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# JPW 370

## Advanced Magazine Writing

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Fall 2013

Wednesday 9:00-11:50

Bus 205

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## Overview

This class will focus on more advanced feature writing for magazines and newspapers. Emphasis will be placed on narrative and creative writing techniques and immersion reporting: voice, point of view, setting, and theme. There will be strict attention paid to edited copy that could be ready for consumer, specialized and literary journalism venues. There will be discussion of “longer form” journalism – pieces for magazines, etc. There will also be a focus on marketing your work, selling your work, audience analysis, writing query letters. You will work on critical thinking in terms of developing/finding advanced features stories. You will write a profile and feature based on the beat that you choose and one feature or profile on a community topic of your choice.

## Goals/Learning Outcomes

- \*Students will learn to identify, report and write accurate feature/magazine stories, as required to practice effectively as a professional in print or digital mediums.
- \*To be able to write compelling query letters pitching a story to a publication
- \*To edit a story for content and length.
- \* To analyze peer work and give constructive criticism during workshops.
- \* To evaluate data and sources for validity and reliability.
- \* To blog using the CMS Wordpress about their area of interest/beat
- \* To present their story ideas effectively orally to an audience of peers “selling” the idea and its appeal to an editor (me) and to their colleagues (fellow students).

## Required Reading:

The Elements of Story: Field Notes on Non-Fiction Writing by Francis Flaherty

Story Craft: The complete Guide to Narrative Non-Fiction by Jack Hart

The Best American Magazine Writing 2012 Edited by Sid Holt and the ASME

**In addition to the required texts and readings we will read selections from**

<http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/Feature+Writing>

**Suggested reading:** Most magazine and newspaper editors I know read three or four newspapers every day to keep informed and to find story ideas. So, it is suggested you read the New York Times and The Wall Street Journal and peruse USA Today from time to time. Here you will find story ideas and good writing. It's also a good idea to listen to a news radio station like your local NPR station.

Set up a Google Alert for any topic you will be covering. We'll be covering the magazine business so subscribe to [mediabistro.com](http://mediabistro.com).

Here are some other sites for longer form writing.

Granta

<http://www.granta.com/>

LongForm

<http://www.longform.org/>

Byliner

<http://www.byliner.com/>

Narrative Magazine

<http://www.narrativemagazine.com/>

Finally, consider joining an organization from one on this extensive list.

<http://reporter.asu.edu/journ.htm>

## The Assignments

These are the main components:

1. Three articles (feature/profile/slice of life profile) with story proposals/pitches/query letters for each story
2. One article about the Community: A narrative piece that will also require a story proposal/pitch/query letter. This story should be about a person (profile), issue (feature) or a public interest piece related to our nearby community. This is due at the end of the semester. There will be a list of story leads made available for you to choose from or you may come up with your own story idea.
3. Homework: Reading Assignments.
4. Presentations. Each student will present their pitches informally to the class for their story ideas. The ideas will be fleshed out and work shopped. The final paper idea will be presented in PowerPoint form in front of the class.

5. **Blog:** The blog will be like a reporter's notebook. In it you will keep thoughts and discoveries over the semester. You can include new information (aka news) from primary sources and links to research sources (studies, reports, books, articles, websites etc.). These postings will be done in class. The blog can include references to articles you have read via Google alerts or other venues. One post a week is required. You must also read your classmate's blog and comment on them. The blog will be viewed twice a semester.

We will workshop in-class every piece you write.

The stories are to be doubled spaced, with your name-date) and a page number at the top of each page. The length will vary according to the assignment. I will give you parameters for each article so you know what is expected (# of sources etc.). At the end of each assignment I require a full list of sources (names, e-mails, dates of interviews)

### Class Policies

- Readings and assignments are due the following class unless noted by the instructor
- Students requiring accommodations for physical challenges or learning differences should obtain documentation from the Office of Differing Abilities:  
[http: differingabilities.pages.tcnj.edu](http://differingabilities.pages.tcnj.edu)

All assignments should be submitted in hard copy unless specified by instructor in class. Please double-space all assignments. Please double check spelling and grammar.

