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TEXTBOOK

This class has no required textbook. You will read from a diverse list of journalists and teachers. Readings from different textbooks and other publications (inspirational AND practical), along with story examples, will be posted online on a weekly basis. However, many magazine writing guides are available, and excerpts from the suggested books will be used throughout the semester. Please feel free to seek out additional sources for your personal use. Suggestions for class readings are also encouraged.

Suggested Reading (Optional):

Ivor Shapiro (ed.), *The Bigger Picture: Elements of Feature Writing*, (Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publications, 2009)
Edward Jay Friedlander and John Lee, *Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines: The Pursuit of Excellence*, 6th edition, (Boston: Allyn & Bacon; 2007).
Cheryl Sloan Wray, *Writing for Magazines: A Beginner's Guide* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 2005).
Carla Johnson, *21st Century Feature Writing* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2004).
Charles H. Harrison, *How to Write For Magazines: Consumer, Trade, and Web* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2002).
Peter P. Jacobi, *The Magazine Article: How to think it, plan it, write it* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
Rick Wilber, *Magazine Feature Writing* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995).
William L. Rivers, *Free-Lancer and Staff Writer: Newspaper Features and Magazine Articles* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1992).
William Blundell, *The Art and Craft of Feature Writing: Based on The Wall Street Journal Guide*, (New York: Plume, 1988).

Personal Reading: READ. READ. READ. Students should read as many magazines and/or webzines as possible, every day. Always ask yourself, "Do I like it?" If so, why does it work? If not, why doesn't it work? You learn to write not only by reading and appreciating the good stuff, but you also learn what to avoid by reading the "not so good" stuff. Be sure to read publications in which you'd love to publish your work.

PREREQUISITES

Students must have completed **JOU 3101** (or its equivalent) with a grade of at least a **C** or have obtained the permission of the instructor. Students will **NOT** be allowed to take JOU 3101 and JOU 4308 concurrently.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

JOU 4308: Preparation of features and articles for publication in newspapers and magazines, coordinated with the study of magazine editing problems. Supervised marketing of pieces produced in the course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to help you develop your skills in fact-gathering, information evaluation, and the fundamentals of good writing, as well as creativity. Emphasis will be placed on story development, writing quality and style, accuracy, and clarity. Good feature writing is a combination of solid reporting techniques and creative writing skills. Often described as “sensory writing,” the feature article dramatizes and supplements facts by giving detailed information that also appeals to the reader’s imagination and emotions. You will need to demonstrate competency in collecting, interpreting, and communicating information from various sources (human, printed, and writer’s observations) through a variety of forms (those other than inverted pyramid style). You will also learn to identify differences in target audiences, as well as how to tailor ideas to appeal to that particular audience. The less rigid story format affords the writer the opportunity to make use of moving narration and vivid description--the heart of a strong feature story--in presenting various types of information to diverse audiences.

Class time will be a combination of lecture/discussion and hands-on activities. We will explore such elements of writing as voice, style, language usage, and techniques of story structure, characterization, and description. Hands-on activities will be spent collecting information and working on writing lessons, as well as reading and reviewing writing selections. Ideally, the hands-on activities will help you identify what elements make the best approach for a piece and/or a particular audience. You will also learn to construct tone and voice according to your style and intended audience.

HONESTY 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.” In addition, on all work students submit for credit at the university, the following pledge is required or implied, under the Student Code of Conduct: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

RULES AND PROCEDURES

WRITING:

1. Spelling, Grammar, and Style: Stories are expected to be free of spelling errors, including typographical errors, and grammar mistakes. This includes rough drafts, as well as final versions. **PROOFREAD, AS WELL AS USE YOUR COMPUTER’S GRAMMAR AND SPELL-CHECK!!!!!!** If **YOU** find the mistake and correct it prior to submission, it demonstrates to me that you are a conscientious writer. If **I** find the mistake, it indicates to me that your writing skills are below average (and it will cost you). If you have problems with basic grammar, purchase *When Words Collide* (by Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald, and written specifically for journalists) or a general writer’s handbook. You will also follow some of the basic Associated Press style rules (mainly numbers, addresses, titles, etc.), unless you can convince me that the rule was broken for creative reasons. Up to 20 percent of your score for each story will reflect your accuracy in these areas.

