Spring 2012 Class Syllabus
University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communications
Magazine Writing and Reporting
19:122:SCA (4 s.h.)

4:30P - 6:20P TTh W336 AJB

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Departmental DEO: Director, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, David Perlmutter, E305 Adler Journalism Building, 384-3833. The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Electronic Communication
University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (Operations Manual, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11.)

Accommodations for Disabilities
A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty
All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies
The date and time of every final examination is announced during the fifth week of the semester; each CLAS student will receive an email from the Registrar stating the dates and times of the student's final exams. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Understanding Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather
In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if
Conflict resolution. In all cases, I am open to hearing student concerns related to the course. I will be eager to work with you to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings. In fact, even though this may be difficult for you, I encourage you to resolve conflicts with me directly. If you feel uncomfortable bringing a concern to me, you may consult the following university authorities in the following order: Dr. Frank Durham, associate director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication; Dr. David Perlmutter, director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication; Dr. Helena Dettmer, Interim Assoc. Dean for Academic Programs in CLAS; the University Ombudspersons. For more information, see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook at: www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml

Course Overview
In news writing, we were taught to write in an inverted pyramid, with the 5 W’s at the top and narrowing to less factual information at the end. A magazine article is more of a rectangle, where the lede sets the scene, the body of the story is a bridge that supports the structure, and the ending takes you to your destination.

In this class, you will write three articles: a profile, a trend or informational piece, and an enterprise story that explores in depth an idea, event, trend, question, or controversy. You will have a fair degree of latitude to choose a subject that interests you. However, all final topics must be reviewed and approved by the instructor. In addition, you will be expected to complete a number of smaller exercises.

Good writing only seems flawless and easy. Writing is surprisingly difficult. Much of it involves ruthless editing, rewriting, and review. One of my favorite quotes is, “I love being a writer. It’s the paperwork I can’t stand.” Even in this electronic age, where an entire piece can be pitched, researched, and produced electronically, the “paperwork” is the amount of time and energy the writer needs to devote to make it coherent and whole.

Basic writing is a technique and can be learned. Good writing is an art that takes work. You can learn all the techniques but great writing is enriched with knowledge, experience, and a curiosity about the world. If you aren’t at least curious about your subject, about the world it lives in, and the subject it addresses, you will be a journeyman, not a master craftsman.

One note: In addition to strict ideas and great copy, editors expect strict adherence to are encouraged to keep in mind The Iowa Dozen throughout this course. These competencies and values reflect the ways in which this course will contribute to your overall Journalism education. You will be asked to identify their relevance to your major coursework in your senior portfolio. They listed at the end of the syllabus.

Expectations
Attendance is required and will be taken. As noted below (under “Grading”), attendance counts for 10 percent of your overall grade. You are allowed one unexcused absence during the semester; however, you will receive a zero on any short assignments that take place during that class. If a reading is assigned during a class you miss, it is your responsibility to get it from one of your classmates or from ICON. It is also your
responsibility to get class notes from a classmate. Please do not ask me to “fill you in” on what you missed. Students with excellent attendance and participation generally receive a better grade. Excused absences are those that have been discussed with me and approved ahead of time (no later than the class period before the one you will miss). I will not accept any excuse sent by email on the day of the class as an excused absence.

Being on time to class is not only courteous to your fellow students and the instructor; it is also expected. If a situation will get you to class late on a regular basis, discuss it with me as soon as possible. Courtesy and civility in dealing with fellow students and the instructor are also expected. Even the most experienced writers can find the workshopping experience difficult. During workshops, focus on content, structure, and mechanics. The content and the beliefs reflected in the stories are to be treated respectfully.

**Deadlines**

*Deadlines in this class are absolute.* All papers will be due in writing at the beginning of the class period. There will be no printing of assignments in class. No make-up work will be allowed, except for assignments due during excused absences. If you are taking an excused absence on the day an assignment is due, your assignment will be due at the class that meets before your absence.

Cell phones and other communications devices must be turned off during class. You may use laptops in class to read online articles. In addition, there will be times when we go online to check sources or other information on the Web. However, it is obvious when you are checking Facebook, Twitter, chatting, or emailing during class. DO NOT DO THIS.

*I shouldn’t have to point this out, but it is especially important to give guests your full attention. You and I have to be here. They are sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm with us.*

**Reading**

Stay up-to-date on local and world events by reading daily periodicals. Reading assignments may be made based on the New York Times print edition. Other assignments will be distributed in class or be available electronically. You should come to class ready to discuss all assigned readings during the following class. Part of your grade will be based on participation in class discussions.

Grammar and style: Use “spell check,” but verify.

Spelling: It counts. (WARNING: Instructor fixation)

Some excellent web sources of magazine articles are:

www.instapaper.com
umagazinology.jhu.edu (looks at the best of University magazines)
www.kk.org/cooltools/the-best-magazi.php
**Class texts** (Available at Prairie Lights Bookstore under the instructor’s name and this course number)

*The best American magazine writing 2011,* compiled by the American Society of Magazine Editors

*The New, New Journalism: Conversations with America’s Best Nonfiction Writers on their Craft,* by Robert S. Boynton

*Associated Press Stylebook 2011*

**You are strongly recommended to read** the *New York Times* daily edition. Class discussions, in addition to focusing on the readings, will bring in information from other timely sources. Free copies of the *New York Times* are available to students in designated boxes across campus, including the AJB.