## Participation

Come to class having read and thought about the assigned reading. If you know you have to miss a class, please see me. Be courteous to others when they are adding to the class discussion. During lecture time please shut off computers and phones.

Attendance is a big part of participation. You may be graded down after 2 unexcused absences. You may be marked down for a half an absence for arriving more than 10 minutes late. You are required to make at least one visit to instructor during office hours, or by appointment.

## Evaluation

Four articles: 70%

Blog: 20%

Participation: 10%

## Grading

A :100-93; A- :92-90;B+: 89-87;B: 86-83;B-: 82-80;C+:79-77;C: 76-73;C-:72-70;D+: 69-67;D: 66-63;D-:62-60;F: 59 and below.

**Incompletes** will be given only to students with a medical excuse that is documented and to students who only have the final two assignments to turn in.

**Plagiarism:** Any paper that contains quotes that are manufactured or copy blocks of text lifted from another source will be graded with an F. The student will be referred to the disciplinary board for such an infraction.

**Readings: Bring a print out to class with notes so you can contribute in class.**  
**Here are some other ways of reacting to stories:**

- What was story about?
- What literary techniques did the writer use and were they effective.
- What was the point of view of story?
- What worked well and why?
- What did not work well and why?
- What's your favorite sentence or passage?
- Where were you confused?
- What did you want to hear more about?
- What seemed out of place, too truncated, or went on for too long.
- Was there enough action, a narrative thread?

**Requirements For The Story Proposals/Pitches/Query Letters:**

These will be double---spaced, proposals/queries/pitches to editors. They must be compelling enough for an editor to want to buy the story from you. ***The story proposals MUST be written as letters to a prospective editor and have this information on the front page:***

5. You must name the SPECIFIC publication you want to send this piece to (Identify a newspaper, magazine, online site, book publisher, etc.)
6. You must list the NAME and ADDRESS (regular mail or e---mail) of the editor at the publication you plan to pitch this piece to.
7. You must have this, in this order, in the body of your proposal/pitch/query letter:
  1. One sentence introducing yourself.
  2. One---to---two paragraph description of your story.
  3. One---to---two paragraphs outlining the singularity of the story, suitability for publication, your qualifications (your expertise, passion, knowledge, level of access, etc.)

### Class Schedule

**Class 1:** Aug 28-INTRO TO COURSE. Set up Google alerts. Review of Magazine Writing basics. Introduction: Beat strategies: how to report, the point of blogs.

For next week: Google alerts, Bring in beat topic.

Read "Game of Her Life" Tim Crothers, Read Dewayne Dedmon's Leap of Faith by Chris Ballard (Sports Illustrated)

Read Ch 1-3 in Storycraft, Read Elements of Story Ch. 1-4.

Watch this video: Ira Glass on finding a story:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KW6x7lOIsPE>

And on sticking with it.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BI23U7U2aUY>

**Class 2:** September 4 Lecture: What makes an interesting story. Story structure. Coming up with the idea. Tips on interviewing. Discuss Readings. Set up blog in class. Brainstorm profile ideas. Make first blog entries based on topic research.

**For next week:** Bring in idea for Profile story. Construct an outline for story. Have interviews set up. Work on interview questions. You must spend time with your subject face-to-face shadowing so you can write scenes.

Read Elements of Story Ch. 5-13, Storycraft 4-6 and p 159-160. "Life of a Salesman" by Eli Saslow (pulitzer.org), "The Poorest Rich Kids in the World", Sabrina Rudin Erdley (Rolling Stone.)

**Class 3: Sept 11-** Bring materials in to work on your profile in class. Discuss readings. Voice and Style, Character, Scene. **How to use quotes, observation, testimony from others, etc.**

**For Next week: Article One draft one due. Word Count: 1400 words. Profile related to beat. You must employ at least two narrative non-fiction techniques in your piece that we have talked about in class. 250-500 word proposal/pitch/query letter to accompany piece.**

**Class 4: Sept 18- Article one – Draft one due.** Workshop Profile. Do you have to do additional reporting or shadowing?

For next week: For next week- Storycraft Ch 7-10, The Elements of Story Ch. 14-18; Read: "Arms and Dudes" by Guy Larson

"Covering the Cops" by Calvin Trillin; "What about George" by Saki Knafo

**Class 5: Sept 25- Lecture: Action, Dialogue, Theme.** How do we add pizzazz to what you have? **Hand back Profile.** Review and decide if additional time with subject is needed. Work on re-writes in class.

