

Journalism 533

Newspaper Feature Article Writing/Fall 2008

Instructor: Cecile S. Holmes

Office: Room 4004

Room 3028, The Carolina Reporter

Office Hours: 10 a.m.-noon Mon & Wed

Or by appointment

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Blackboard site: Handouts and other materials for this class are posted on the combined blackboard site for The Carolina Reporter

Description

Feature writing and in-depth reporting under deadline conditions

Goal: Reporting and writing feature and in-depth stories for the online and print editions of The Carolina Reporter, with training in multimedia. Stresses narrative journalism and learning to write an assortment of types of stories from brief news stories to profiles, projects and scene-setting articles.

Objectives:

- Gain a thorough knowledge of writing. Master skills required for complex, multi-sourced stories requiring critical thinking, online and library researched articles and narrative writing styles.
- Report and write feature articles that are truthful, accurate and fair, identifying and using diverse sources.
- Write feature articles and in-depth stories that are accurate, clear and precise and adhere to appropriate style and grammar rules.
- Learn to apply critical thinking skills and ethical decision-making in a journalistic setting. Use those skills for all sorts of writing – from online stories to in-depth projects to TV scripts.
- Report and write articles that demonstrate an understanding of concepts and theories on the impact of mass media and how it shapes a diverse nation and a global society.
- Master and apply new storytelling skills so that multimedia storytelling grows out of good writing.
- Understand and write with narrative style, using diverse voices and sources from multiple ethnicities and cultures.
- Develop and live out the best practices of journalism, recognizing the essential role of a free press in a democratic society.
- Application of appropriate style and rules of grammar in writing for publication.

Good writing goes far beyond a simple mastery of words or sentences. It means creating stories that “sing,” as one of my editors was fond of saying. It makes readers and audiences want to read more, learn more, know more about a subject. It is, first and foremost, good storytelling. Such storytelling can be applied whether you are writing for the Web, a print publication, a TV station, radio or scripts for documentaries and film.

Approach this class knowing you are entering a multimedia world. With every story, think of how you can tell that story across multiple media platforms. Think with all five senses. Visual storytelling is as important as written storytelling. Both apply in this class.

Texts:

Required:

The AP Stylebook (2007)

Writing as Craft and Magic, Carl Sessions Stepp

********Available at the South Carolina Bookstore***

Provided by Instructor:

Selections from Paula LaRocque’s Championship Writing

Selections from other texts

********This syllabus may be changed during the semester to meet class or student needs at the instructor’s discretion. ********

Standards/Guidelines

To master the basics of good writing, you have to write and write often. Read everything you can: online articles, blogs, RSS feeds, email blasts, newspapers, magazines, brochures, tabloids, newsletters. Seek to determine what others are reading and why they read what they read.

You should undertake and produce more complex stories with multiple sources, but that often that will not mean writing longer stories. Instead, you should strive to tell a story in as few words as possible. Pay attention to the length of paragraphs. Use quotes sparingly and meaningfully. Never, ever plagiarize. Attribute according to journalism standards. For longer, in-depth articles, we will work hard on using narrative techniques and on mastering more complex writing styles. We will also work to produce shorter, multimedia stories for the Web site.

For this class (something of a companion course to Jour 536), I will grade on a portfolio system, meaning achieving gradual improvement in your writing will help raise your final grade – if, of course, you meet all requirements. You must produce a minimum six stories (totaling about 5,000 words. Each student will be required to produce a news story, a question and answer interview nicknamed “10 Minutes With” (a Newsmaker), a short narrative profile on a person, organization or group, at least one multimedia story and the special project story.

In other words: you will write three shorter stories, tailored to the required formats, two other stories (one must be multimedia) and the special project story (which may be multimedia if approved by the instructor in advance.)

I also want you to develop and hone your storytelling skills. I cannot teach grammar in this class nor constantly review style and basic sentence structure. You should know those by now. Failure to meet acceptable standards in those areas will decrease your grade significantly. Never turn in a story without spellchecking it first.

Evaluation and Grading: Each written story you turn in will be graded on writing, as will your multimedia story or stories. In addition, I will consider your command of different story structures, the organization and “flow” of stories and your ability to develop your voice as a writer. You will also be graded on grammar, style, etc.

Grades are on a 100-point scale, meaning an A is 90-100, a B+ is 86-89, a B is 80 to 85, a C is 76-79. You must meet all requirements for participation in the Carolina Reporter as outlined in our handbook, posted online.

Professionalism: This counts significantly towards your final grade. Dress appropriately and professionally. Practice teamwork. Treat classmates, faculty, visitors (including tour groups) and others with courtesy. Follow the standards in the Carolina Reporter handbook.

AVOID:

1. Attribution to Internet sites, unless you know their complete origin and have discussed them with me in advance.
2. First-person stories. Those are not acceptable, unless cleared in advance under special circumstances with me.
3. Single or two-source stories. Three sources is a minimum. You should be interviewing more people than you quote so that you write with insight and authority.
4. Writing only with experts and officials as sources. We want real, normal people in your stories. We also want a cross section of age groups, professions, races, genders and economic and social classes.

READING ASSIGNMENTS FOR REVIEW WEEKS

Review Weeks:

***Each discussion leader should prepare a 1-page summary of the day’s reading to turn in to the professor**

Friday, Aug. 22

Chapters 1 and 2, Writing as Craft and Magic

Student Discussion Leaders: Benning, Brasington

Monday, Aug. 25

Chapters 3 and 4, Writing as Craft and Magic
Student Discussion Leaders: Collins, Cunin

Wednesday, Aug. 27

Chapters 5 and 6
Student Discussion Leaders: Hare, Tsuyoshi

Friday, Aug. 29

Handouts, Assigned Chapters
(Roy Peter Clark, Stephen Bloom, et al)
Student Discussion Leaders: Lampe, Riley

Wednesday, Sept. 3

Chapters 7 and 8
Student Discussion Leaders: Underwood, Yusko

Friday, Sept. 5, To be announced

Law review (likely)

Monday, Sept. 8

Chapters 9 and 10
Student Discussion Leaders: Benning, Brasington

Wednesday, Sept. 10

Chapters 11, 12 and 13
Student Discussion Leaders: Collins, Underwood

FILING INSTRUCTIONS FOR STORIES: Everything written for this class will be filed to be electronically as a word.doc attachment UNLESS it is a multimedia story. Put complete information on the top of each story in the actual word document. (Include slug/story title, your byline, word count and suggested headline). Many stories will be edited electronically. Some will be returned as hard copy, in printed form.

The only exception to this rule is the Reporter's Notebook, due every Monday at 9 a.m. Type the questions and your answers and print it out. Give it to me in a pocket folder with your name on the front of the folder. Keep each week's printed summary in the folder, returning to me weekly. *You always have a notebook due unless I tell you that no notebook is due in a particular week.*

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

Graduate students must purchase "Championship Writing" and produce a 700-word critique of that book to earn 3 hours credit. In addition, each graduate student will complete an additional 1,000-word narrative or (additional) multimedia article for this class.

