essay. This could also include some vocabulary terms that you are required to define below your essay.

One due each Saturday at 10 p.m. before next class. Post to your blog. Please title your posts **Blog Essay Week 2 etc.** and sign each of your posts with your full name and email address. You need to file by this deadline so your Reading Group members have time to respond with a quality response.

Include DQ: Also, at end of essay add **just one** discussion/debate question derived from the readings assigned for the day. The questions should be original to you alone and manifest deep, critical thinking on your part. These are limited to 140 characters – just as if you were tweeting them. Points off for being either superficial or overly long or complex or convoluted.

Your Reading Group cohort for the week should **both** respond to your essay and answer your question. The question can target a point or points that you believe constitute a real strength of the material. Or it can deal with a criticism of the material. Just make sure you stay on point to the subject of the material. Points off for not doing so.

5. Reading Group Response to Blog Essays

Each week you will respond to your Reading Group members' essays – both the essay and the question. The list of peers' blogs on the right side of this page.

How the Blog Essays and Reading Group Responses work:

Blog Essay:

- Your blog essays are your way of struggling with the material — the examples of literary journalism and the essays about literary journalism — both singularly and then in collaboration with your peers.
- You will write a minimum 600-word blog essay informed by the readings/screenings for each class, informed by earlier readings inside and outside of class, and informed by your own experience with the media. **Include your full name at top along with your email link activated so by clicking on it one can send you a message.** Here is an example of what I mean: rr194602@gmail.com
- These are not essays in the sense that they begin with a thesis statement, etc.
 - They should not sound like a book report.
 - They should contain very little description of the readings.

- Instead they should reveal your struggle with the material as you interpret the authors' meanings, as you research and make note of terms and concepts you are not familiar with, and as you grind the concepts through the gears of your mind.
- They should reflect your deep-thinking about the readings and your intellectual struggle with the material.
- You should write about what you do not understand, or about what you half-understand, or how the material might connect to material from previous weeks or from your experience in whatever form that takes.
- You can spend the entire essay on one point or start anew every other paragraph.
- These are posted to your blog for this class and should be titled **Essay Week 2 ... etc.**
- It is best to write these on a Word document first and then paste to your blog. Save the Word doc as a record just in case. **Be sure to click the Word icon in the banner above or your essay will include a bunch of html code.**
- **DQ:** Each essay should end with just one **discussion/debate question** of no more than 140 characters informed by your readings/screenings. This should be in a separate paragraph and labeled clearly.

Reading Group Responses to Essays:

- We will form Reading Groups the first day, and then regroup them once or twice during the semester.
- You will send a link to your essay to your Reading Group members once you have filed it and they will do the same.
 - Once I have all blog links I will create a list on the right side of this blog so you can check your group's blogs.
- You will write a 300-word response to one another's essays on a Word document.
- Also, respond to the discussion/debate question.
- Title your response post so it is clear what/whom you are responding to. **Include your full name at top along with your email link activated so by clicking on it one can send you a message.**
- Then copy and paste the response as a comment to the respective Reading Group member's essay.

Grading:

- I will read all the material, but I do not grade it weekly other than keeping track that the work is completed.
- I will give little feedback but will note if you are not on track — especially early in the semester. All your feedback comes from your peers. Please keep in mind you are responding to your peers, not me. You are trying to help one another struggle with the material.
- Your Essays and Readings Responses are a big chunk of your end grade, but they only get that end grade. I will evaluate these at end of semester.

- You can come in and talk to me if you are concerned about where your grade is headed, but otherwise I normally give very little feedback unless I see a problem arising.

Some of How I Evaluate the Essays and Responses:

1. If you produce a sufficient quantity of prose on a weekly basis in the manner requested, it will be hard for you to get below a B-.
2. If, in addition to (1) above, you are engaged, you struggle, you open up and you deal with the difficult, it will be hard for you to get below a B.
3. If, in addition to (1) and (2) above, you demonstrate significant improvement from the beginning of the semester to its end, it will be hard for you to get below a B+.
4. If, in addition to (1), (2), and (3) above, you demonstrate intellectual imagination, it will be hard for you to get below an A-.
5. If you want an A, do all the above in the extreme.

6. Nonfiction Story Proposal

Story Proposal due as blog post slugged Story Proposal at noon before class Week 4. Bring in copies for class and be prepared to give a class presentation on your idea. Here is link explaining what I am looking for in proposal: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/2011/09/02/final-story-idea-proposal/>

Post the proposal to your blog.

Proposal due by noon Sunday before Week 4 class

You will have five minutes to discuss your proposal with class.

7. Nonfiction Story Rough Draft

This should be at least two-thirds completed by due date.

Rough Drafts due before Monday of Week 12. Small-group paper confabs to be scheduled Week 12 and 13. Post to your blog and send me on email attachment a Word document version of your rough draft. I may cancel one or two classes at the end of the semester so we can spend time together in these confabs. We will meet in groups. You will bring enough copies of your rough draft in so everyone in the confab has a copy. We will go over these together.

8. Final Non-Fiction Story and Query Letter to Possible Publisher – Both due as one document – letter on top – by Sunday before last class at noon in email attachment.

(NOTE: I want no first-person work in this class unless you can make an argument for why it would be relevant.) Using the many principles and techniques of literary journalism you have learned through your readings, writing, discussions and analysis ([see, for example](#)), you will write an at least 3,000-word story. To make sure there is

enough meat on the bone, I must approve all story ideas. For an objective-as-possible explanation of grading criteria see the Grading Guidelines link: [General Grading Criteria for Nonfiction](#)

- Though there are no limitations on the kind of story you write, you are required to have a minimum of four ‘people’ sources and three research sources.
- HOWEVER, I do not want to see a story with any kind of contaminated access. For example, you write a story about your mother the lawyer who defends child molesters and often wins. But it shows such a salacious side of the law you would not publish it if you could because it would be too embarrassing.
- Given the constraints of time and place, this needs to be a local topic.
- Double-space the story at 12 point Times Roman.
- At the end of the story, submit a source list, which should include complete contact information (phone and e-mail) for the people you interviewed, as well as bibliographic material for written sources used.
- **Story Proposal due before class Week 4 as a post to your blog.** Bring in a copy and be prepared to give a class presentation on your idea on Week 4.
- **The final story is Due Sunday before the last class at noon in email attachment.**
- Bring in a copy of your story to final class along with a query letter.
 - Re your nonfiction query letter to a publisher. There are a lot of templates out there about how to write such a letter. Here is a good explainer: http://www.agentquery.com/writer_hq.aspx – follow this format for your letter.

8.1 If you are a doctoral student taking this class for advanced writing credit, let’s discuss a research paper requirement after class.