

JOU 4308-7664 FEATURE WRITING (SPRING 2015)

"We have so much we want to say and figure out."

Anne Lamott. *bird by bird*.

Contact Information:

Patrick Yack
patrick.yack@ufl.edu

907/317-4045
patrickyack@gmail.com (this the best email for me.)

I live in Alaska. Alaska? Yes, Alaska. It's not south of California where cartographers typically draw us. We are west of the Yukon Territory. Latitude 61. Gainesville is 29. I am four hours behind you.

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.

I am happy to discuss your work or your career plans.

Welcome to class:

Here are some basics:

Course description. This course will:

- showcase certain types of feature stories (trends, profiles, etc)
- provide an opportunity to develop reporting tools and writing approaches.

Goals. In this class, you will learn how

- to spot ideas for feature stories.
- frame and report feature stories.
- write basic feature stories and profiles.

Required texts:

You will need to buy these or borrow these. You should keep them as part of your collection. They are two of the best books on reporting and writing that you will find.

- 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.

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

Students will be expected to do their own independent research and reporting to fulfill the obligations of the assignments.

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

- Franklin, Jon. *Writing for Story*.
- Lamott, Ann. *bird by bird*.
- Wells, Ken. *Herd on the Street*.
- Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well*.

Specific assignments will be posted on Canvas or emailed to students.

Grading and Assignments:

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

- Routine planning, reporting or writing assignments. 100 percent.

Midterm exam: There is no mid-term exam.

Final exam: There is no final exam.

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 no more than 1,500 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):

- Manage your time wisely. Do not wait to the last minute to tackle an assignment.
- Ask questions in advance.
- Read all of the required material and scan, if not read, the optional material.
- Treat the course seriously.
- Follow instructions regarding format.
- Write and rewrite before turning in an assignment.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1. Tuesday, Jan. 6.

Introduction.

Readings: Clark. Tool 40. Draft a mission statement for your work.

Clark. Tool 43. Read for form and content.

Clark. Tool 44. Save string.

Assignment 1: Choose a feature story or profile for a time capsule; draft a mission statement for your work.

Due: Friday, Jan. 16.

WEEK 2. Friday, Jan. 9.

Work on Assignment 1.

WEEK 3. Friday, Jan. 16.

Spotting good ideas; framing stories.

Readings: Blundell. Chapter 1. Raw Materials. p.1-22.

Clark. Tool 41. Turn procrastination into rehearsal.

Clark. Tool 43. Read for form and content.

Assignment 2: Tease a local idea from a state or national story.

Due: Friday, Jan. 23.

WEEK 4. Friday, Jan. 23.

Assessing good reporting and writing.

Readings: Clark. Tool 24. Work from a plan.

Clark. Tool 31. Build your work around a key question.

Clark. Tool 39. Write toward an ending.

Blundell. Main Theme Statement. p. 27-28.
Blundell. Planning and Execution. p. 69-76.
Readings posted on Canvas or emailed to class.

Assignment 3: Analyze a feature story. (Alaska's Outdated Maps)

Due: Friday, Jan. 30.

WEEK 5. Friday, Jan. 30.

Localizing a national or state story. Building around a key question.

Readings: Blundell. Chapter 4. Planning and Execution. p. 69-76.

Clark. Tool 31. Build your work around a key question.

Clark. Tool 50. Own the tools of your craft.

Readings posted on Canvas or emailed to class.

Assignment 4: Build a local feature story around a key question.

Due: Friday, Feb. 6.

WEEK 6. Friday, Feb. 6.

Building a plan for a local feature story.

Readings: Clark. Tool 24. Work from a plan.

Assignment 5: Build a plan for a local feature story.

Due: Friday, Feb. 13.

WEEK 7. Friday, Feb. 13.

Writing a local feature story.

Readings: Clark. Tool 1. Begin sentences with subjects and verbs.

Clark. Tool 10. Cut big, then small.

Clark. Tool 16. Seek original images.

Clark. Tool 19. Vary the lengths of paragraphs.

Clark. Tool 23. Tune your voice.

Readings posted on Canvas or emailed to class.

Assignment 6: Write a local feature story. 1,500 words.

Due: Friday, Feb. 27.

WEEK 8. Friday, Feb. 20.

Assignment: Continue working on Assignment 6. (**Due:** Friday, Feb. 27)

And

Framing material for writing a local profile.

Readings: Blundell. Chapter 4. Planning and Execution. p. 76-77.

Clark. Tool 31. Build your work around a key question.

Clark. Tool 50. Own the tools of your craft.

Readings posted on Canvas or emailed to class.

Assignment 7: Build a local profile around a key question.

Due: Friday, March 13. (After Spring Break)

WEEK 9. March 2-6. NO CLASSES. SPRING BREAK.

WEEK 10. Monday, March 9.

Framing material for writing a local profile.

Readings: Blundell. Chapter 4. Planning and Execution. p. 76-77.
Clark. Tool 31. Build your work around a key question.
Clark. Tool 50. Own the tools of your craft.
Readings posted on Canvas or emailed to class.

Assignment 7: Build a local profile around a key question.

Due: Friday, March 13. (After Spring Break)

WEEK 11. Friday, March 13.

Building a plan for a local profile.

Readings: Clark. Tool 24. Work from a plan.

Assignment 8: Build a plan for a local profile.

Due: Friday, March 20.

WEEK 12. Friday, March 20.

Writing a local profile.

Readings: Clark. Tool 1. Begin sentences with subjects and verbs.
Clark. Tool 10. Cut big, then small.
Clark. Tool 16. Seek original images.
Clark. Tool 19. Vary the lengths of paragraphs.
Clark. Tool 23. Tune your voice.
Readings posted on Canvas or emailed to class.

Assignment 9. Write a local feature story. 1,500 words.

Due: Friday, April 3.

WEEK 13. Friday, March 27.

Continue working on Assignment 6. (**Due:** Friday, April 3)

And

Begin thinking about and planning for your **final assignment**. Write a local feature story or local profile (**Due:** Monday, April 27).

WEEK 14. Friday, April 3.

Plan, report and write a local feature story or local profile.

Readings: Review Blundell and Clark readings assigned earlier.

Assignment 10: Build a local story or profile around a key question; build a plan; write a story.

Due: Monday, April 27.