**For next week: Re-write Profile.** Read Storycraft Ch 11-13, Read EOS Ch. 19-30. Features: Joplin By Luke Dittrich (Esquire), "Arms and Dudes" by Guy Larson.

**Class 6: Oct 2- Article One – Article One Final Draft due.**

**Key elements of the Feature piece. Lecture:** Story Narratives, Explanatory Narratives, and Artfulness. **For next week: Read EOS Ch. 35-46, Article Two: The feature is due.**

**Class 7: Oct 9- Article Two-The feature due.**

**Lecture: Leads and Transitions. Drawing Readers in- some techniques.**

Workshop the feature in class. **Polish leads and transitions.**

**For next week:** Read EOS Ch. 31-34, Read “The Apostate” by Lawrence Wright, “One Man in Kandahar” by Matthieu Aikins. “The Things that carried Him” by Chris Jones

**Class 8: Oct 16-** Article two handed back. Timeliness of your feature. Discuss readings. Work on feature re-write in class. What is a Public Interest/Service story? Is there a public interest story related to your beat? Is there one that is related to the community you are reporting in for your final piece?

Read in class: The Secret that Kills Fours Women a Day by Liz Brody.

For Next week: Final Draft of feature due. Proposal for Public Interest story.

**Class 9: Oct 23- Article Two- Final draft due.** Workshop piece. Brainstorm ideas for Final feature piece. Set up interviews.

Read: TBD

**Class 10: Oct 30- Article Two- Final Draft due of Feature. Writing tips. Read Camden article in class. Writing on deadline. Write one 500 word blog post by the end of class.**

[http://www.nj.com/inside-jersey/index.ssf/2013/10/six\\_people\\_making\\_a\\_big\\_difference\\_in\\_troubled\\_camden.html](http://www.nj.com/inside-jersey/index.ssf/2013/10/six_people_making_a_big_difference_in_troubled_camden.html)

FOR NEXT week: Draft one of Public Service piece due.

For next week- Guest speaker Robert Strauss. Read this piece. He will discuss other articles and freelancing. Have questions prepared for him. Ben Franklin

Underground Museum in Philly:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/27/arts/artsspecial/a-revamped-home-for-philadelphias-favorite-son.html?ref=artsspecial&r=0>

**Class 11: Nov 6-** Robert Strauss guest speaker. Hand Back Graded Feature. First Draft of Public Interest piece due. Workshop that piece.

For next week: Begin work on Final piece. Read Paper Tigers by Welsey Yang. Talk about your final piece and parameters. 1500 Words- 3 interviews- 1 main and 2 supporting. Must include photos. Begin reporting.

**Class 12: Nov 13-** Hand back first draft of Public Interest piece. Discuss edits. Discuss reading- writing about what you know. Blog piece about stereotypes (gender as it relates to your beat or age or ethnic). For

next week read: Gay Talese Mr. Bad News. <http://longform.org/stories/mr-bad-news>. There is a podcast of Talese talking about this piece. Go to minute 24:00 and listen to minute 31:00. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2013/11/09/too-much-of-too-little/>. Submit one of the articles from the course for TCNJ Journo online magazine. Need photo to accompany piece.

**Class 13: Nov 20-** Discuss Readings. Lecture on Narratives. Recap of semester. Turn in outline for final piece. Article Three final draft due.

**Nov 27- Thanksgiving break. No class.**

**Class 14: Dec 4- Draft one of Article 4 due. No late pieces will be accepted. Turn in blog. Freelance writing and staff writing. Where magazines are going.**

**Dec 11- No class. Email edits to students. Submit hard copy TBD**

**Article Four- Community piece due- Draft One. Option One:** Identify and profile a social service, charitable/philanthropic agency or institution or organization in Trenton area. See in action the people who provide the service and you will profile the people who receive the service. You will quote 4 people in total including neutral observers/experts. See list of story leads.

**\*I do my best to adhere to this schedule but reserve the right to change dates should we need more or less time on a topic.**