2. Accuracy: Feature writing requires accurate and factual information, just as important as in basic news reporting. Do not confuse *feature writing* with *fiction writing*. It is not an opportunity to fabricate material or to fail to verify all information (or as a substitute for journaling or blogging). Feature writing is NOT synonymous with sloppy work. Making up quotes and/or inventing sources are grounds for disciplinary action, as detailed in the student handbook. Don’t guess, don’t assume, and don’t get *creative* with facts. **VERIFY EVERYTHING!!!** Minor factual errors will cost you at

least half a letter grade, while major fact errors will result in an automatic failure. A list of all human sources used in the article, including phone numbers at which the individuals can be reached, MUST be turned in with each feature assignment. **No story will be graded without a source sheet, and points will be deducted from your assignment until the source list is turned in to me.**

STORY IDEAS:

Magazine writers engage the interest, and often the heart, of their readers, by looking beyond, as well as behind the scenes, of breaking news and key issues and events. To accomplish this, writers must push their reporting, interviewing, and writing skills in new directions, often outside their comfort zones. Stories are everywhere! Extrapolation allows you to look beyond an event to find a more significant story, while synthesis permits you to look for the possibilities of commonality in seemingly unrelated events and find the threads that tie them together.

1. Approval: Story ideas must be approved by the instructor prior to beginning the story. Please submit **at least 3** ideas, in case I eliminate one or more as inappropriate or unacceptable. All story ideas are to be submitted typed, on or before the due date, or e-mailed to <btripp@jou.ufl.edu>.

2. Idea Requirements: Each idea **must include**: 1) the topic or subject; 2) the proposed angle or what you plan to write about the topic; 3) the names (or general types, if names unknown) of the people you anticipate using as sources, as well as any published materials you anticipate using as background information.

3. Changing Story Topics: Sometimes story ideas don't work out. Sources become unavailable, information does not support the original angle, events are canceled, etc. If you must change topics, first select from any remaining pre-approved topics among your story ideas. If none of the remaining topics is feasible and you need to develop a new idea, you are still required to receive the instructor's approval.

GRADES:

1. Regular features: **THREE** regular features (profile, newsfeature/color story, personal experience/how-to) will be worth 100 points each. **Story ideas must be approved by the instructor in advance.** A two-page spread in most magazines with two or three photos will consist of about 1,000 words. (Minimum of 1,000-1,500 words or about 6-8 pages for regular features)

2. National magazine feature: You will implement the entire magazine freelancing process, in which **you**: develop the story idea, select the type and category of the feature, research the magazine market, and submit the final version to the appropriate nationally circulated magazine for consideration and possible acceptance. In doing so, you will analyze the intended magazine's tone (straight, humorous, conversational, conservative, advocacy, etc.) target readership (college students, young mothers, fitness fans, gadgetry enthusiasts, etc.), and its feature needs. **Both the story idea and the magazine must be approved by the instructor in advance.** (Minimum of 1,500-2,000 words or about 8-10 pages)

3. In-class assignments/homework: Work on features will be conducted outside of the regular class period. However, your final grade will also reflect your performance on in-class exercises, quizzes, homework assignments and critiques. All assignments are graded assignments. You will receive a

zero for all missed homework assignments, unless you missed the assignment because of an excused absence.

4. Exams: The mid-term exam will be in two parts: a take-home short answer/essay format (with a bonus question for extra points) and online terminology exam. Questions will be based on reading assignments and class lectures. There will be no final exam. The national feature will serve as your final exam.

