

Feature Writing
Journalism 3130-01
Fall 2011
Prof. Candy Justice
Tuesday/Thursday 11:20 a.m.-12:40 p.m., Meeman 208
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COURSE-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Advanced practice in writing, publishing feature stories for magazines and newspapers and the Web; finding and developing publishable ideas; freelance techniques; advanced reporting skills; writing techniques with emphasis on leads, endings, description, effective use of anecdotes and quotations; critiques of student work.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR3130:

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

PREREQUISITE:

Jour 2121

TEXTBOOKS:

No textbook, but you must read either *The Commercial Appeal*, *USA Today* or *The New York Times* every day. Those newspapers are available free at various locations around campus including the library and Jones Hall. You also must read at least one magazine each week (a different one each week). Submit a one-page report on certain Tuesdays at the beginning of class naming the magazine and describing your favorite article in that issue. In the same report, describe the feature story in one of the above named newspapers you enjoyed most that week. Include what you thought was the best piece of description among the newspaper and magazine articles you read that week.

OBJECTIVE OF COURSE:

By the end of the semester, you should be able to write publishable articles for both newspapers

and magazines. You will become proficient at generating publishable ideas for stories and will learn to do the research and interviews required for magazine articles newspaper features. Your writing skills will grow to include meaningful description and leads particular to feature writing. You will learn the difference between the way magazines and newspapers approach feature writing. You will also learn the techniques of successful freelancing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Your newspaper features will count for 70 percent of your final grade. Your magazine article will count for 20 percent of our final grade. Your reports on your newspaper and magazine readings and daily writing assignments, such as lead and description exercises, will count 10 percent. If you get one or more of your stories published, you will receive extra credit, which will vary, based on the prestige of the publication. Students are strongly urged to pursue publication. Published work is important in obtaining internships and getting jobs after college.

GRADING:

90-100 is an A; 80-89 is a B; 70-79 is a C; 60-69 is a D; and 59 and below is an F. All stories should be double spaced and typed and all assignments are due at the beginning of class. Reading reports are due on certain Tuesdays and will not be accepted late. Newspaper stories can be turned in one class day late for the loss of one letter grade. After that, the story will not be accepted. If you are sick, you may e-mail your assignment, but you will not be excused from meeting the deadline unless you have a doctor's letter stating that you were not physically able to sit at the computer and write your story during the whole week before the deadline.

OTHER ISSUES:

Missed Class: Attendance is mandatory and very few excuses will be accepted. If you are too sick to attend class, the absence will not be excused without a specific note from your doctor saying you were treated and were too ill to attend class or you must submit proof that you were treated at an emergency room. A form from a doctor saying you saw the doctor on a certain date is not enough, since this could be for a check-up or some other reason other than illness. If an absence extends beyond one class, you or a relative should keep the professor informed by phone or e-mail, rather than missing two weeks of class and then coming in with a doctor's note. If a story is assigned well in advance, even a medical excuse is not accepted unless the doctor says you were ill and unable to do your work for the whole period you had to do the assignment. In other words, getting sick two days before the assignment was due is not an excuse for missing a deadline if you had a week to do the assignment.

If you miss class for any reason, do not call or e-mail the professor and ask what you missed in class. She will not give you an individual lecture because you weren't there. The first day of class, you should exchange phone numbers with another student, so that you can check on assignments made while you were absent.

Distractions: All cell phones must be turned off and kept out of sight to prevent text messaging and other distractions, such as checking missed calls. All cell phone headsets must be taken off and put away. Laptop computers may not be used in class for any reason. BlackBerries and other such devices may not be used in class and must be put away. iPods, MP3 players and other music devices must be put away. If you are caught using an electronic device in class, you will be told to leave the class and the device will be confiscated. It can be retrieved only by going to the department chair.

Sources: Press releases are not acceptable sources, except as a starting point. Nothing, especially quotes, should be taken directly from a press release or from published works. We are not writing term papers here, so books and the work of other journalists should not be quoted. Websites

should rarely be quoted and when they are, the story should reflect that. Do not use a Website as a source without first checking with the professor.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive Objectives to Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):

- Acquire the technical knowledge necessary to write news feature stories.
- Utilize interviewing skills to develop information needed to write feature stories.
- Practice higher order critical thinking skills by analyzing feature stories for style, structure and focus.
- Enhance retention and transfer of information from class discussions to the real world by researching and writing feature stories.
- Be familiar with AP style and appropriate magazine styles.
- Student can write a query letter and submit to a publication.
- Student knows how to find appropriate publication market for an article idea.

Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):

- Students will write at least 4 newspaper features and 1 magazine feature. Story length will vary based on the assignment.
- Students are responsible for developing the story idea, researching and writing the story within the stated deadline.
- Students will analyze award-winning features for class discussion.
- Students will utilize the AP Stylebook in writing newspaper features.
- Magazine articles should be extensively researched with multiple and multi-cultural sources.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR3130:

- Require multi-cultural sources
- Require a list of sources with contact information so professor can do spot-checks for accuracy.
- Required to gather and analyze secondary data
 - Required to write at least newspaper and/or magazine stories, including one article for specific publication
- Analyze targeted publication and write query letter, then produce multiple-sourced article appropriate to publication market

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

EMAIL:

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the University.

CELLPHONES:

You must turn them off during class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your "job" in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

CHEATING:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. That may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the university.

"Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all." (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

ONLINE SETEs:

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

EXIT EXAM FOR ALL JOURNALISM MAJORS:

All Journalism majors are required to take the Journalism Exit Exam their last semester before graduation. Please contact the Journalism office staff anytime during the semester to sign up. You may take the test anytime there are open lab hours during the semester. You will not be certified to graduate until you have completed the test.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.