FEATURE REPORTING AND WRITING
019:129:001 (JMC:3520:0001), 4 s.h.
SPRING 2013
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:30-3:20PM
W336 Adler Journalism Building
Prof. David Dowling
Office: E336 Adler Journalism Building
david-dowling@uiowa.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11-12:30 pm, or by appointment

Course description and objectives
This course provides instruction in the writing of feature length articles for newspapers and magazines. We will explore reportorial methods for feature writing including interviewing, research, and data gathering, with an emphasis on handling a wide variety of sources of varying degrees of credibility, from the anonymous tip to the peer reviewed professional article. The course emphasizes time management for the longer deadlines typically associated with feature writing, and thus will pay close attention to the writing process, especially revision and editing. We will survey a variety of exemplary Pulitzer Prize winning feature articles in newspapers and magazines to determine the best techniques—including pacing, tone, and the construction of a dramatic and coherent narrative arc—to incorporate in particular assignments. Assignments will emphasize how to employ investigative, ethnographic, and immersion journalism methods effectively into feature articles.

Required texts available at University Bookstore

“The Iowa Dozen”
In this course, according to the core principles of SJMC at the University of Iowa,
We learn:
1. to write correctly and clearly
2. to conduct research and gather information responsibly
3. to edit and evaluate carefully
4. to use media technologies thoughtfully
5. to apply statistical concepts appropriately

We value:
6. First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups
7. a diverse global community
8. creativity and independence
9. truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity

We explore:

1 Does not apply to this course.
10. mass communication theories and concepts
11. media institutions and practices
12. the role of media in shaping cultures.

Class Policies:

- **Late papers** will be penalized one letter grade for each weekday after the deadline. For example, a paper assessed as a “B,” which is due on Thursday and turned in on Monday is two weekdays late and would therefore receive a “D.” Students with legitimate difficulty in meeting a deadline should make advance arrangements with the professor for an extension; this may require turning in work before the due date. No emailed assignments please.

- Make up work is only accepted for excused absences. **It is the student’s responsibility to obtain the content of classes missed through classmates who were in attendance.** Exchange contact information with a partner who will agree to give you the class notes in case you are absent. Never ask if you missed anything important; assume that it was important, and contact your partner for the notes.

- **Academic Fraud** – We are bound by the Code of Academic Honesty, in which each of us agreed to do “my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge [http://thechallenge.uiowa.edu/meet/index.html]. 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.” Attempting to disguise another’s work as your own is therefore strictly forbidden. Words that are not your own must be clearly identified by the use of quotation marks. Paraphrased material must be properly cited. For more details, see [www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml).

- **Reacting Safely to Severe Weather** – If the warning system indicates severe weather, we should immediately seek shelter in the innermost part of the building, if possible at the lowest level. Stay clear of windows and free-standing expanses. The class will reconvene after the severe weather has ended.

- **Special accommodations** – I want to hear from anyone who has a disability that may require some modification of seating, testing or other class requirements. Please contact me during my office hours, by e-mail or after class. Special academic arrangements for students with disabilities are handled in cooperation with Student Disability Services ([www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/)). Students who feel they need special accommodations for any aspect of the course are encouraged to contact SDS and to speak with the instructor and/or TAs early in the semester, so that accommodation can be made as soon as possible.
• **Conflict resolution** – Should conflict arise, please seek to resolve them with us directly. Students seeking to resolve a conflict should first contact myself, then, should the issue remain unresolved, David Perlmutter (Director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication). For more information, see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook at: www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml.

• **Sexual harassment policy** – Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. We all have a duty to report incidents of sexual harassment immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment at www.uiowa.edu/~eod/policies/sexual-harassment-guide/index.html for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy. Immediately report any concerns to Professor Dowling or Director David Perlmutter (AJB 305).