**Other great books on writing**

*Eats, Shoots and Leaves, The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation!*, Lynne Truss, Gotham Books,

*Bird by Bird, Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Anne Lamott, Anchor Books


*The Elements of Style*, William Strunk and E. B. White, many editions

Online references

*Elements of Style* Online (searchable), [http://www.bartleby.com/141/](http://www.bartleby.com/141/)


#APStyle

**Assignments**

A) One 350-500 word piece describing someone who raised you.

B) Short writing assignments, including written reaction to articles read for class, a query letter, and writing exercises, will be assigned during the semester.

C) One 750-1,200 word personality profile. This should not be the person from assignment A.

D) One 1,200-2,000 word trend/service/informational, personal essay, or behind-the-scenes story, drawing on local events, sources, and issues.

E) One 1,800-2,500 word enterprise story—a feature that explores in depth and idea, event, question, controversy, or trend.
Assignments C, D, and E should be written with a particular publication in mind. All story topics must be approved in advance by the instructor.

Grading
In the magazine writing world, you are judged by your writing. However, you are also judged by your ability to meet deadlines, to provide accurate and clean copy, and make timely revisions. This is also true for this class.

Your three articles (C, D, and E) are worth 20, 20, and 25 percent, respectively, of your overall grade. First drafts will be assigned tentative letter grades; revisions will earn the final grade. (A=exceptional work, B=very good work, C=average work, D=unacceptable work, F=failing.)

Your writing will be graded on content (background research, sources, reporting, complexity), writing skill and style (voice, transitions, complex sentences, interesting word choice), and mechanics (grammar, spelling, organization, etc). Revisions between your first draft and final story should show that you have listened to comments made by your classmates and instructor during workshopping. Significant revisions that greatly improve a piece improve your chances of getting a better grade. However, changes alone don’t guarantee a higher grade. You must also pay attention to content, writing and style, and mechanics. If you have any questions about your grade, please see me.

Class attendance is worth 15 percent of your grade.

Preparation, participation, following instructions, etc., are worth 10 percent of the grade.

Short assignments will be noted as 5=exceptional, 4=good, 3=satisfactory, 2=unsatisfactory, or 0=non-existent. They are cumulatively worth 10 percent of your grade.
**Calendar** This schedule is subject to change, depending on the availability of guest speakers, etc. Any changes will be announced in class and on the class ICON page. Additional information and any changes to the syllabus and/or class schedule will be posted on the course’s ICON page.

**Week 1**
1/17: Welcome: introductions, course overview, review of syllabus, review of first assignment due 1/24.

*In-class assignment:* answer a short questionnaire about your interests and reading habits. We’ll share the responses.

**Readings for 1/19:**

**Assignment for 1/19:**
*In-class exercise:* Conduct 10-minute interview based on the questionnaire answered by your classmate. Tell us about your subject and how you would structure a profile of him or her.

**Assignment due 1/24:** Write a 350-500 word profile describing one of the people who raised you. Turn in paper version at start of class. This will be graded as a short assignment (A).

**Week 2**
**Assignment for 1/24:**
Due at beginning of class: 350-500 word profile describing one of the people who raised you (A). This will be graded as a short assignment.

**Readings for 1/24:**
These three articles represent the three types of articles you will be assigned this semester. Read and be prepared to discuss the characteristics that make them what they are.

- **Profile**

- **Trend/Informational**
Readings for 1/26:
1. “Lynne Truss has Another Gripe with You,” The New York Times
2. “Lost Son,” by Calvin Trillin, The New Yorker
   http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/03/14/050314fa_fact3?currentPage=1
3. Calvin Trillin, New, New Journalism, 379
4. “Hearts and Guts: Writing the Personal Profile,” Poynter online,

Assignment 1/26: Bring to class 3 profile story ideas you are interested in writing about, along with the names of three publications each for which they might be appropriate. These may or may not be the ideas you end up using for your assignments. Be prepared to share and we’ll talk about these ideas as a class. Turn in your printed list of ideas at the end of class. This will be graded as a short assignment.

Week 3—Profiles
This week: Confirm profile subject with instructor.

Readings for 1/31:
   http://nymag.com/arts/all/features/17244/
   onwisconsin.uwalumni.com/features/a-voice-in-the-wilderness/

Readings for 2/2:
   http://susanorlean.com/articles/orchid_fever.php

Assignment for 2/2:
Write a summary of your profile topic, including list of sources, to pitch to the class. Include your sources for article, not including subject. Class will help you think about your profile (assignment C). Turn in printed sheets at the end of the class period.
**Week 4**

*Readings for 2/7:*

   [http://www.pittsburghinwords.org/tom_junod.html](http://www.pittsburghinwords.org/tom_junod.html)
3. Adrian Nicole Leblanc, *The New New Journalism*, 227. Also,  

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**2/9 Guest:**

Brian Morelli is associate regional editor of Iowa City Patch ([http://iowacity.patch.com/](http://iowacity.patch.com/)). Brian is a former reporter for the Iowa City Press-Citizen and will discuss career paths, the transition to electronic media and journalism, and local journalism.

