

JOU4308: Magazine & Feature Writing
T, W, R 9:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Room TBA
Summer B 2015

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Office hours: T & W 12:50-1:40 or by appointment: Weimer 2041A.

Welcome to Magazine & Feature Writing. In this course, you will learn how to:

- Formulate ideas for long form feature stories, collect sources, conduct in-depth interviews, prepare your story, edit for appropriate grammar and AP style issues, and market your piece for publication by crafting a query letter
- Read a variety of feature pieces from various decades to learn the historical context of feature-writing as a journalistic art
- Collect pieces for your professional portfolio and potentially get published
- Understand the differences between different types of feature stories, different target audiences and markets
- How to do proper research to write a feature story and incorporate a variety of sources: live sources, documents, and online sources
- How to incorporate narrative and storytelling techniques: imagery, anecdotes, descriptions, quotes, and more

Prerequisites: To enroll in this course, you must have completed JOU3101 (Reporting) with a C or better.

Required & recommended text: Access to an AP Stylebook (or the app) is necessary for this course. If you don't have a copy of "The Elements of Style" by Strunk & White, consider buying a copy. In lieu of a textbook, we will review and critically discuss the following long form feature stories from a variety of genres: Fashion, sports, food, science/medicine, politics/social justice, pop culture, music, and more. These readings will be posted on the Canvas site.

Canvas: Any supplemental readings will be provided on our Canvas site. I will also use Canvas to post announcements, grades, and other items of interest to the course. You'll use Canvas to post your drafts and final stories in order to receive feedback from your classmates and me.

Attendance: Your attendance is expected each week unless I have preapproved the absence and you have provided me with official documentation to excuse the absence. Failure to attend class (unexcused absence) will result in a one-point deduction from your overall grade. If you miss class with an excused absence, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate.

Examples of excused absence (with official note):

- Religious holiday observance
- Illness
- Jury duty
- Military service
- University sponsored event
- Death in the family
- Emergencies

If you are experiencing an unforeseen and extenuating situation, please let me know and we will discuss your options for make-up work.

Classroom procedures:

- Please be respectful to your fellow classmates, me and any guest speakers we may have by following basic classroom etiquette such as: arriving on time to each class, refraining from side conversations, and giving your full attention.
- Food is not permitted in class. If you do bring a drink, please make sure it has a secure-top lid.
- Staying on task during class is imperative to your success as a student. This class is not just about teaching you the fundamentals of magazine and feature writing, but also how to be professional as you prepare to take on internships and jobs.

Technology policy: Technology can be a very useful tool in the communications field. We will talk at many points throughout the semester about how different types of technology can be used effectively. I will give you notification ahead of time about bringing laptops/tablets/smart phones to class to complete various assignments. Please ensure that a device unrelated to class doesn't consistently distract you, as it will hinder you from participating in class discussions.

Email policy: Please email me using an official UFL account, not from your personal email address, and mention JOU4308 in the subject line. I respond to emails within 24-48 hours. If you have a complicated issue to discuss, I highly recommend that you come to speak with me during office hours. I frequently send out listserv emails with reminders and announcements, so be sure to check your UFL account frequently.

Students with disabilities: The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. For more information: www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

Academic honesty, accuracy & plagiarism: Your work will be checked for accuracy and plagiarism. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit 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." It is assumed that you will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission for you to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of your obligation to uphold the Honor Code, you should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For more information:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/SCCR/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

- *When in doubt for how you should attribute information and/or a source, ask your instructor. Once the assignment is turned in, it is too late. Ignorance or accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism and will be treated as such. Failure to uphold the aforementioned standards will result in automatic failure of the course and may result in serious academic disciplinary action.*

On-campus resources: These resources are available to you as a student: Division of Student Affairs (352-392-1261); Counseling & Wellness Center (352-392-1575); Disability Resource Center (352-392-1261); Knight Division for Scholarships, Career Services and Multicultural Affairs (352-392-0289); Career Resource Center (352-392-1601); SNAP (352-392-7627).

Course evaluations: Your evaluations of my instruction and feedback will be conducted online at <http://www.evaluations.ufl.edu>. You will receive an email reminder during the last couple weeks of class to complete the evaluation. Ten minutes of class time will be devoted to the completion of these evaluations via laptop, tablet or smartphone.

Late work: Deadlines are crucial in journalism. Assignments are due on the date indicated in the syllabus. If your story (either draft or final) is late, 10 points will be deducted per day that it is late.

Description of assignments: You will write two feature stories over the course of the semester—one profile story, and one in-depth story (each story worth 40% of your overall grade). Each feature story must be 800-1,200 words. You will turn your stories in a packet, which includes an elevator pitch (gist of story in one to two sentences), written pitch, query letter to editor, and your final story. A week before the story deadline, we'll hold an in-class writing workshop for you to receive feedback from your classmates and me before turning in

your final story. More detailed requirements and grading rubrics will be provided for each feature story.

