FALL 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 W236 AJB

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Administrative Home
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 Academic Policies 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 Academic Policies 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 necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety website.

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 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, “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 deadlines. In this class, you are expected to do the same.

In addition, you 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. 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 your instructor 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 the instructor 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.

You are expected to be on time to class. This 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. We will spend a number of class sessions workshopping your work. 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 still be due at the assigned time.

Cell phones and other communications devices must be turned off during class. You may use laptops in class to read online articles that are under discussion. 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. Our guests have come during their free time to share 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 for the 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](http://www.instapaper.com)
- [umagazinology.jhu.edu](http://umagazinology.jhu.edu) (looks at the best of University magazines)
- [blog.longform.org/](http://blog.longform.org/)
Class texts (Available at Prairie Lights Bookstore under the instructor’s name and this course number)

*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. 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/)


For current editing issues, follow #APStyle on Twitter

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, travel, community news, 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. One “source” for your story should be a report or other research material.

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. 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. Because your instructor also reads your drafts, as part of the workshop process, your improvement and willingness to incorporate corrections and edits will be noted. (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.

Final Exam
Your Enterprise project will be considered your final for the class. The specific time and date will be announced by the Registrar during the first half of the semester. Your instructor will announce the final date/time in class and post it to the class ICON page.
**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**
8/21: Welcome: introductions, course overview, review of syllabus, review of first assignment due 8/23. One subject we will discuss is the difference of reports vs. stories, in Writing Tools

*In-class assignment:* answer a short questionnaire about your interests and reading habits. Included among these will be question “If you were writing an article about yourself, what would you write?” We’ll share the responses.

*Readings for 8/23:* Read assigned articles. Think about what works and what doesn’t. What interested you as a reader? What do you think about the writing process, as discussed by Gay Talese? How does social media work in writing—why and why not?


Gay Talese, *The New New Journalism*, 361


*Roy’s Writing Tools,* #1 “Begin Sentences with Subjects and Verbs,” #2 “Order Words for Emphasis,” #3 Activate Your Verbs, #4 “Be Passive Aggressive”

*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 8/28:* 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 8/28:*
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 8/28:*
These four 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. How are they similar? How are they different from each other? Note the lede and where it comes in the story. Be prepared to suggest other stories that fit these descriptions.
Profile: How does this relate to Passion?

Trend/Informational: How is this informational? What do you learn from it?

Enterprise: What makes this an investigational piece? What’s the “call to action?”

Assignment 8/30:
Bring to class THREE profile story ideas you find interesting, along with the names of publications in which they would appear. Pay particular attention to what it means to write for different audiences. 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.

In class exercise, 8/30:

Readings for 8/30:
“Lost Son,” by Calvin Trillin, The New Yorker
http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/03/14/050314fa_fact3?currentPage=1

Calvin Trillin, New, New Journalism, 379


Roy’s Writing Tools, #5 Watch Those Adverbs,” #6 “Take it Easy on the “-ings, #7 “Fear Not the Long Sentence,” #8 “Establish a Pattern, Then Give it a Twist,” #40 “Draft a Mission Statement for Your Work”

Week 3—Profiles
Assignment for 9/4:
Bring to class a printed summary of your profile topic (assignment C), including a mission statement and a list of sources, to pitch to the class. Your fellow writers will help you think about your story. Turn in printed sheets at the end of the class period.

**Readings for 9/4:**

[http://nymag.com/arts/all/features/17244/](http://nymag.com/arts/all/features/17244/)

“Joan Rivers Always Knew She Was Funny,”
[www.nymag.com/movies/features/66181](http://www.nymag.com/movies/features/66181)


*Roy’s Writing Tools* #8 “Establish a Pattern, Then Give it a Twist,” #9 “Punctuating with Power and Purpose,” #11 “Prefer the Simple Over the Technical”

**Readings for 9/6:**

Susan Orlean, *The New, New Journalism*, 271


*Roy’s Writing Tools*, #13 Play With Words Even in Serious Articles,” “Seek Original Images,” #17 “Riff on the Creative Language of Others”

Sign up for workshopping. Review workshopping principles (download worksheet from ICON). If you are not in class on 9/6, instructor will assign workshop sessions. Workshop assignments will be posted to class’ ICON page.

**Week 4 — Profile Workshops**

NOTE: Profile drafts must be uploaded to folder in ICON dropbox by midnight 9/11.

**Readings for 9/11:**

**WORKSHOP GROUP #1**
Read and comment on drafts for workshop group #1 and be prepared to discuss each submitted draft according to workshop principles.

**Readings for 9/13:**
Read and comment on drafts for workshop group #2 and be prepared to discuss each submitted draft according to workshop principles.
Week 5 — Trend/Informational
Final paper versions of profile (C) due to instructor at start of 9/25 class session.

Readings for 9/18:

“Happily Lost in the Luberon,” by Laurie Winer, New York Times, May 2, 2010
http://travel.nytimes.com/2010/05/02/travel/02choice.html


Roy’s Writing Tools, #14 “Get the Name of the Dog,” #15 “Pay Attention to Names”

Assignment for 9/18:
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.

