

Feature Writing

JOUR 3130-001

Fall 2017

3:55-5:10 p.m., T/Th, Room 202 Meeman Journalism Building

Instructor: Candace Justice

Office: 210 D Meeman (inside the Helmsman newsroom, 210 Meeman)

Office Hours: Monday 4-6 p.m.; Tuesday 3-4 p.m.; or by appointment

Office phone: 901-678-4790

E-mail: ccjustic@memphis.edu (best way to reach me day or night, including weekends)

Twitter: @ccjustice2

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:

JRSM 2121 and JOUR 3526 or PBRL 3421

TEXTBOOKS:

No textbook required

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

Lecture, lab assignments and outside writing assignments

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- You must read either *the Commercial Appeal*, *USA Today* or the *New York Times* at least once a week. These newspapers are free on campus — in front of the library, in the lobby of the Tiger Den and other locations. You must read *The Daily Helmsman* every day Tuesday-Friday. You also must read at least one national magazine each week (a different one each week). Submit a one-page typed report each Thursday at the beginning of class naming the magazine and newspaper you read and describing your favorite *feature* story from each. Also include the best descriptive writing in one of the features. This reading assignment will be due every week unless the class schedule says otherwise. Must be typed and printed out.
- **Writing assignments** will count for 80 percent of your final grade: The four newspaper features will count 15 percent each, and the major magazine article will count 20 percent. Weekly reading and other assignments, such as in-class exercises, multi-media and publication efforts will count for 15 percent. Your magazine article will be turned in as a first draft (counting 10 percent) and then rewritten as a final draft (counting the other 10 percent). Online portfolio update will count 5 percent.

- Two of your five writing assignments must have a multi-media component, which might be a photo or photos you take; video you shot; graph or chart you designed.
- All features you write must be submitted for publication in professional print or online publications. Check with the professor if you are not sure if your publication is acceptable. You won't be graded off if stories are not published, but you will be graded off if you do not present evidence that you *tried* to get each story published. Any story that is published will receive extra credit, which will vary, based on the prestige of the publication. For example, you would get more extra credit for getting your story published in the New York Times than being published in the Helmsman, but the Helmsman is a legitimate publishing credit, so don't overlook it.
- Your online portfolio will have to be regularly updated during the semester — adding the best features you write this semester. This counts 5 percent of your final grade and the instructor will do unannounced checks to see that you are doing this. Post them after they are graded and after you have made corrections/rewrites suggested by the instructor.
 - You are responsible for coming up with your own story ideas, except for two newspaper features. The first you will choose from a list I give you. Later in the semester, you will write a feature that will relate to the upcoming 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. These stories will be published in a special MLK commemorative issue of the Helmsman. More about this later.
- No electronic devices, including phones and laptops may be used during class.

No late work accepted. This is a departmental rule and not negotiable.

GRADING:

- Feature stories: 80 percent
- In-class work and other assignments: 15 percent
- Regular updating of your online portfolio: 5 percent

CLASS SCHEDULE AND DEADLINES:

All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Will not be accepted later.

Tuesday, Aug. 29 — Go over syllabus, take roll, “What is a feature?” Each student will choose a feature from my collection to read and report on at the next class. Graded assignment, so don’t miss first class.

Thursday, Aug. 31 — Oral reports on feature stories selected at first class and first reading assignment due.

Tuesday, Sept. 5 — Lecture on sources. In class, choose a feature idea from professor’s list, and we will discuss the particular sources you should find for your feature.

Thursday, Sept. 7 — 2nd reading assignment due today. Lecture/discussion on feature leads. Assignment for Tuesday, Sept. 12: for grade, write feature leads from my hand-out. Print out and bring to class.

Tuesday, Sept. 12 — Graded lead assignment due. Interview techniques lecture.

Thursday, Sept. 14 — 3rd reading assignment due today. Lecture on writing and organizing a feature story.

