

JOU4308: Magazine & Feature Writing

“The six golden rules of writing: read, read, read, and write, write, write.”

-Ernest Gaines

Contact information

Professor 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 JOU4308: Magazine & Feature Writing. In this course, you will learn the skills necessary to write engaging feature stories. The goal in this course is to have you build upon the skills you learned in Reporting class. Instead of focusing on hard news stories that use the inverted pyramid, you will learn to identify feature stories and apply literary writing techniques. I want you to leave the class with improved interviewing, reporting and writing skills and three published clips to add to your portfolio.

Because we meet online, you will need to post your thoughts to the discussion board each week. I recommend composing your thoughts in a Word document so you can use spell check. This step may also save you from losing your work in case there is a glitch with the website.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

“Feature Writing: The Pursuit of Excellence” (Seventh Edition) by Edward Friedlander and John Lee

“Choosing Naia: A Family’s Journey” by Mitchell Zuckoff

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 read the assigned lessons, text chapters and additional readings. You will also be required to post on the discussion board each week and complete three major writing assignments that you'll submit through Sakai. You are expected to complete the work each week even though we do not have a “set” meeting time. If we were meeting in person, we'd have one class period once a week for about three hours total. The beauty of

this online class is that you can learn throughout the week. You will have the same “out of class” workload. This involves writing the **three major stories** for the semester.

What will I learn?

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

- Understand characteristics of feature stories: the differences between features and other genres, i.e. what makes a story a feature
- Understand different kinds of features (i.e. profile, trend, slice-of-life, etc.)
- Identify differences in target audiences — and to understand how to tailor ideas to that audience
- Use a variety of research techniques while gathering information — live sources, documents, web-based sources
- Use a variety of interviewing techniques to draw out useful and colorful information
- Integrate various non-fiction storytelling techniques into feature stories (anecdotes, colorful quotes, description, etc.)
- Be able to soundly structure a feature story using those elements and by tying them together with a clear and compelling focus
- Be able to write tightly, clearly and colorfully
- Be able to identify the best markets for each story
- Be able to write query letters that sell story ideas
- Publish stories in newspaper, magazines or websites

How do I navigate the site?

Below is a brief description of what you’ll find under each link.

HOME – this is where you’ll find the syllabus. This includes my expectations for you as well as the points and grading scale.

COURSE SCHEDULE – this lists the topics we’ll cover each week and the required readings and due dates.

BLOGS – **On my blog, I will post the lectures.** Each Monday, there will be one main topic covered, and I will often post on Thursday, too. This is comparable to what we’d cover in a typical class meeting if were not online. You can leave comments or ask questions through the comments section of the blog. ***The blog is where you should always look for my instruction and tips, and you should always scroll down to make sure you’ve read the most recent lectures.***

DISCUSSIONS -This is the online forum that we will use to share thoughts and interact with each other. The weekly discussions help me get a grasp on what you understand and if you are learning. **You will have weekly required postings that are graded.** The initial postings will be **due each Tuesday**, with at least **two responses to others due each Thursday**. To earn a high grade, you need to completely answer each question and

demonstrate that you have put time and thought into your posting. You also need to read all of your classmates' postings and respond to at least two of them. This is the minimum requirement – you can respond to more. This is an area where you don't want to fall behind because these weekly grades add up.

ANNOUNCEMENTS – I like to post reminders about due dates and other important information in the announcements. These are saved to the site, so you can look back through them. When I post an announcement, I also have the option to have a copy delivered to your UF email account. I will do this for the urgent announcements that I want to make sure you read. (Of course, read ALL announcements.) I expect that you are reading them as part of being in the course.

CALENDAR - I will put due dates on the calendar as another way to remind you of what you should be completing each week.

ASSIGNMENTS - This is where you will submit your assignments for a grade. Yes, you will also be posting your stories to your blog, but I want a Word document that I can open and edit. This means you'll be uploading your rough drafts and final versions to this Assignment space. You'll also be able to receive my feedback through here. You won't see anything until an assignment due date approaches and the submission link becomes active.

TEST & QUIZZES - This is where you will find quizzes on the readings. You won't find anything there until the quiz has been made active. You'll have a limited amount of time to complete the quiz. These dates will be announced in advance so you can plan for them. The quizzes are timed, so you need to do the readings. I expect you to take all quizzes on your own and not with other students.

MAIL – We also have an email function within Sakai. This provides an easy way to contact me. Unfortunately, it doesn't notify me when an email has been submitted, so if you don't hear back from me quickly, then send a note to my gmail account. I am frequently on that email, so you'll get a faster response if you email me at **reneemk@gmail.com**. I also have a UF email: **rmartinkratzer@jou.ufl.edu**. If I don't respond to your email within 24 hours during the week or 48 hours on the weekend, send me the email to reneemk@gmail.com again.

GRADEBOOK - Grades will be posted online to your gradebook. You can tally your grade as we progress through the course. If you have questions about your grades, please don't hesitate to ask me.

RESOURCES - Before you can link to files in Sakai, you first have to upload them to the Resources folder. When you post your image on your blog, you will first upload your photo and then link it. I have to do this for all the documents I share. You don't need to access this link, but that's the reason it's there.

STUDENT FAQ - This is where you should turn when you feel lost navigating or using the site. You will find answers to a variety of problems that might pop up in Sakai. Turn here first to try to find an answer, and then email me if you still have problems.

That concludes our tour of Sakai! It may seem daunting now, but soon you'll be used to navigating the site.

