

# JOU4308: Magazine & Feature Writing

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

*-Ernest Gaines*

## **Contact information**

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## **Welcome**

Welcome to JOU4308: Magazine & Feature Writing. In this course, you will learn about 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 your blog and the discussion board. I will clarify what I would like you to do before each assignment is due. When you are doing your postings, I advise you to compose your thoughts in a Word document and check the spelling, and then copy and paste your information onto the site. That step may save you from losing your thoughts in case there is a glitch with the site.

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

*Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines* (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 (if any). You will also be required to post on the discussion board, participate in a live chat (maybe) and complete 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** – you have your own blog in Sakai. 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 we were not online. You can leave comments or ask questions through the comments section of the blog. I may also write more than one posting a week if I notice that everyone has the same questions or if there is more material to share. ***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 all the most recent postings.***

You will be posting your rough drafts on your blog so that we can leave you feedback in your comment section. This is also where you will share your final stories. There may also be times where you need to post a short writing assignment as well. You won’t be “blogging” in the traditional sense, but we’ll use this as a way to share your work.

**DISCUSSIONS** -This is the online forum that we will use for discussions. This feature is important to help us get to know each other and allows you to post your thoughts. This really helps 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 your 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 I make the submission link active.

**TEST & QUIZZES** - This is the link you'll click on to find the 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.

**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 constantly on that email, so you'll get a faster response if you email me [atreneemk@gmail.com](mailto:atreneemk@gmail.com). 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](mailto:reneemk@gmail.com) again.

**GRADEBOOK** - Grades will be posted online to your gradebook. You can tally your grade as we progress through the course.

**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. This has answers on 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.

### **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>

### **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 three major writing assignments. A week before the final deadline, we will conduct a 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 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**.

### **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

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)