

**Feature Writing**

JOUR 3130-02

Fall 2013

MJ 208

MW, 3:55 pm-5:20 pm

R. Spielberger

Office: 322 Meeman

Office Hours: MW 10:15 am-11:45 am. 1 pm-3:00 pm

Friday 8 am-9 am.

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**COURSE 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.

**PREREQUISITE:**

JOUR 2121

**TEXTBOOKS**

Writing for Magazines, Second Edition. Author: Cheryl Sloan Wray Publisher: McGraw Hill ISBN: 978-0-07-286491-5

**CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

Lecture, lab assignments and outside writing assignments

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

You must read *The Commercial Appeal* every day as well as a national newspaper such as the *USA Today* or the *New York Times*. These newspapers are free on campus, either in front of the library or in the lobby of the Tiger Den. You also must read at least one national magazine each week (a different one each week). Submit a one-page report each Thursday at the beginning of class naming the magazine and newspaper you read and describing your favorite articles. Also include the best descriptive writing in the features. Additional critiques will vary from week to week.

Writing assignments will count for 60 percent of your final grade. Weekly reading and other writing assignments, such as in-class exercises, will count for 20 percent. You will have a mid-term over the first half of the text and the lecture material up to that point. You will have a final over the second half of the text material and the lecture material from the second half of the course.

Your major writing assignments will include four newspaper features and one multiple-source feature for a national consumer magazine. Feature stories that are rewritten will be graded in this way: 75 percent of the grade will come from the first version, and 25 percent will come from the rewrite. At least one of your four outside assignments will have to be rewritten. Other feature rewrites are optional.

All features you write must be submitted for publication. You won't be graded off if stories are not published, but you must try. Any story that is published will receive extra credit, which will vary, based on the prestige of the publication.

**GRADING:**

- Feature stories: 60 percent
  - Tests: 20 percent
  - In-class work and outside assignments: 20 percent
- You will be graded on the plus/minus system

**TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**(Please note that the class schedule will change to reflect the needs of the class.)**

**Week One (Aug 26)**

Course Introduction

**Week Two (Sept 4)**

What is a News Feature?  
Developing Story Ideas

**Week Three (Sept 9)**

Leads and Story Organization  
Descriptive Writing

**Week Four (Sept 16)**

**FIRST FEATURE DUE: News Feature**  
How to Make a Pitch

**Week Five (Sept 23)**

Editing and Rewrites

**Week Six (Sept. 30)**

Personality Profiles, Group or Organization Features, Hobby Features

**Week Seven (Oct. 7)**

Historical Features, Science/Research/Health Features  
**SECOND FEATURE DUE**

**Week Eight (Oct 16)**

Critical Writing (film, book, concert, food reviews)

**Week Nine (Oct. 21)**

Fair Use

**Week 10 (Oct. 28)**

Seasonal Features, Travel Writing, Personal Experience  
**THIRD FEATURE DUE**

**Week 11 (Nov 4)**

The Differences Between Magazine and Newspaper Features

**Week 12 (Nov. 11)**

Development of Final Features

**Week 13 (Nov. 18)**

So You Want To Be A Freelancer ....

**Week 14 (Nov. 25) Final Magazine Feature Due**

**ASSESSMENT**

**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.

**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 four newspaper features and one magazine feature. Story length will vary based on the assignment.
- Students are responsible for developing the story idea and 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 will 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.

### **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.

## **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 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.