

# Food Writing/Reporting

JRSM 4160/6160-001

Fall 2019

Class Meeting: TR 11:20 a.m.-12:45 p.m., MJ 202

## Pamela Denney, M.A.

Office: 330 Meeman Journalism Building

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 1-3 p.m. or by appointment

Email: [padenney@memphis.edu](mailto:padenney@memphis.edu)

Twitter & Instagram: Memphis\_stew

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog description

Develops expertise in the specialized niche of food writing with stories, multimedia and social media content.

### Prerequisites

JRSM 3120 and 3526

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

- “Notes From a Young Black Chef,” by Kwame Onwuachi. Published by Alfred A. Knopf 2019. Available in hard cover and ebook.
- “The Best American Food Writing 2018,” edited by Ruth Reichl. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2018. Available in paperback and ebook.
- Tuesday food section of The Commercial Appeal and Wednesday food section of The New York Times (Both are available on campus.)
- A smart phone and access to a laptop or a desktop computer. Students cannot rely on using university computer labs. Journalists today need to be in constant contact with the Internet and social media, so make sure you have the devices to make that happen.
- A camera or smart phone for taking digital photographs.
- A clip-on Lavalier microphone for recording interviews for video and audio.

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://elearn.memphis.edu>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JRSM 4160/6160 - 001 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

### Course Requirements

- Popularly referred to as the new rock and roll, food these days encompasses much more than what we put on our plates. For writers, the new bounty of consumer interest encourages story telling through the lenses of food culture, food history and the health of our planet. In this class, students will use descriptive narratives and multi-media to cover a range of topics, including restaurant reviews, food trends and the politics of what

America eats. Field trips also will be on the menu, as students discover for themselves why Memphis is quickly becoming the South's most popular food destination.

- Assignments will be completed both in and outside the classroom, so attendance and participation in class are vital. Class time is also valuable for discussions, so please be on time. If you are late, it is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet.
- Here's how attendance works: I'm not interested in hearing excuses. You get three free passes during the semester. After you cash in your passes, missed classes are reflected in your final grade. For example, if you miss one additional class, your final grade drops a letter grade. If you miss two more classes, your grade drops again. So if you miss six classes, your final grade drops two letters.
- If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out missed assignments and/or deadlines for assignments. Do not count on me to answer texts, emails or Facebook posts about missed work. If you are unsure about deadlines, ask classmates or check the ecourseware drop box dates. Do not rely on assignment dates printed on the syllabus.
- Be sure to join the class Facebook page.
- To be a good writer, you need to be a good reader. Reading outside of class will be required regularly and will be basis of class discussions and possible quizzes.
- All assignments must be filed to the ecourseware drop box by midnight (11:59 p.m.) on the day they are due. Late assignments will NOT be accepted.
- All written assignments will be graded on content, story structure, word count, grammar, punctuation and AP style. One point may be deducted from story grades for every mistake in AP style, spelling, punctuation and grammar, so edit your work carefully.
- Assignments for food writing also may involve several components. You must complete all parts of the assignment to receive a grade. Assignments that are incomplete will not be graded, and students will receive a zero.
- And finally, all work will be re-written as needed and posted to portfolios. Rewrites that do not include the additional reporting discussed in editing notes or during class critiques will receive lower grades than the original stories.

## Grading

Course assignments, including an updated portfolio, will constitute 80 percent of semester grades. Students will sometimes work individually, in pairs and as a team, so peer grading may be used to help decide final grades for some assignments.

In-class work, homework, quizzes and participation will constitute 20 percent of semester grades.

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%  
B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%  
C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%  
D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4%  
F 0-59.4%

## Other issues

Please remember that food writing is a vehicle for becoming better writers, reporters, story tellers and problem solvers. Yes, food writing is fun, but it is not frivolous. While food writing does not conform to strict rules of traditional newspaper journalism, it is at its heart narrative storytelling based on fact, accuracy, opinion, voice, observation and description. In other words,

don't cut corners with research and reporting and remember this: Opinion needs justification.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Part One: A food writer's tool box

*Week 1, Aug. 27, Aug. 29: Course Introduction*

What is food? Record food diary. Introduce assignment one. Develop story ideas.

*Week 2, Sept. 3, Sept. 5 Explore, eat and learn*

Wakelet stories on neighborhood food scenes. Introduce assignment two.

Sept. 2: Labor Day. School closed.

Sept. 7: Mandatory: Meet at downtown Farmer's Market.

*Week 3, Sept. 10, Sept. 12: Photography and Premiere*

Guest lecturer. In-class photography practice.

**Assignment 1 (New campus food) due Sept. 13.**

*Week 4, Sept. 17, Sept. 19: Photography and Premiere*

Critique and rewrite assignment one.

Reading: "Notes from a Young Black Chef," thru page 110.

*Week 5, Sept. 24, Sept. 26: Description, anecdotes and voice*

Practice descriptive writing. Lab time for assignment two. Introduce assignments three and four.

**Assignment 2 (Farmer's Market slideshow) due Sept. 26.**

Lecture by Gutenberg Professor Fabienne Makhoul, Sept. 23, 6 p.m., Meeman 100.