**REQUIREMENTS**

Four feature stories are required, including a scene story (750 words), profile story (750 words), trend story (750 words) and immersion story (2,000 words). Students do their own research to locate and interview sources with the goal of producing material suitable for publication in any of the local newspapers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scene Story</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile Story</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend Story</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion Story</td>
<td>300 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
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**Grading scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60%</td>
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</tbody>
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## Calendar

### Week 1
- **Tuesday, January 24**: Introductions and course overview; Autobiographical profile
- **Thursday, January 26**: Scene Story idea
  - Reading: *Telling True Stories*: Part I (Preface-pg. 24); [http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/Feature-Writing](http://www.pulitzer.org/bycat/Feature-Writing)

### Week 2
- **Tuesday, January 29**: Immersion idea
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Chs. 1-2
- **Thursday, January 31**: Reading: *Telling True Stories*: 24-35; 132-140

### Week 3
- **Tuesday, February 5**: Scene Story first draft; Profile idea
  - Reading: *Telling True Stories*: 65-74
- **Thursday, February 7**: Final Immersion idea
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Chs. 3-5

### Week 4
- **Tuesday, February 12**: Final Profile Idea
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Chs. 8-9
- **Thursday, February 14**: Scene story markup
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Ch. 10

### Week 5
- **Tuesday, February 19**: Scene story final draft
- **Thursday, February 21**: Immersion scene 1
  - Reading: *Telling True Stories*: 35-51

### Week 6
- **Tuesday, February 26**: Profile first draft
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Ch. 11-12
- **Thursday, February 28**: Scene 1 Markup
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Ch. 14

### Week 7
- **Tuesday, March 5**: Trend story idea
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Ch. 15
- **Thursday, March 7**: Immersion Scene 2
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Ch. 18

### Week 8
- **Tuesday, March 12**: Profile Final Draft
  - Final trend story idea (scene 2 markup)
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Ch. 19
- **Thursday, March 14**: Spring Break, March 17-25

### Week 9
- **Tuesday, March 26**: Immersion scene 3
  - Reading: *Feature and Magazine Writing*: Ch. 22
- **Thursday, March 28**: Immersion scene 3
  - Reading: *Telling True Stories*: 51-62

### Week 10
- **Tuesday, April 2**: Trend story draft
  - Reading: *Telling True Stories*: 140-159
**Week 12**

**Thursday, April 4**  
Immersion scene 3 markup  
*Reading: Telling True Stories: Ch. 89-91*

**Week 13**

**Tuesday, April 9**  
Immersion scene 4  
*Reading: Telling True Stories: 170-193*

**Thursday, April 11**  
Trend story markup  
*Reading: Telling True Stories: 97-121*

**Week 14**

**Tuesday, April 16**  
*Trend Story Final Draft*

**Thursday, April 18**  
Immersion scene 4 markup  
*Reading: Telling True Stories: 197-212*

**Week 15**

**Tuesday, April 23**  
Immersion first draft  
*Reading: Telling True Stories: 197-212*

**Thursday, April 25**  
*Reading: Telling True Stories: 212-223*

**Week 16**

**Tuesday, April 30**  
Immersion markup  

**Thursday, May 2**  
Reading: [http://www.niemanstoryboard.org/category/whys-this-so-good/page/2/](http://www.niemanstoryboard.org/category/whys-this-so-good/page/2/)

**Exam Week**

**Tuesday, May 7**  
Evaluations; Revision Project Discussed

**Thursday, May 9**  
*Reading: [http://futureoffeatures.blogspot.com/](http://futureoffeatures.blogspot.com/)*

**Maintaining a Professional Environment**

- Be courteous and professional in your correspondence for this course, using proper grammar and proper modes of address.
- Come prepared and be ready to contribute. Do not skip class meetings. Focus on the material when in class.
- Do not read the newspaper, text, sleep, surf the web, pass notes, or otherwise engage in behavior that distracts your (and possibly others’) attention from the course.
Media scholarship is founded upon the use of evidence and logic to formulate forceful and convincing claims. Insights and comments will be judged strictly on the merit of their content and use of textual support without regard to the individual who asserts it. The assertion of any personal, or “editorial” values beyond the scope of the course content is not required, and should be made only at the student’s discretion.

In addition to respecting one and other in class, students will approach the course’s readings and films as academic material for active study rather than passive entertainment. The study of journalism and mass communication, like the work of anthropology, involves examining texts to discover how a culture thinks about itself. In an exciting, safe classroom environment, in which the student’s social class, ethnic background, gender orientation or other personal attributes will not come under scrutiny or judgment, satisfaction will derive from finding profound meaning in the world of mass communication. It is in this spirit of mutual respect for classmates, professor, and subject matter that we begin our intellectual journey.