Spring 2015 Class Syllabus
University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication
Magazine Writing and Reporting
JMC:3410:0100 (4 s.h.)
Class ICON page: https://icon.uiowa.edu/index.shtml

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

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Departmental DEO: Director, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, David Ryfe, E305B Adler Journalism Building, 319-384-3383.

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 CLAS 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 correspondence. (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 final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. 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. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of the final exam.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor (and 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 OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

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 or feature 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 the reader to the destination.

In this class, you will study three general types of articles: profile, trend/informational, and enterprise/investigative. 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 shorter 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 devotes to the project to make it compelling and coherent.

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.

You are expected 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**

1. **ATTENDANCE**
   Attendance counts for **15 percent** of your 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.

   *Excused absences must be discussed with the instructor and approved ahead of time (no later than the class period before the one you will miss). An email on the day of the class is not an excused absence.*

   You are expected to be punctual. 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.

2. **PARTICIPATION**
   You are expected to read assignments and be prepared to discuss them in class. Many times I will suggest a direction to pay attention to in the reading. Be prepared to share your opinions about the structure and writing of the articles.

   Assignments and the class calendar are in the class syllabus, which is posted in the Contents folder on our class ICON. The calendar is subject to change, especially later in the semester.

   Participation and preparation count for **10 percent** of your grade.

   (As a note, we may do projects in class where you will work collaboratively. Each student is expected to complete a similar amount of work and to contribute equally to the project. Students who misrepresent themselves as equal partners in a collaborative project but who are actually letting others do the bulk of the work will be reported to the College for academic dishonesty. If you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask them.)

3. **DEADLINES**
   Deadlines in this class are absolute. Final versions of your assignments are due **in writing** at the beginning of the class period. Do not print the 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 is still be due at the assigned time.

   Your profile, trend/informational, and investigative articles account for **20, 20, and 25 percent of your grade**, respectively.
4. COURTESY
Your three major projects will be shared and discussed with the class in workshop sessions. Even the most experienced writers find the workshop experience scary and stressful. During workshops, focus on content, structure, and mechanics. The content and the beliefs reflected in the stories are to be treated respectfully.

Give presenters and guests your full attention. Treat them as you expect to be treated.

5. ELECTRONICS
Turn off cell phones and other communications devices during class. You may use a tablet or laptop in class to read articles that are under discussion. We sometimes check sources or topics of discussion online during class. DO NOT check Facebook, Twitter, message, or email during class. I may not say anything to you directly, but I will notice.

6. GRAMMAR AND STYLE
Pay attention to those squiggles that show up thanks to word processing software. Your writing should be the best it can be. Before you hand it in, reread your work. Have someone else read it for you. Read it out loud.

Spelling counts and is an obsession of your Instructor.

INFORM YOURSELF
Anyone in this class is a writer. Broaden your horizons by reading a variety of publications. Read the New York Times and other international publications. Keep up with issues in your community through the Daily Iowan, Little Village, Iowa City Press Citizen, and Cedar Rapids Gazette.

As a student, you have access to the New York Times. In addition, the Resource Center subscribes to an array of local and regional publications. Read online aggregators such as Flipboard, and electronic publications such as Narratively, Longform, and Medium.

REQUIRED TEXTS
1. Subscribe to Iowa Center for Public Affairs Journalism’s newsletter, Iowa Watch. http://iowawatch.org/

Writing Tools is also available through the Student Dropbox volume on jmcserver.iowa.uiowa.edu. You can copy the audio files from there.

Windows:
From the Start menu, enter the following in the Search box at the bottom of Start menu:
\jmcserver.iowa.uiowa.edu\Student_Dropbox\Roys_Writing_Tools

Mac:
From the Finder, select Connect to Server from the Go menu and enter the following address in the dialog box:
afp://jmcserver.iowa.uiowa.edu/Student_Dropbox/Roys_Writing_Tools

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED

Associated Press Stylebook

Read great books on writing
Eats, Shoots and Leaves, The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation!, Lynne Truss, Gotham Books,
On Writing, A Memoir of the Craft, Stephen King, Scribner
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/
For current editing issues, follow #APStyle on Twitter

Help closer to home
The SJMC Resource Center, located in Room E350 Adler Journalism Building, is a place for students to study, relax between classes, work on group projects, check e-mail, do research, and browse key publications in the field of journalism and mass communications. You can also find writing assistance with journalism writing assignments. The Writing Assistance Project is staffed by SJMC teaching assistants. The Resource Center is open Monday – Thursday: 8:30 am–8 pm, Friday: 8:30 am–5 pm.
Don’t be afraid to ask for help. The librarians at the UI’s Main Library, specialty libraries, and the Iowa City Public Library are your friends: Call on them.
ASSIGNMENTS

A. One 350-500-word piece describing someone doing his or her job.
B. Shorter assignments, including an interview exercise, presentation article, written ideas for articles, and writing exercises.
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 topics of interest.
E. One 1,800-2,500-word enterprise story—an investigative 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. Think about your audience as you’re writing.