5. Class Participation: Because this class meets only one day per week, your presence in class, as well as your participation in class discussions, will be carefully noted. **Attendance is taken each class period.** [Leaving without permission before I have dismissed the class will result in an unexcused absence.] Points lost for **unexcused absences** increase exponentially. For example, the penalty for the first unexcused absence is one point; second unexcused absence is two points, and so on. Excessive unexcused absences can lead only to failure in the course. In order for you to make up any assignments missed because of an **excused** absence, you must contact me **in advance** and provide documentation immediately upon your return. **It is YOUR responsibility to make arrangements with me to complete makeup assignments within TWO weeks after your return.**

SPECIAL NOTE: Please respect your classmates and your instructor by arriving in class on time. Occasional tardiness is often unavoidable. However, excessive tardiness will not be tolerated, and I will deduct points from your final grade if tardiness becomes a problem. You should make arrangements to drop the course if you will be late on a regular basis. If you do arrive late, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure that I have not marked you absent while checking attendance at the beginning of class. Be prepared to provide an explanation for your late arrival.

6. Final Grade Proportions:

Average of regular features	50%
National magazine feature	15%
Mid-term exam	10%
In-class exercises/quizzes, homework, critiques	15%
Class attendance/participation	10%

Grading standards for content of writing assignments:

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

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

C = satisfactory but needs *a lot* of revising; story meets minimum requirements but may have problems with story structure, with appeal to targeted readership/audience, and with mechanical errors of grammar, spelling, punctuation and usage/style errors.

D = unsatisfactory; work does not display a grasp of basic writing skills; story has significant problems with story structure, mechanical errors, and/or an unclear understanding of the targeted readership/audience.

E = unacceptable, failing; story has flaws in research, story 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.

ADDITIONAL GRADING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS: As graduate students, you are expected to demonstrate a significantly higher level of knowledge and skill. Thus, your assignments should reveal an additional aptitude for thinking beyond the obvious and taking your writing to the next level. I expect you to demonstrate the ability to visualize **all aspects** of the topic and communicate this multifaceted nature of feature writing to the reader on a much more defined scale than the undergraduates in the class. Therefore, ideally, **the lengths of your stories should be longer (about 1,500-2,000 words for regular features and 2,000-3,000 words for the national feature)**. You will also provide a detailed account (**in journal form**) of your experiences in developing each of the stories you produce for this class, as well as any other writing experiences or epiphanies you have about the creative process, during the semester. This journal will count as **an additional graded homework assignment**, and it will be **due at the end of the semester**.

7. Plagiarism/Academic honesty: As a student at this university, you are expected to produce your own work and reference any outside source materials where appropriate. You are also expected to observe intellectual property rights, as well as copyright laws, and not plagiarize others' words, concepts, or ideas. Give credit where credit is due. This class also requires that you adhere to professional ethical guidelines and NOT make up quotes or sources. Your work – both classroom and outside assignments - will be regularly checked for plagiarism. The faculty members of the Journalism Department have endorsed a policy that details strict guidelines regarding plagiarism. These guidelines can be found at: <http://www.jou.ufl.edu/academic/jou/honesty/>.

In addition, as stated in the UF student handbook, **violations of the Student Honor Code shall result in a reduced or failing grade and/or judicial action as defined in Rule 6C1-4.016, F.A.C. of the Student Conduct Code**. These violations include cheating (improperly taking or providing information that will be used in determining academic credit), plagiarism, bribery, misrepresentation, conspiracy to commit academic dishonesty, and fabrication of information. Info regarding the code is available at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php>. For the purposes of this course, plagiarism also includes (but is not limited to) submitting stories that were written to fulfill requirements for another class, using someone else's notes to write your story, making up quotes and/or sources, and failing to cite your use of the work of others. Failing to adhere to the Academic Honesty Guidelines will result in serious disciplinary action, which may include expulsion from the class, as well as the college and university. For further definitions of plagiarism and how to avoid it, try the links on the following webpage: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/msl/subjects/Physics/StudentPlagiarism.html>.