Tuesday, Sept. 19 — **Out of class writing day. No class.**

Thursday, Sept. 21 — First newspaper feature due at the beginning of class. No reading assignment this week. Lecture on where to find story ideas. Graded exercise in class. Assignment for Tuesday: bring five story ideas (typed and printed out).

Tuesday, Sept. 26 — First feature will be graded and handed back. Class discussion on strengths and weaknesses of the first story (without naming the writers). Discuss in class your five story ideas. Decide on one to do as your second newspaper feature.

Thursday, Sept. 28 — **Out of class writing day. No class.**

Tuesday, Oct. 3 — Second newspaper feature is due. Lecture on hobby/job features

Thursday, Oct. 5 — 4th reading assignment due. Lecture on history and how-to features.

Tuesday, Oct. 10 — Bring idea for third newspaper feature for approval.

Thursday, Oct. 12 — Lecture on group/organization features and seasonal features. No reading assignment this week (Happy Fall Break!)

Tuesday, Oct. 17 — **Fall Break**

Thursday, Oct. 19 — **Writing Day for 3rd newspaper feature. No class.**

Tuesday, Oct. 24 — Newspaper Feature #3 due. Lecture on humor features

Thursday, Oct. 26 — Graded newspaper Feature # 3 returned. Reading assignment due. Lecture on personality profiles and description description.

Tuesday, Oct. 31 — Lecture on Dr. Martin Luther King commemorative section in Helmsman. Choose idea from professor's list or bring your own idea for approval.

Thursday, Nov. 2 — Lecture on difference between newspaper and magazine writing. No more reading assignments rest of the semester.

Tuesday, Nov. 7 — **Writing Day. No class.**

Thursday, Nov. 9 — **MLK feature due.**

Tuesday, Nov. 14 — Graded MLK feature returned. Bring three ideas for your magazine article.

Thursday, Nov. 16 — Bring a source list for your magazine article for discussion and approval in class. Also, be ready to say which magazine you plan to write for. Magazine analysis form will be handed out. No reading assignment this week.

Tuesday, Nov. 21 — Magazine analysis form due, along with a copy of the magazine.

No class, but you must leave a copy of the magazine and the analysis form at my office (210 D – inside the Helmsman newsroom no later than 5 p.m. You can bring it days earlier if you wish, but no later than Tuesday, 5 p.m.

Thursday, Nov. 23 — **Thanksgiving Holiday**

Tuesday, Nov. 28 — Lecture on freelance methods.

Thursday, Nov. 30 — **Writing Day. No class.** No reading assignment this week.

Friday, Dec. 1 — **First draft of magazine article with source list and contacts due no later than 11:59 p.m. by email:** ccjustic@memphis.edu (10 percent of your final course grade)

Tuesday, Dec. 5 — **Return and discuss first draft of magazine article.**

Monday, Dec. 11 — **Final draft of magazine article due no later than 11:59 p.m. by email to: ccjustic@memphis.edu** Final draft counts 10 percent of your final course grade. First and second draft averaged together is your final magazine grade, which is 20 percent of course grade.

With final draft, submit a separate document with the following information: A link to your completely updated online portfolio (check the link to be sure it works before sending); the two required multi-media components; a list of all stories that were published and who published them (so you can get your extra credit); a list of all sources for the magazine final draft and contact information.

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. Students learn to practice the highest standards of professionalism in research and writing of stories.
- *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 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
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatically correctness
- Apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world

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 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.

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:

Awareness:

- Aware of importance of diverse 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 five newspaper and/or magazine stories, including one article for specific publication.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and contribute to it from every course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from his/her courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their majors.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. The department requires students to use WordPress to build their portfolio sites. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail or Yahoo.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files, and Storify pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

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.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. 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 because of 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 and Strategic Media 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.

Further, as this is a journalism/mass communication class, students are expected to comply with copyright law, and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

“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.

DEADLINES:

Remember there’s a reason “DEAD” makes up half the word “deadline.” All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. If you get into trouble, talk to your instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:

All written work in this class 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.

DISABILITY:

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

DIVERSITY:

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

WEATHER POLICY:

Always 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.