### Part Two: Food connects culture, issues and trends

*Week 6, Oct. 1, Oct. 3: Food Culture, Issues and Trends*

Critique and edit slideshows. Review how to build timelines.

*Week 7, Oct. 8, Oct. 10: Food Culture, Issues and Trends*

Reading: "Notes from a Young Black Chef," thru page 200.

**Assignment 3 (Issue, history or trend timeline) due Oct. 11.**

*Week 8, Oct. 17: Food Culture, Issues and Trends*

Critique and edit timelines. Introduce assignment five.

**Assignment 4 (Issue, history or trend story) due Oct. 18.**

Oct. 15: School closed for fall break.

*Week 9, Oct. 22, Oct. 24: Food Culture, Issues and Trends*

Critique and edit stories.

Reading: "Notes from a Young Black Chef," thru page 273.

*Week 10, Oct. 29, Oct. 31: Food culture, issue and trends*

Lab time for assignment five. Introduce assignment six.

Assignment 5 (NPR-style story on chef or food producer) due Nov. 1.

### Part Three: Eat the Street

*Week 11, Nov. 5, Nov. 5: Restaurant Reviews*

Critique and edit assignment five. Discuss how to critique food.

Election Day: Nov. 5

*Week 12, Nov. 12, Nov. 14: Restaurant Reviews*

First drafts due in class Nov. 12.

**Assignment 6 (Restaurant Review) Due: Nov. 15.**

*Week 13, Nov. 19, Nov. 21: Restaurant Reviews*

Critique and edit restaurant reviews. Update work on portfolios.

*Week 14, Nov. 26: Thanksgiving holiday (Nov. 27-Dec. 1)*

Nov. 28: School closed for holiday.

*Week 15, Dec. 3: Portfolios*

**Assignment 8 (Updated portfolios) due Dec. 5. Post link on class Facebook page.**

Dec. 5: Study Day.

## ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

### Five Pillars in JOUR 4160-6160

- *Critical Thinking:* Students work independently, in pairs, and as an integrated staff for both print and multimedia projects, pitching ideas to editors and developing story packages with multiple components.
- *Media Literacy:* Students learn how to become experts in unfamiliar areas by immersing themselves in a specialized media and learning from guest lecturers working as writers, editors, and photographers in a specialized field. Food writing is a growing and popular news niche that demands writers who are informed about regional and cultural history, food politics and policies, specialized vocabulary, and tastemakers who set the trends.
- *Multimedia:* Students use photography, slideshows, smartphone apps, podcasts and social media to reach the many different kinds of audiences interested in food.
- *Professionalism:* Students address publishing and promoting work on established blogs and publications and working directly with professional art directors and editors to publish a final project.
- *Writing:* Students write both complex stories for print, learning to integrate national sources, descriptive writing, and statistical information into their work, along with formats more appropriate for blogs and the web. Students also learn to write with humor, opinion, and a developed voice and to better understand how these writing and reporting techniques differ from more traditional journalism practices.

### Professional Values and Competencies in JOUR 4160-6160

- 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 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 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)*

- Develop expertise in a specialized niche of news reporting by reading and analyzing books, newspapers, magazines and online formats.
- Develop a better understanding of how food writing represents both lifestyle and entertainment reporting and cultural and political trends.
- Continue to improve information-gathering techniques, including interviewing and research, through classroom exercises and story assignments.
- Be familiar with the journalism ethics governing food writing through classroom discussion and assignments.
- Learn to work as a team to develop an in-depth project for publication in a local magazine.
- Learn to separate fact from opinion by writing restaurant reviews and memoirs.
- Use multi-platform reporting tools, including digital photography, podcasts, social media and blogs.

#### *Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)*

- Students take occasional quizzes on textbook content and other required readings.
- Students learn how to become experts in a specialized news niche.
- Students learn to develop, write, and edit multi-source stories for print and online both individually and as part of a team.
- Students complete assignments that require them to utilize multiple media, including podcasts, photography, and social media.
- Students monitor events, news and developments in food, both locally and nationally.
- Students produce a final project for publication in a local magazine, along with additional

components for the publication's web format.

## How assessment of student learning will be met

### *Awareness*

- Students learn the importance of verification, attribution and accuracy in all completed projects.
- Students venture into new forms of narrative non-fiction, such as essays, memoirs, first-person experiences, and recipe development.

### *Understanding*

- Students learn the difference between traditional and new media by writing and posting stories and photographs in print and online publications.
- Students write assignments by identifying and developing individual voices (funny, confessional, relaxed, self-deprecating, approachable, etc.).

### *Application*

- Students produce content using digital cameras, phones, social media and other technologies vital to today's journalism.
- Students work together to produce a final project for print and online that meets professional standards.

## JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA 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 graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or Squarespace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they 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 lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

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 writing 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**

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

### **Electronic devices**

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

### **Attendance**

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class 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). Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a "job" in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

### **Course repetition**

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade ("C-") in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

### **Academic integrity**

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 students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade

reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media 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 rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. (*Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018*)

### **Online SETEs**

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the 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 must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

### **Disability and accommodations**

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **Diversity and inclusivity**

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. Media 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.

### **Student support**

Students who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.