

Feature Writing

JOUR3130-M50

Spring 2014

Via the World Wide Web

Thomas J. Hrach, Ph.D.

308 Meeman

Office hours: 9:30 to noon Mondays; 2:30 to 5 p.m. Thursdays

(901) 678-4779 (office) (901) 590-4949 (home)

thrach@memphis.edu

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.

PREREQUISITE:

Media Writing, Journalism 2121

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Cheryl Sloan Wray *Writing for Magazines*, 2nd edition, 2005.
- William E. Blundell *The Art and Craft of Feature Writing*, 1988.
- Daily access to the World Wide Web. All course materials and instructions will be available at the www.elearn.memphis.edu. As well as Web access, students will need Microsoft Word where all assignments will be completed
- A digital camera so students are able to take photographs.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

- Students will complete a writing assignment each of the 15 weeks of the semester. In some weeks, the assignment is rather simple but in others they will take more time. The weeks when a feature article is due will be a week where the assignment takes more time than some of the other weeks. Each assignment is due in the dropbox by noon Friday. There is a penalty of one letter grade (2.5 points) for each day the assignment is late. No assignments will be accepted more than six days after it was due. Each writing assignment is worth 25 points. If it is determined there is plagiarism or fabrication with an assignment, it will mean that assignment gets an automatic zero.
- Comments about the work of other students work are required. Each student is expected to offer a comment on the writing assignment of others. The comments should be at least 100 words each. The other students' assignments will be posted in the discussion board. The comments are due at noon Tuesday. This is done in place of classroom discussion so it is not optional. Each week the comments are worth 2 points.
- Midterm and final exams will be completed. The purpose of the exams is to ensure students read the material. Students are welcome to use their textbooks to take the exam, and the exams must be completed on the assigned dates. The midterm exam will be given on March 9. The final exam will be given on April 28.

GRADING:

15 assignments (14 at 25 and 1 at 50)	400
Comments about the work of others (participation)	30
Exams (35 for midterm, 35 for final)	70
TOTAL	500

GRADE SCALE:

A 93 to 100 percent
A – 90 to 92 percent
B + 87 to 89 percent
B 83 to 86 percent
B – 80 to 82 percent
C + 77 to 79 percent
C 73 to 76 percent
C – 70 to 72 percent
D + 67 to 69 percent
D 63 to 66 percent
D – 60 to 62 percent
F 0 to 59 percent

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE FEATURE WRITING

Week of:	Topic	Readings	Additional Info
Jan. 16-17 Week 1	Introduction- What makes a good feature article?	Wray, Chapter 1; Blundell, Introduction	Assignment 1 – A feature about yourself
Jan. 20-26 Week 2	Coming up with ideas, planning and execution; plagiarism/fabrication	Blundell, Chapters 1-2. Wray, Chapter 3	Assignment 2 – Feature article analysis
Jan. 27 to Feb. 2 Week 3	Interviewing, researching and note taking.	Wray, Chapter 8 Blundell, Appendix 2.	Assignment 3 – Feature article ideas
Feb. 3 to Feb. 9 Week 4	Leads and story structures	Blundell, Chapter 6 Wray, Chapter 9	Assignment 4 – Person feature article
Feb. 10 to 16 Week 5	Interjecting humor, typographical devices	Blundell, Chapter 4 Wray, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.	Assignment 5 - Re-write of person feature article
Feb. 17-23 Week 6	Photo and art	See online readings.	Assignment 6 – Feature photos
Feb. 24 to March 2 Week 7	Voice, tempo, pace, punch, shape	Blundell, Chapter 3. Wray, Chapter 10.	Assignment 7 – Travel Feature
March 3 to 9 Week 8	Editing your own work, the work of others – Mid-term Exam	Blundell, Chapters 5 and 9	Assignment 8 – Re-write of travel feature article with photos
March 10 to 16	Opinion pieces, columns and reviews	See online readings.	Assignment 9 – Opinion, column or review

March 17 to 23 Week 9	Language choice	Blundell, Chapter 7. Wray, Chapter 11 and 12.	Assignment 10 – Re- write of opinion column or review
March 24 to 30 Week 10	Online features, use of links	See online readings.	Assignment 11 – Online feature article
March 30 to April 6 Week 11	Legal stuff and ethics	Wray, Chapter 13.	Assignment 12 – Re- write of online feature article
April 7 to 13 Week 12	Business stuff and entrepreneurship	Wray, Chapter 4	Assignment 13 – Query letter
April 14-20 Week 13	Finding a niche	Wray, Chapter 2 and 14.	Assignment 14 – Final Feature Article
April 21- April 27 Week 14	Final thoughts on life as a feature writer	Blundell, Appendix 1 Wray, Chapter 15.	Assignment 15 – Rewrite of Final Feature Article
April 28 to May 5 Week 15	Final exam		

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR FEATURE WRITING:

- 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 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 FEATURE WRITING:

- 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.