*Assignments for 2/9:*

1. Familiarize yourself with IowaCityPatch ([http://iowacity.patch.com/](http://iowacity.patch.com/)). For this assignment, please sign up for the Iowa City Patch daily news feeds. It is also suggested that you “like” Iowa City Patch on Facebook and follow on Twitter (@IowaCityPatch and @bmorelli14). You may unfollow/unsubscribe afterwards.
2. “Patch Triples Traffic Year-Over-Year, Claims Growth Across Network ‘Consistent,’” *Streetfight,*  
3. Review workshopping principles (download worksheet from ICON)
4. Sign up for workshop session. If you are not in class on 2/9, instructor will assign workshop sessions. Workshop assignments will be posted to class’ ICON page.

**NOTE:** Profile drafts must be uploaded to folder in ICON dropbox by midnight 2/13.

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**Week 5 — Profile Workshops**

*NOTE:* Profile drafts must be uploaded to folder in ICON dropbox by midnight 2/13.

*Assignments for 2/14:*

Read drafts for workshop group #1 and be prepared to discuss each submitted draft according to workshop principles.

*Assignments for 2/16:*

Read drafts for workshop group #2 and be prepared to discuss each submitted draft according to workshop principles.

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**Week 6**

*Readings for 2/21:*

Readings for 2/23:

Week 7 — Trend/Informational

Final paper versions of profile (C) due to instructor at start of 2/28 class session.

Assignments for 2/28:
1. Final printed version of profile (Assignment C) due at start of class.

2. Familiarize yourself with work of guests.
“A Monster Called Meth,” http://www.iowalum.com/magazine/dec06/Exclusive/meth.cfm
Password to access the articles: oldcap

Readings for 3/1:

Assignment for 3/1:
Bring to class, in writing, three trend/informational story ideas that interest you. Be prepared to discuss. Hand in to instructor at end of class.
Week 8 — Enterprise

Readings for 3/6:

Assignment for 3/6: Describe your trend/informational story, including the sources you plan to interview, to share and discuss in class.

Readings and Assignments for 3/8:

Assignment for 3/8:
Be prepared to discuss local media sources that use feature material.

NOTE: Trend/Informational draft is due 3/20. It must be uploaded to ICON folder by midnight, 3/20.

Week 9 —SPRING BREAK

Week 10 — Enterprise

Readings for 3/20:

**Assignments for 3/20:**

1. **Trend/info drafts (D) due.** All stories must be posted to appropriate folder in ICON dropbox by midnight 3/20.

2. Bring in ideas for enterprise story (E), including possible sources, in writing, to pitch to the class. Turn in written versions at end of class session. Be prepared to discuss in some depth enterprise story (E) with class.

3. Sign up for workshop

3/22: Workshop group #1 trend/informational story.

**Week 12**

3/27: Workshop group #2 trend/informational story.

3/29: Workshop group #3 trend/informational story.

**Week 13 — Enterprise**

**Assignment for 4/3:**
Trend/Informational story (D) final print version due at beginning of class session.

**Readings for 4/3:**
2. Google current legal situation of people involved with Memorial Hospital in New Orleans.

**Schedule individual meeting with instructor to discuss progress on enterprise assignment (E).**

4/5:
4. Familiarize yourself with Richard Preston’s work online.
   http://richardpreston.net/

**Week 13 — Enterprise**

*Readings for 4/10:*
   http://www.sanfranmag.com/story/war-of-values
2. “A World on Fire: Life and Death in a New Orleans Squat,”
   http://www.bostonreview.net/BR37.1/danelle_morton_new_orleans_squat_fire.php
3. Also, read the profiles of squat story:

4/12:
TBA

**Week 14**

4/17:
TBA

*Assignments for 4/19:*
1. **Enterprise story (E)** must be posted to appropriate folder in ICON dropbox by midnight 4/19.
2. Schedule workshopping session.

**Week 15**

4/24: Workshop group #1 enterprise (E) stories.
4/26: Workshop group #2 enterprise (E) stories.

**Week 16**

5/1: Workshop group #3 enterprise stories (E)
5/3: Workshop group #4 enterprise stories (E)
**Week 17**

*Final version of Enterprise story (E) due in my office by date TBA.*

**The Iowa Dozen**

As one of more than 100 programs in journalism and mass communication accredited by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), we assess student learning to assure that each of our graduates meets the following standards.

**We learn to…**

Write correctly, clearly and well.

Conduct research and gather information responsibly.

Edit and evaluate carefully.

Use media technologies thoughtfully.

Apply statistical concepts accurately.

**We value…**

Free speech and First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups.

A diverse global community.

Creativity and independence.

Truth, accuracy and fairness.

**We explore…**

Theories and concepts.

The history, structure and economy of media institutions

The role of media in shaping cultures.