JOU 4311: ADVANCED MAGAZINE WRITING

PROFESSOR
John Woodrow Cox
johnwoodrowcox@gmail.com
Appointments/office hours can be arranged by email

REQUIRED READING
Writing Tools, Roy Peter Clark, Little, Brown
Other required readings will be sent via email

OBJECTIVE
This course aims to prepare students for magazine-style reporting, writing and revising articles suitable for publication in various outlets. You will assume the role of a professional magazine writer, and we will conduct this class in a writers-group format.

GOALS
• To use a variety of advanced research and interviewing techniques
• To develop advanced writing and rewriting skills
• To develop advanced and alternative structural techniques and approaches to stories
• To explore different genres of creative non-fiction writing
• To identify differences in target audiences and develop compelling story ideas for specific markets
• To develop good marketing techniques to get stories accepted and published

COURSE TOPICS
Idea Generation Marketing/Audience
Interviewing Reporting/Research
Diversity of Sources Revision
Ethical Issues Writing Short, Writing Tight
Story Structure Story Genre
Style/Voice Literary Devices

PICK YOUR PATH
The bulk of your grade will be based on your writing assignments throughout the semester. You have two choices for how you would like to complete the project assignments. Choose the path that most interests you.

Option 1: The Package Writer (good for those who want to be magazine editors)
You will write one magazine package that includes a main story (about 1,200 to 1,500 words) and about four sidebars of various lengths and genres (depending on content of package) that total about 1,800 words. All stories are related to one main theme.

You are required to email a one-page, single-spaced memo detailing your plan with specifics by 1/23 (a Thursday) at noon. In this memo, you must identify your intended audience, because that dictates story angles, sources, etc. We will discuss this in more detail during class.

All stories will be graded 50-50 on reporting and writing. Please be aware that while the instructor will offer editing and specific guidance on the excerpts/ sidebars and first drafts, grading on the final drafts will be based on more than how the student addressed those corrections. Overall quality of storytelling – and how much it improved between drafts – will heavily influence the grade.

If you’re interested in using multimedia as part of your storytelling, please inform the instructor and he may adjust either option accordingly.
One sidebar due (25 points): Wednesday, 2/10
Second sidebar due (50 points): Wednesday, 2/24
First draft due (155 points): Wednesday, 3/17
Final draft due (120 points): Wednesday, 4/14

Option 2: The Storyteller (good for those who want to write in-depth about one topic)
Write one piece of narrative non-fiction using literary and storytelling techniques (about 3,000 to 3,500 words).
Excerpt 1 (25 points): Wednesday, 2/10
Excerpt 2 (50 points): Wednesday, 2/24
First draft due (155 points): Wednesday, 3/17
Final draft due (120 points): Wednesday, 4/14

NOTE: Because of the instructor’s work schedule, this class will not meet in person every week, but the instructor will give students at least 48 hours warning. The non-meeting weeks will not delay or otherwise impact stated deadlines, and students will still be required to remotely complete and submit assignments and/or quizzes during the non-meeting weeks. Students may also need to be available and have access to a computer during the hours when the class normally does meet. The instructor will provide specific detail when class begins in January.

GRADING
You will be graded on a 500-point scale:

350 points: Project Writing Assignments
30 points: Short Writing Assignment (due date to be announced in class)
40 points: Reading Quizzes
20 points: Reading Presentation (to be explained in class)
60 points: Attendance/Participation/Live Assignments

A: 465-500
A-: 450-464
B+: 435-449
B: 420-434
B-: 400-419
C+: 380-399
C: 365-379
C-: 350-364
D+: 335-349
D: 320-334
D-: 300-319
E: 299 and below

READING SCHEDULE
(Links or PDFs will be emailed)

For 1/13
Writing Tools: Intro and Part One

For 1/27
Writing Tools: Part Two

For 2/3
Writing Tools: Part Three and Part Four

For 2/10
“The Losses of Dan Gable,” ESPN the Magazine, Wright Thompson

For 2/17
“Animals,” Esquire, Chris Jones

For 2/24
“Walking His Life Away,” Sports Illustrated, Gary Smith

Remaining reading will be announced in class

STORY SUBMISSION GUIDELINES
• All ideas must be approved
• Turn in one hard copy, and email one copy
• Double-space all stories
• Include source info (name, phone, e-mail) at bottom of every story
• Include a headline and subhed for each story
  (not for grade; to help you think and focus story concept)
• Submit first draft with my comments along with final draft
  Failure to follow guidelines will result in a point penalty at instructor’s discretion

CLASSROOM NEEDS
Students requesting special classroom needs must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide the documentation to instructor.

HONOR CODE
Violation of the honor code includes plagiarizing material from other sources or fabricating material, as well as other forms of cheating. Violations will result in a failing grade, and you will be dismissed from the journalism program and reported to the Honor Court. See the Department of Journalism web site for specific outline of honor code violations.

ATTENDANCE/DEADLINES
You are allowed one unexcused absence (“excused” includes religious holidays and documented medical excuses). After that, your grade will be deducted by an automatic 20 points for each absence (first coming from your attendance/participation score, and then dipping into writing score if necessary). Lateness to class can also result in a point deduction at instructor’s discretion. No makeup quizzes will be given (unless the absence is excused). Deadline penalties on stories are -10 points for each 12-hour period it’s late after the start of class.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
This is a workshop-style class in which we will all contribute ideas and critiques of other writers’ work and ideas. Please use professional courtesy. Turn cell phones off. No texting (or checking your phone) in class. If you must, please leave the room to do so.
RECOMMENDED READING
• *The Best American Magazine Writing*, various editions
• *Esquire’s Big Book of Great Writing*, Hearst Communications, various authors
• *Sports Illustrated: Going Deep: 20 Classic Sports Stories*, Gary Smith

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATION
Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/.

THE INSTRUCTOR
John Woodrow Cox, with the Tampa Bay Times since 2011, is a general assignment reporter. He mostly writes features, including the "Dispatches from Next Door" column for Floridian magazine. He also covers breaking news and has led long-term investigations into frivolous government spending, military contract fraud and Florida's prescription pill epidemic. He is a two-time graduate from the University of Florida, where he earned a bachelor's in journalism and a master's in business management.