How to earn a good grade

For each writing assignment, I will provide a rubric ahead of time so that you understand how I will be grading the stories. You will also get my feedback on your rough draft for the first two stories. You are encouraged to contact me if you have any questions. To earn a high grade, you not only need to do well on your stories, but you should also do the following:

1. Complete the weekly readings
2. Participate in online discussions, read postings from your classmates and write thoughtful replies
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 original stories that are worthy of publication

How do I earn participation points?

The participation points are earned by logging in, reading postings and making meaningful comments. You also earn points by showing me that you have put time and thought into the peer assessments of stories (also known as story workshops). I also have the expectation that you participate in any other assignment that comes up throughout the semester. You will LOSE points by being late, by failing to participate and by acting unprofessional or by putting in little effort on assignments.

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.

Major Writing assignments

During the semester, you will write a **profile story, a trend story and a service story**. Your service story will include a sidebar and must be accompanied by a query letter.

Specific details (including word counts) will be handed out prior to each of the assignments. A week before the final deadline, we will conduct a story workshop so that you not only get feedback from me, but you also will find out how your peers assess your stories. **These first drafts of the profile and trend story will NOT be graded**, but I expect you to turn in work that you consider complete. You will have almost a week to make changes before turning in a final draft that will be graded.

Source List

For each story that you turn in, you will also submit a separate source list that includes names and contact information for the people that you interviewed. I randomly contact these people to find out how you did. I don’t tell you about this unless there were problems.

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 first draft or final versions are late.

Points

Keep track of your points as the semester progresses:

Profile story: 100 points

Trend story: 100 points

Final story: 150 points

Discussion postings: 100 points (10 points each)

Quizzes (two total): 100 points

Participation: 50 points

Total points: 600

Grading scale

A: 93-100% (558-600 points)

A-: 90-92% (540-557 points)

B+: 88-89% (528-539 points)

B: 83-87% (498-527 points)

B-: 80-82% (480-497 points)

C+: 78-79% (468-479 points)

C: 73-77% (438-467 points)

C-: 70-72% (420-437 points)

D+: 68-69% (408-419 points)

D: 63-67% (378-407 points)

D-: 60-62% (360-377 points)

F: 59% and below (354 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

You are to complete the assigned readings **the week that they are listed** (completing them by each Tuesday is wise). The schedule below includes the due dates for the major writing assignments and quizzes.

You have **weekly discussion posts** due starting with Week 3. **You must post your response by 11:55 p.m. each Tuesday and then respond to at least two of your classmates by 11:55 p.m. each Thursday.** You are expected to read all responses.

Jan. 6 (Week 1)

Friendly Reminder – *If you haven't taken Reporting, you must drop this course by Jan. 12.* If you drop it after this date, you will be assessed fees. This class builds upon the basic interviewing and writing skills that you learn in Reporting, so it's essential that you pass Reporting first. It doesn't matter if ISIS lets you enroll – you need to meet the prerequisites to remain in the course.

Topic: Course overview; Elements of feature stories

Task: Introduce yourself on the discussion board and include a photograph. See my blog posting (lecture) for the questions you should address.

Read: Handout & Chapter 1

Jan. 12 (Week 2)

Topic: Generating story ideas; Literary elements

Read: Handout, Ch. 2 & 3

Assignment: Complete class questionnaire under the ASSIGNMENTS link by Sunday

Jan. 20 (Week 3)

The lecture will be posted on Tuesday because of the holiday

Topic: Introduction to profiles

Due: Brainstorm **five profile ideas** and post the **THREE BEST ones to the discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Thursday.** Discussion posts begin this week. Your initial post is due Tuesday and your responses are due Thursday.

Jan. 26 (Week 4)

Topic: The art of interviewing

Read: Handout, Ch. 5, complete half of the Naia book

Feb. 2 (Week 5)

Topic: How to write a compelling lead; Quotes and anecdotes

Due: Lead for profile posted on the discussion board by 11:55 p.m. Thursday

Looking ahead: Profile 1st draft due at 11:55 p.m. Thurs., Feb. 12

Feb. 9 (Week 6)

Topic: How to structure stories; Workshop profile stories

Due: Profile rough draft at 11:55 p.m. Thurs., Feb. 12

Quiz on "Choosing Naia" due by 11:55 p.m. Sun., Feb. 15

Feb. 16 (Week 7)

Topic: What is a trend story?

Read: Handouts

DUE: Final profile story at 11:55 p.m. Sun., Feb. 22

Feb. 23 (Week 8) – Homecoming week

Topic: Using descriptive language

Read: Handouts, Ch. 7

March 2 (Week 9)

Spring break! Enjoy!

March 9 (Week 10)

Topic: Choosing your sources; finding diverse sources; Writing personal essays

Read: Handouts, Ch. 4 & 9

Looking ahead: Trend rough draft due by 11:55 p.m. Thurs., March 19

March 16 (Week 10)

Topic: Service articles; Pitching articles to magazines

Read: Handouts, Ch. 8

Due: Trend rough draft by 11:55 p.m. Thurs., March 19

Workshop trend stories over the weekend

March 23 (Week 11)

Topic: Job hunting; Writing short; Magazine department stories

Read: Handouts

DUE: Final trend stories by 11:55 p.m. Sun., March 29

March 30 (Week 12)

Topic: The importance of sidebars

Read: Handouts

April 6 (Week 13)

Topic: Overcoming writer's block; Writing tips from the experts

DUE: Textbook quiz due by 11:55 p.m. Sun., April 12

April 13 (Week 15)

Topic: Ethics and credibility

Read: Ch. 10

Due: rough draft of final story due by 11:55 p.m. Fri., April 10

Workshop stories over the weekend

April 20 (week 16)

Wrap-up/final comments

DUE: Final story, query & sidebar by 11:55 p.m. Wed., April 22

Congratulations on completing the course!