8. Extra Credit/Grade Improvement Opportunities: Re-writing is a crucial part of successful writing of any type, and the revision process is emphasized in this course. With the **exception of the national feature**, re-writes of stories are not required. However, you are encouraged to re-write each story in order to improve your grade. **First drafts: With each first draft, turn in a memo outlining your plans for the second draft -- what worked, what didn't work, what you'll do next.**

To allow you to take advantage of rewrite opportunities, grades for the **first draft will provide 25%** of your final grade on the story. The final version of the story will represent the remaining **75% of the grade**. (SEE ATTACHED COPIES OF EVALUATION FORMS.)

(NOTE: You will want to deal with any problems I identified in the original story you submitted--i.e., more quotes, more description, additional information, better sources.) Revisions typically involve transposing paragraphs or restructuring the story to improve overall story flow, adding sources to enhance information, strengthening the beginning and/or the ending, verifying information, or similar "polishing" and/or "tightening" of sentence/paragraph structures. Grading

standards will be somewhat higher for re-writes because you will have had the opportunity to correct all mechanical mistakes I marked in the original, as well as those I might have overlooked. Correcting only the mechanical mistakes will not result in a grade improvement. THE REWRITE, ALONG WITH THE ORIGINAL AND MEMO, IS DUE WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF THE RETURN OF THE ORIGINAL TO YOU. IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO DO A REWRITE, **YOU MUST RETURN THE ORIGINAL AND FIRST-DRAFT MEMO.**

****Additional Credit:** Get your class features published in a magazine or newspaper feature section. Each time a feature is published, I will average your score on it with 100 points, **but only if the publication has been approved by me before submission and only if the published story is essentially the same story as the one turned in.** Reproduction of the story in a non-approved publication or in a publication whose standards the instructor deems less than rigorous (or in a publication that uses only a portion of the original story) will result in fewer or no extra credit points. Proof of publication will be required before any extra credit is granted.

9. **Deadlines:** Unless otherwise specified, your stories are due at the beginning of class on the scheduled *due* date (See attached schedule). Partial stories or outlines **WILL NOT** be accepted! **I must be notified in advance (and not just prior to class time) if you will miss a deadline. Any requests for extensions must be made either in person or on the phone. Don't assume that an e-mail message to me automatically entitles you to an extension.** In some cases, I will allow an extension, but if I have not agreed to this **before the original deadline**, your grade will be dropped **one letter grade per day** until the story is turned in. Unless I have agreed to a later *deadline* (in advance of the original due date), stories **more than one week late** will receive an automatic zero grade.

Warning: Don't ask for more than a week's extension, and don't ask unless you have a very good reason. In addition, don't expect more than one extension during the semester. Please note the due dates for each of the stories and plan accordingly. However, I will try to work with you in the event of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.

10. **Additional resources:** Assignment examples, handouts, grades, instructional information, etc. will be posted regularly on e-Learning. To access the class homepage, go to the Learning Support Systems homepage at <<http://lss.at.ufl.edu/>> and click on the link. Students must have an active Gatorlink ID to access the system. If you do not have a Gatorlink ID, cannot remember your login information, or have an ID that does not work, please go to the Gatorlink Website at <<http://gatorlink.ufl.edu>> or contact the CIRCA Help Desk [(in HUB 132) or 392-HELP] for assistance.

11. **Course accommodations for students with disabilities:** Students who require special accommodations or support services should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) Office in Reid Hall, (352-392-8565 x200). Students must register with the DRC and provide the instructor with documentation from that office when requesting accommodations.

12. **Professional conduct:**

- Class begins when the instructor walks into the room. Cell phones and other personal electronic devices must be turned off or placed on 'vibrate' at the beginning of class. Likewise, laptops are to be used **ONLY** for course-related work when classes are in session. No checking e-mail or social networking accounts, internet surfing, texting, instant messaging, twittering, etc., during class time.
- Your participation and attentiveness are critical to your success in this course. Please provide your instructor and your fellow classmates with your undivided attention. When one

person speaks, whether instructor or classmate, we ALL listen. Working on assignments for other classes (or for this class), reading the *Alligator* or other material unrelated to this course, or any other disruptive or distracting behavior is prohibited.

