

JOU4301: 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

Instructor: Renee Martin-Kratzer (you can call me Prof. MK to make it easier)

email: ReneeMK@gmail.com or rmartinkratzer@jou.ufl.edu (***I respond faster to gmail***)

Cell: 573.356.2346 - feel free to call or text me between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m.

Office hours: Unfortunately, we won't be able to meet in person because I'm in Columbia, Mo. However, I'm always eager to talk to you by phone or webcam. The best way to do this is to set up a specific time. I'm also available by email or text, so please don't worry that you won't be able to get help in this online course.

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 keen 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. This 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
- "The Right Stuff" by Tom Wolfe
- "Rin Tin Tin" by Susan Orlean
- "In Cold Blood" by Truman Capote

What will I learn?

At the conclusion of this course, you should be able to:

- Identify the founders of literary journalism and understand how they contributed to this field
- Understand the arguments for and against this form of writing
- Be able to identify and use a variety of literary writing techniques not only in leads but throughout the entire article
- Demonstrate skill at interviewing, observing and researching in order to gather material for a long-form story
- Understand the gender imbalance among published long-form writers and what contributes to this issue

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 and critique your classmates' stories.

Weekly Expectations

The benefit 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 on Sundays.

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

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 discussions, read postings from your classmates and write thoughtful replies. You want to show that you understand the literary works we are reading, so you should 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 an original story that is worthy of publication.

Class Attendance

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

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

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

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>

Seek help if needed

College is stressful. You have counseling help available to you, and I hope you will use it if needed. Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center:
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575.

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. For this assignment, you will be expected to use many of the literary elements that we discuss. You will need to get your story idea approved in the first three weeks of class. Throughout the semester, you will complete little writing assignments to help you get started on your story. This means that your reporting, observations and interviewing are taking place multiple times throughout the semester and not in the last week. You will get feedback on the little assignments and the rough draft of your final assignment from your classmates and me.

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. I randomly contact these people to get feedback on how things went. I only notify you if there are issues. In the past, the sources usually give glowing feedback about the writers.

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: 100 points

Total points: 350 points

Grading scale

A: 93-100% (324-350 points)
A-: 90-92% (314-323 points)
B+: 88-89% (308-313 points)
B: 83-87% (289-307 points)
B-: 80-82% (279-288 points)
C+: 78-79% (272-278 points)
C: 73-77% (254-271 points)
C-: 70-72% (244-253 points)
D+: 68-69% (238-243 points)
D: 63-67% (219-237 points)
D-: 60-62% (209-218 points)
F: 59% and below (208 points and below)

UF Grading Policy

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Course evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. I value your feedback, and I hope you will take the time to complete the evaluation form. I will let you know when it's available, but it's typically open during the last two weeks of the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Aug. 25 (Week 1): Course overview

Task: Buy the textbooks! **Post your photograph and an introduction about yourself to your blog.** Your introduction should answer the questions included in the lecture.

Sept. 1 (Week 2): Introduction to literary journalism

Monday's lecture will be posted on Tuesday because of Labor Day.

Read:

Tom Wolfe: "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby"

Jimmy Breslin: "It's An Honour"

Hunter S. Thompson: "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved"

Discussion Post #1: Write a six-word memoir that you will post to the discussion board by **11:55 p.m. Tuesday**. Include in your post whether it was difficult to sum up your life so far in six words. What was left out?

Discussion Post #2: See the discussion board for the question about the readings. Discussion posts are always due by 11:55 p.m. Tuesday with replies to at least two classmates due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday.

Sept. 8 (Week 3): Elements of literary journalism

Read:

"The Right Stuff" by Tom Wolfe - foreword plus chapters 1-4

"Next Wave": "Hannah & Andrew" & "The Unspeakable Choice"

Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Sept. 15 (Week 4): Literary journalism story ideas and how to generate them

Read:

"The Right Stuff" by Tom Wolfe - chapters 5-8

"Next Wave": "The Education of Ms. Barsallo"

Discussion posts are due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday.

Brainstorm five story ideas and post the THREE BEST ones to the discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Thursday.

Sept. 22 (Week 5): Story plans

Read:

"The Right Stuff" by Tom Wolfe - chapters 9-12

"Next Wave": "The Boy Who Died of Football"

Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Sept. 29 (Week 6): Topic: How to interview for a literary story

Read:

"The Right Stuff" by Tom Wolfe - chapters 13-15 plus epilogue

“Next Wave”: “The Tragedy of Britney Spears” & “Three Minutes to Fort Totten”
Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday
Take the quiz on “The Right Stuff.” The quiz will be available Thursday through Sunday. This is a timed quiz, so once you start, you must finish.

Oct. 6 (Week 7): Finding a narrative

Read:

“Rin Tin Tin” by Susan Orlean – chapters 1-3

“Next Wave”: “A Brevard Woman Disappeared”

Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Oct. 13 (Week 8): Using quotes and dialogue

Read:

“Rin Tin Tin” by Susan Orlean – chapter 4-5

“Next Wave”: “The Last Days of Tony Harris”

Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Oct. 20 (Week 9): Discovering your voice

Read:

“Rin Tin Tin” by Susan Orlean – chapter 6

“Next Wave”: “Sgt. Wells’ New Skull”

Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Take the quiz on “Rin Tin Tin.” The quiz will be available Thursday through Sunday.

Oct. 27 (Week 10): Leads and endings

Read:

“In Cold Blood” by Truman Capote – Part 1

“Next Wave”: “Travis the Menace”

Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Nov. 3 (Week 11): Subjectivity and the literary journalist

“In Cold Blood” by Truman Capote – Part 2 & 3

In Next Wave: “Going Under” & “Either/Or”

Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Nov. 10 (Week 12): Using “place” as a character

Read:

“In Cold Blood” by Truman Capote – Part 4

“Next Wave”: “The Last Trawlers” & “The Assassin in the Vineyard”

Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Take the quiz on “In Cold Blood.” The quiz will be available Thursday through Sunday.

Nov. 17 (Week 13): Memoirs and autobiographies

Read: Joan Didion, John McPhee and Tracy Kidder

Discussion posts due by 11: 55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

DUE: Rough draft is due Fri., Nov. 21; complete peer critiques by 11:55 p.m. Mon., Nov. 24

Nov. 24 (Week 14): ENJOY THANKSGIVING BREAK!

Complete peer critiques by 11:55 p.m. Mon., Nov. 24

Dec. 1 (Week 15): Criticism of literary journalism + where are the female authors?

Read: Handout

Discussion posts due by 11:55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Dec. 8 (Week 16): Wrap-up

Discussion posts due by 11:55 p.m. Tuesday; responses due by 11:55 p.m. Wednesday

DUE: Final story due by 11:55 p.m. Wed., Dec. 10