GRADING
Writers are judged by what they put down on paper. You are also judged by your ability to meet deadlines, to provide accurate and clean copy, and ability to produce timely revisions.

The 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 the following:

Story idea and development

Content: background research, sources, reporting, and complexity of the story.

Writing skill: This is both 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 and participation are **10 percent** of the grade.

Short assignments throughout the semester are cumulatively worth **10 percent** of your grade.

**Final Exam**

Your Enterprise/Investigative project will be your final for the class. Your instructor will announce the final date/time in class and post it to the class ICON page.
**Weekly Calendar**

This schedule is subject to change. Additional information and any changes to the syllabus and/or class schedule will be posted on the course’s ICON page.

**WEEK 1**

**1/20**  
*Welcome*  
Introductions, course overview, review of syllabus, review of first assignment due 1/27. One subject we will discuss is the difference of reports vs. stories. If you have questions, start with tool #25 in *Writing Tools*, “Learn the Difference Between Reports and Stories.”

*In-class assignment*  
Fill out 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.

**1/22**  
*Readings*  
Read assigned articles, noted below. Think about what works and what doesn’t. What interested you as a reader? What do you think about the writing process? There are two surprises in these stories (one each). A hint about the Kanye story: This story was an award winner in 2011 because it bridged celebrity “access” and social media. How do you think about the two articles you’ve read after you listened to the Writing Tools chapters? Have our authors followed the “rules”?


“Kanye West Has A Goblet,” *Slate*, Aug. 25, 2010,  
[www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2010/08/kanye_west_has_a_goblet.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2010/08/kanye_west_has_a_goblet.html)


*In-class exercise*: Conduct 10-minute interview with classmate, using his or her questionnaire as a jumping off point. Tell the rest of the class about your subject, what questions you asked, which ones elicited good answers and which ones didn’t, and how you would structure a profile of him or her.
Assignment due 1/27: Write a 350-500 word profile describing someone at work. Turn in paper version at start of class.

Class Presentations
In Week 2, members of the class will choose a feature-length article and lead a discussion about it. Over the course of the semester, each one of you will be responsible for choosing and leading a discussion about an article with the class. The articles must be approved ahead of time by the instructor. Further information is posted on our class ICON page.
Week 2
1/27

Assignment
Due at beginning of class: 350-500 word profile describing a person at work. This will be graded as a short assignment.

Readings
The assigned articles represent the types of articles you will be reading, discussing, and writing this semester. 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: A profile can be a chronological exploration of a person’s life, a moment in time for one person, or a representative of a program or effort. There are similarities and differences in each of these, but what they have in common is passion: passion for an activity, for another person, or for life. Sometimes it’s looking at one relatively small aspect of a life.

“Goal judge at hockey game is lonely job that requires single-minded focus,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, December 26, 2013

Trend/Informational: How is this informational? What do you learn from it? How much information do you think had to be distilled to end up with an informative, yet short, description? Think about how much information it took to end up with the final paragraph. Look at how it’s written, as well, to attract the reader.

Review the entire section but read two of the condensed descriptions well enough to talk about them in class.


Enterprise: What makes this an investigational piece? What’s the “call to action?”
“Broken,” Bicycling magazine,
**Class Presentations**
See Class ICON site for requirements and responsibilities for Class Presentations. Presenters will be responsible for the following: getting the instructor’s approval of the story, distributing the link to the class via email, and leading a discussion in class about the article.

Presenters should look at the structure of the article. What makes it different from others? Where’s the passion? In addition, presenters will be expected to discuss how the assigned *Writing Tools* chapters relate to their article.

**Readings**
*Writing Tools, #5 Watch Those Adverbs,* #6 “Take it Easy on the “-ings, #7 “Fear Not the Long Sentence”

**Assignment**
Bring to class THREE profile story ideas you find interesting, along with the type of publications in which they might 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 is an example of a short assignment.
Week 3

2/3
Assignments
The draft of your profile must be uploaded for workshop by 2/8. The final version is due 2/17.

Continue to refine your profile topic. Use Writing Tool #40, “Draft a Mission Statement for Your Work,” to hone your story idea. It doesn’t have to be as long as the one he cites—makes yours 2-3 sentences long. Bring to class a printed summary of your profile topic, including a mission statement and a list of sources, to share with the class. Your fellow writers will help you think about your story. Turn in printed sheets at the end of the class period.

Readings
“300 Cats, Yes, Craziness, No." New York Times, Jan 9, 2013
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/10/garden/300-cats-and-counting.html?emc=eta1


http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/18/science/bill-nye-firebrand-for-science-is-a-big-man-on-campus.html?emc=eta1

2/5
Class Presentations

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

Sign up for workshop session. Review workshopping principles (download worksheet from ICON). If you are not in class, the instructor will assign you to a workshop session. Workshop assignments will be posted to class’ ICON page.
Week 4

All profile drafts must be uploaded to folder in ICON dropbox by **10 pm on Sunday, 2/8**. All drafts must be uploaded by the deadline, regardless of your workshop session.

Please name your file (Last name)(Subject).

2/10
WORKSHOP
Read and be prepared to discuss drafts for workshop group #1, according to workshop principles.