STORY FORMAT

1. Unless otherwise stated, all assignments, excluding in-class work, will be typed or word-processed, *double-spaced*, and printed by a reasonably dark printer on white paper (one-sided only). **If I can't read it, I won't accept it.** Use standard margins (1 inch on all sides) and standard fonts (12-point). Failure to meet this requirement may result in a grade reduction for your assignment.

2. I will **NOT ACCEPT** homework or stories on computer disk or flash drive. It is **YOUR** responsibility to provide me with a hard copy of your work. You will not be allowed to print your assignment during or after class.

3. **Format all pages of your stories according to the following guidelines.**

The top left-hand corner of the first page of each story **should look like this:**

Name

Date due/date turned in

Audience and type of feature*

Original or re-write

Approximate number of words

Center Suggested Title

*Audience refers to the intended audience for the article. Type refers to the kind of article -- profile, newsfeature/color story, and personal experience/how-to. [NOTE: This is not necessary for the national feature submission.]

The top of ***each* subsequent page** should include this information in the upper left-hand corner:

Last name -- story slug -- page no.

COURSE OUTLINE

(Schedule and discussion topics may change during the semester.)

Weekly readings and examples will be posted on the e-Learning/Sakai class page the week before each is due. All readings should be completed by the beginning of each Monday class unless otherwise directed.

NOTE: Stories and re-writes are due on **Mondays**. Story ideas for the next assignment are due on or before **Fridays at noon**.

WEEK

1 Aug. 22-24

NO CLASS MEETING

2 Aug. 27-31

Introduction; News vs. Features: Feature Writing Components;
Narrative qualities and the use of fictional techniques to make a point;
What makes a good profile?

****Profile story ideas due (8/31)**

****Magazine genre selection (provide a preliminary idea of the demographics of your intended audience, including such things as age, gender, marital status, economic group, lifestyle, etc.)**

- 3 Sept. 3-7** (LABOR DAY, 9/3)—NO CLASS
- 4 Sept. 10-14** **PROFILE due**
Feature Writing Components; Interviewing and the Art of Description and Action; Building Interest
****Newsfeature/Color Story ideas due (9/14)**
- 5 Sept. 17-21** Hooking the Reader; Understanding the Audience
- 6 Sept. 24-28** **NEWSFEATURE/COLOR STORY due**
Organizing the Pieces; Finding Significance
- 7 Oct. 1-5** **Profile re-write due**
When the Writer Becomes the Story; Writing Anecdotes
****Personal experience/How-to story ideas due (10/5)**
Take-Home Midterm
- 8 Oct. 8-12** **Take-Home Midterm due**
Specialized writing
E-Learning terminology exam (10/11-10/16)
- 9 Oct. 15-19** **Newsfeature/color story re-write due**
Maintaining Appropriate Tone and Voice
****National feature ideas due (10/19)**
- 10 Oct. 22-26** Packaging the Story
*****Bring a copy of your national magazine choice to class.**
- 11 Oct. 29-Nov. 2** **PERSONAL EXPERIENCE/HOW-TO feature due**
Finding a Market
Letters of Inquiry drafts due (e-mailed) (11/9)
- 12 Nov. 5-9** **Magazine Analysis and Story Analysis due**
(UF HOMECOMING, Friday-Saturday, 11/9-11/10)
- 13 Nov. 12-16** (VETERANS' DAY (11/12)—NO CLASS
NATIONAL feature due (11/13)
Online vs. Print Magazines; Blogging and Writing for the Web
- 14 Nov. 19-23** **Personal Experience/How-To re-write due**
Individual discussions of National feature re-writes
(THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS, 11/22-11/23)
- 15 Nov. 26-30** Multimedia Extras; Law and Ethics
National Feature Submission Guidelines

16 Dec. 3-7

National feature re-writes due
(CLASSES END, DEC. 5)
(READING DAYS, DEC. 6-7)

17 Dec. 10-14

Finals Week (No Final Exam)
(National feature re-write extensions, due 12/10???)