

Feature Writing

JOUR3130-M50

Spring 2015

Online

R. Spielberger

322 Meeman

Office hours: MWF 11:30 am-12:30 pm. TT 2:30 pm-3:30 pm

(901) 678-2403 (office)

rsplbrgr@memphis.edu

email sent to rsplbrgr@memphis.edu will be responded to more rapidly than e-learn email

COURSE REQUIREMENTS**CATALOG 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

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 14 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 Feature article emailed. 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 21-27. The final exam will be given May 1-7.

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

ATTENDANCE FOR JOUR3130:

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.

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE

Week of:	Topic	Readings	Additional Info
Jan. 20-23 Week 1	Introduction- What makes a good feature article?	Wray, Chapter 1; Blundell, Introduction	Assignment 1 – A feature about yourself
Jan. 24-30 Week 2	Coming up with ideas, planning and execution; plagiarism/fabrication	Blundell, Chapters 1-2. Wray, Chapter 3	Assignment 2 – Feature article analysis
Jan 31- Feb. 6 Week 3	Interviewing, researching and note taking.	Wray, Chapter 8 Blundell, Appendix 2.	Assignment 3 – Feature article ideas
Feb. 7to Feb. 13 Week 4	Leads and story structures	Blundell, Chapter 6 Wray, Chapter 9	Assignment 4 – Person feature article
Feb. 14 to 20 Week 5	Interjecting humor, typographical devices	Blundell, Chapter 4 Wray, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.	Assignment 5 - Rewrite of person feature article
Feb. 21-27 Week 6	Photo and art	See online readings.	Assignment 6 – Feature photos
Feb 28- Mar. 6 Week 7	Voice, tempo, pace, punch, shape	Blundell, Chapter 3. Wray, Chapter 10.	Assignment 7 – Travel Feature
March 16-20 Week 8	Editing your own work, the work of others – Mid-term Exam	Blundell, Chapters 5 and 9	Assignment 8 – Rewrite of travel feature article with photos
March 21-27 Week 9	Opinion pieces, columns and reviews Mid-Term	See online readings.	Assignment 9 – Opinion, column or review
March 28 to April 3 Week 10	Language choice	Blundell, Chapter 7. Wray, Chapter 11 and 12.	Assignment 10 – Rewrite of opinion column or review
April 4 to 10 Week 11	Online features, use of links	See online readings.	Assignment 11 – Online feature article
April 11-17 Week 12	Legal stuff and ethics	Wray, Chapter 13.	Assignment 12 – Rewrite of online feature article
April 18 to 24 Week 13	Business stuff and entrepreneurship	Wray, Chapter 4	Assignment 13 – Query letter
April 25-30 Week 14	Finding a niche	Wray, Chapter 2 and 14.	Assignment 14 – Final Feature Article
May 1 to May 7 Week 15	Final exam		

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentration.

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 <http://iam.memphis.edu> 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. Personal student information, such as grades, is restricted to your UM email address.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for his/her specific 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. Your instructor will set the policy for his/her specific class. Students with excessive absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. Assignments turned in late will **NOT** be accepted unless arrangements have been made with the instructor.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers any fabrication of content and/or sources, misappropriation and plagiarism of facts or other content, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be completed on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and/or department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions, failure of the course and/or 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).

Intellectual property and copyright guidelines

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook: The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

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 me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

DIVERSITY:

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with civility. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communication reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

WEATHER POLICY:

Check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day’s work.

AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:

All written work should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don't know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.

FIVE PILLARS OF JOUR3130

- *Professionalism*: Students learn the professional standards and practices of feature writing by discussing the composition and merits of award-winning features presented in class.
- *Writing*: Students are required to research topics and write and rewrite multiple short and long form articles and analyze their strengths and weaknesses.
- *Multimedia*: Students understand through lecture and demonstration how feature writing applies to print, electronic media and the web.
- *Critical Thinking*: Students must demonstrate an understanding of the audience for which their work is intended. As part of this process, students will be required to review such reference works as *Writers Market* prior to writing.
- *Media Literacy*: Students understand the increasingly changing media environment in terms of technological, economic, and societal trends.

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 the role of professionals and institutions in shaping communication.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of people and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society.
- 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.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatically correctness.

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 and magazine feature stories.
- Use 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 use 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:

Awareness:

- Require multi-cultural sources.

Understanding:

- Analyze targeted publication and write query letter, then produce multiple-sourced article appropriate to publication market.

Application:

- 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.

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.