

Feature Writing

JOUR 3130-002

Fall 2015

2:20 p.m.-3:45 p.m. M/W, 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

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS**CATALOG/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: no textbook required**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 *USA Today* or the *New York Times*. These newspapers are free on campus, in front of the library, in the lobby of the Tiger Den and other locations. You also must read at least one national magazine each week (a different one each week). Submit a one-page typed report each Wednesday at the beginning of class naming the magazine and newspaper you read and describing your favorite articles. Also include the best descriptive writing in one of the features.
- 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, and publication efforts will count for 20 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)
- Two of your five writing assignments must have a multi-media component, which might be a photo or photos you take; video you shoot; graph or chart you designed, professional web posting (not your personal social media accounts unless you are promoting a feature you wrote for this class that is being published in a professional publication).

- 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 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.
- You are responsible for coming up with your own story ideas. However, beginning with your second story, if you don't have a story idea, you may choose one from a list I have made out. There are newspaper and magazine ideas on the list. However, you can only do this once during the semester.

No late work accepted.

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:

First Class Outline

Mon., Aug. 24 — 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.

Wed., Aug. 26 — Oral reports on feature stories. First reading assignment due.

Mon., Aug. 31 — Lecture on where to find story ideas. Graded exercise in class. Assignment for Sept. 2: bring five story ideas (typed and printed out) you got from eavesdropping or observation.

Wed., Sept. 2 — Eavesdropping/observation ideas to be shared in class and turned in for grade. 2nd reading assignment due.

Mon., Sept. 7 — **Labor Day. No class.**

Wed., Sept. 9 — Bring at least two ideas for your first newspaper feature to today's class. 3rd reading assignment due today.

Mon., Sept. 14 — Lecture/discussion on feature leads. Assignment for Wednesday: for grade write feature leads from my hand-out.

Wed., Sept. 16 — Interviewing techniques and sources for feature stories. 4th reading assignment due, as well as feature exercise.

Mon., Sept. 21 — Writing and organizing a feature story.

Wed., Sept. 23 — **Writing Day. No class. No reading assignment**

Mon., Sept. 28 — **First newspaper feature due at the beginning of class. Lecture on hobby/job features.**

FIVE PILLARS FOR 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.

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 concentrations.

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.

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 her/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. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

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, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done 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 department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions 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, but the way they are described can.
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 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:

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 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.