Readings for 9/20:

“Letting Go,” New Yorker,
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/08/02/100802fa_fact_gawande

Adrian Nicole Leblanc, The New New Journalism, 227. Also,
http://www.adrianleblanc.com/

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/04/magazine/04actors.html

Roy’s Writing Tools #28 “Put Odd and Interesting Things Next to Each Other,”
#34, “Turn Your Notebook into a ‘Camera’”

Assignments for 9/20:
TBA

Week 6 — Trend/Informational
Readings for 9/25:


“The Hunter Games,” New Yorker, 7/2/12, PDF will be available on ICON
Roy’s Writing Tools #31 “Build Your Work Around a Key Question,” #32 “Place Gold Coins Along the Path,” #33 “Repeat, Repeat, Repeat”

Assignment for 9/25:
Bring to class a printed summary of your trend/informational topic (assignment D), including a mission statement and a list of sources, to pitch to the class. Your fellow writers will help you think about your story. Turn in printed sheets at the end of the class period.
Assignment for 9/27: Be prepared to discuss local media sources that use feature material.

What makes an interesting local story? How much does it depend on audience or type of media?

Readings for 9/27:
Familiarize yourself with local media, such Iowa City Patch (http://iowacity.patch.com), Iowa City Press Citizen, Cedar Rapids Gazette, Little Village, Radish, Edible Iowa River Valley, Daily Iowan. How do each of these three cover the community? What do you like about them? What audience are they writing for? How would you change the writing to reach an audience of young parents? College students? Retired people?

Edible iowa story

Roy's Writing Tools, #18, “Set the Pace with Sentence Length,” #19, “Vary the Lengths of Paragraphs”

Week 7—Trend/Informational

Continue thinking about what a trend/informational piece could be. How can you use your writing skills to capture the reader’s attention and teach us something?

Readings for 10/2:

“Millenials Struggle with Financial Literacy,” USA Today, April 23, 2012
http://www.usatoday.com/money/perfi/basics/story/2012-04-23/millenials-financial-knowledge/54494856/1

Roy’s Writing Tools, #37 “Shape Shorter Works with Wit and Polish,” #38 “Use Subtle Symbols, not Crashing Cymbals”

Readings for 10/4:
Behind the News: Joplin

“This is my paper. This is my town”” Behind the News: CJR on the media, Columbia Journalism Review, May 17, 2012,
http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/the_joplin_globe_one_year_after.php?page=all

Roy’s Writing Tools, #42 “Prepare for the Expected and the Unexpected,” #43 “Read for Both Form and Content.”

Week 8—Trend/Informational

TBA

Sign up for workshop.

NOTE: Trend/Informational draft is due 10/14. It must be uploaded to ICON folder by 8 am, 10/14.
Week 9 — Trend/Informational Workshop

**Trend/info drafts (D) due.** All stories must be posted to appropriate folder in ICON dropbox by 8 am on 10/14.

10/16: Workshop group #1 trend/informational story.

10/18: Workshop group #2 trend/informational story.

Week 10 — Enterprise

Trend/Informational story (D) final print version due at beginning of class session.

Bring to class 2-3 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.

*Readings for 10/23 and 10/25:* Pay close attention to the structure of the articles. What is the writer trying to say to the reader? Look at how they are organized, and how the reader is brought along to understand the point of the story.

*Readings for 10/23:*


Eric Schlosser, *The New, New Journalism*, 142


Roy’s Writing Tools, #24, “Work from a Plan,” #25 “Learn the Difference Between Reports and Stories”

*Readings for 10/25:*


Roy’s Writing Tools #35 “Report and Write for Scenes,” #36 “Mix Narrative Modes”

Week 11 — Enterprise
Readings for 10/30:
“Pearls Before Breakfast,” Washington Post, 4/8/07

Post Magazine Chat: Too Busy to Stop and Hear the Music,”
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2007/04/06/DI2007040601228.html

http://www.snopes.com/music/artists/bell.asp
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnOPu0_YWhw

Roy’s Writing Tools #39 “Write Toward an Ending,” #45 “Break Long Projects into Smaller Parts”

Readings for 11/1:
Richard Preston, The New New Journalism, 293
Familiarize yourself with Richard Preston’s work online.
http://richardpreston.net/


Roy’s Writing Tools #48 “Limit Self-Criticism for Early Drafts, Then Let It Loose,” #49 “Accept Other Criticism,” #50 Own the Tools of Your Craft”

Assignment for 11/1:
Bring to class a printed summary of your enterprise topic (assignment E), including a mission statement and a list of sources, to pitch to the class. Your fellow writers will help you think about your story. Turn in printed sheets at the end of the class period.

Week 12

Readings for 11/6:

11/8: Enterprise, using documents in your research


www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/the_superintendents_racy_email.php?page=2

Week 13

11/13: TBA
11/15: TBA

Week 14

THANKSGIVING WEEK

Week 15

11/27: TBA
11/29: TBA

Sign up for workshop session.

**Enterprise story (E)** must be posted to appropriate folder in ICON dropbox by midnight 12/2.
Schedule workshop session.

Week 16

12/4: Workshop group #1 enterprise stories (E)
12/6: Workshop group #2 enterprise stories (E)

Week 17

*Final version of Enterprise story (E) due in my office by date TBA. Registrar releases date of final exam by fifth week. Final date will be posted on ICON page.*
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.