There will be four in-class quizzes (worth 20% of your overall grade), which will be based on our classroom discussions and my lectures. Make-ups for quizzes will not be provided unless the absence is excused.

Students who get their stories published may be eligible for extra credit. More information will be provided in class.

Source list: Each story must be accompanied by a source list. Your story will not be graded without it. In the source list, you'll include the first and last name, title, and contact information (email and/or phone number) of the people that you interviewed for your story.

Proofreading & AP style: It is your responsibility to check your work for proper use of AP style, grammar and punctuation.

General grading standards for content of writing assignments:

A = outstanding work that demonstrates originality, excellent story structure, and meets professional publishing standards.

B = good work but still needs additional revising; achieves the objectives but lacks some elements that would make it an outstanding piece.

C = acceptable but requires significant revising; story meets minimum requirements but may have problems with story structure, with appeal to target audience, mechanical and/or AP style errors.

D = unsatisfactory; work does not display a grasp of basic writing skills; story has significant problems with structure and mechanics or appeal to target audience.

E = unacceptable; story has flaws in research, structure, basic reporting, writing elements, and comprehension of target audience. (*Any plagiarism or falsification of information earns an E and a failing grade for the course.*)

Grading scale:

- A 100.00-93.00
- A- 92.99-90.00
- B+ 89.99-87.00
- B 86.00-83.00
- B- 82.99-80.00
- C+ 79.99-77.00
- C 76.99- 73.00
- C- 72.99-70.00
- D+ 69.99-67.00
- D 66.99-63.00
- D- 62.99-60.00
- E 59.99 and below

How to be successful in this course:

- Keep up with the assigned readings. Print them out, highlight them, underline them, write in the margins—anything that helps you connect and engage with the piece. Pose questions as if you were getting the chance to talk to the author. Make note of what worked and what you might've done differently.
- Don't procrastinate. When you fail to prepare, you prepare to fail. Assume that sources will lag in getting back to you about interviews or possibly fall through altogether, and plan accordingly. Have backup plans in mind.
- Immerse yourself. Writing feature stories is not like writing news articles. We will work together this semester to ensure you understand the art and craft of feature writing.
- Read constantly. Reading is how you will learn how to become a more effective writer. Practice writing almost every day. *"Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good—it's the thing you do that makes you good."* – Malcolm Gladwell
- Don't just sit in class each week, but be an active participant. Take good notes.
- Communicate with your instructor. If you have a situation you'd like feedback on, please contact me in a reasonable time frame so I may help and offer suggestions.

Course schedule:

Introduction & fundamentals of magazine/feature writing.

June 30 – First day of class: instructor and student introductions. What is feature writing? (Genres, types of stories, online versus print magazines, writing for the web and print, audience & readership, where to get ideas).

July 1 – How to identify (and write) an outstanding feature story: what makes a story great? We will review important feature pieces by deconstructing and discussing each piece as a class. You will be required to write an in-class response paper.

- Do readings posted on Canvas site.

July 2 – Types of ledes, tone, use of anecdotes and descriptions, understanding your audience. Use of sources, in-depth interview techniques, building rapport, narrative writing.

- Pitch for first story (profile) due at next class meeting.

Storytelling & interviewing

July 7 – Fundamentals of pitching, publishing, and how to write a query letter, overview of publication venues.

- Do readings posted on Canvas site.

July 8 – Storytelling: narrative structure, using quotes, anecdotes, details and imagery; interviewing & building rapport.

July 9 – In-class writer's workshop.

Pitching & publishing 101

July 14 – Target readership/markets, query letters and fundamentals of publishing.

- Quiz on Canvas opens at noon, due by 11:59 p.m.

July 15 – Target readership/markets, query letters and fundamentals of publishing.

- Review "What's newsworthy?" presentation and provide comments via Canvas, due by 11:59 p.m.

July 16 – Profile story package due to Canvas by 11:59 p.m. Guest speaker: TBA.

Developing a feature voice

July 21 – Finding your voice and writing beyond the cliché.

July 22 – Pitch for feature story 2 due.

July 23 – In-class writer’s workshop.

Importance of comprehensive research for a feature story

July 28 – How to do proper research and incorporate a variety of sources, using and interpreting data, attribution

July 29 – Distinguishing between good and bad sources, use of secondary information.

July 30 – Feature story 2 package due on Canvas by 11:59 p.m.

Story packaging & pitching for publication

August 4 – Fundamentals of pitching; query letters.

August 5 – Freelance writing; how to make contact with editors; self-marketing.

August 6 – Analyzing magazine writer guidelines, career and internship readiness.

**The instructor reserves the right to change the course schedule at any time, and students will be notified of any changes in class and via email.*