2/12
WORKSHOP
Read and comment on drafts for workshop group #2 and be prepared to discuss each submitted draft, according to workshop principles.
**Week 5**

Final (paper) versions of Profile due to instructor at start of 2/17 class session.

**2/17**

*Readings*

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/magazine/47-hour-train-ride.html

http://thebus.net/fred_esquire1998
The article is also available as a word document in ICON


**2/19**

*Class Presentations*

*Readings*

*Writing Tools*, #15 “Pay Attention to Names,  #28 “Put Odd and Interesting Things Next to Each Other,” #34, “Turn Your Notebook into a ‘Camera’”

*Assignment*

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. Although I said at the start that you have latitude in deciding your topics, I STRONGLY DISCOURAGE you from writing about the bar “scene” in Iowa City. Former students in previous semesters have tried. Most of them are not interesting to anyone outside a narrow demographic. You can try, but consider yourself warned!
Week 6

2/24
Guests TBA

Assignment
Continue to discuss trend/informational story ideas.

2/26
Class Presentations

Readings
*Writing Tools*, #18, “Set the Pace with Sentence Length,” #19, “Vary the Lengths of Paragraphs”

Assignment
Bring to class a printed summary of your trend/informational topic, 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 7

3/3
Readings
“The Sharp, Sudden Decline of America’s Middle Class,” Rolling Stone, June 25, 2012, PDF is available on ICON and at the Resource Center.


2012: The Best and Worst 'Trend' Stories
http://www.thewire.com/national/2012/12/trend-stories-2012/60333/

3/5
Class Presentations

Reading

“Millennials 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

Writing Tools, #37 “Shape Shorter Works with Wit and Polish,” #38 “Use Subtle Symbols, not Crashing Cymbals”
Week 8

3/10 & 3/12
Readings & Assignments TBA

SPRING BREAK 3/15-22

NOTE:
Trend/Informational drafts must be uploaded to ICON folder by 10 pm on 3/22 (Sunday night).

Week 9 — Trend/Informational Workshops

3/24
Workshop trend/informational story.

3/26
Workshop trend/informational story.

Week 10

3/31
Readings

Let’s talk about passion and obsession. This story was made into a movie with Nicholas Cage playing a stagewriter. “Orchid Fever,” Susan Orlean, New Yorker, Jan. 23, 1995, http://susanorlean.com/articles/orchid_fever.php

This story was written for an alumni publication. Pay attention to the way it speaks to the audience and how science is explained. “A Voice in the Wilderness,” John Allen, On Wisconsin, May 14, 2010, http://onwisconsin.uwalumni.com/features/a-voice-in-the-wilderness/

For the last few years of his life, film reviewer Roger Ebert was unable to speak audibly. But, thanks to technology, he was able to communicate with those around him. When you read this story, think about how a writer overcomes the barriers to a “conventional” interview. What would you do? Does the writer ever make us forget Ebert’s disability? If so, when?

Assignment
Bring questions, concerns, issues with your trend/informational story.

4/2
Class presentations

Readings
Writing Tools, #31 “Build York Work Around a Key Question,” #32 “Place Gold Coins Along the Path,” #33 “Repeat, Repeat, Repeat”

Week 11
Trend/Informational story final print version due at beginning of class session, 4/7.

4/7
GUESTS TBA

4/9
Class Presentations

Readings
Writing Tools, #24 “Work from a Plan,” #39 “Write Toward and Ending”

Assignment
Bring to class 2-3 ideas for Enterprise story, 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 with class
Week 12

4/14

GUESTS TBA

4/16

Class Presentations

Readings

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

Assignment: Continue to refine your enterprise story. Bring to class the closest version to a mission statement, outline, and list of sources.
Week 13
4/21
Readings
“Letting Go,” New Yorker, 
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/08/02/100802fa_fact_gawande

“The Deadly Choices at Memorial,” New York Times magazine, 

Writing Tools, #13 “Play With Words Even in Serious Articles,” #16 “Seek Original Images,” “#17 “Riff on the Creative Language of Others”

Assignment
Bring to class your story, with mission statement, list of sources, and other information pertinent to your article. Be prepared to share with class.

4/23
GUESTS TBA

Week 14
4/28
GUEST TBA

Assignment
Bring detailed outline of your story, including probable lede and conclusion, list of sources, and other information you’ve collected. Include your mission statement at the top. Be prepared to discuss with class. Hand in at end of class.

4/30
Readings
Pay close attention to the structure of these articles. What is the writer trying to say to the reader? Also, how important is it to be able to interpret science in a story like this? Look at how they are organized, and how the reader is brought along to understand the point of the story.

“Why McDonald’s Fries Taste So Good,” Eric Schlosser, 
http://www.rense.com/general7/whyy.htm
“Trial by Fire. Did Texas execute an innocent man?” New Yorker, Sept. 7, 2009,

Sign up for workshopping session.

**Enterprise story draft must be posted to appropriate folder in ICON dropbox by noon on Sunday, 5/3**
Week 15

5/5

Workshop

5/7

Workshop

Exam week

*Final version of Enterprise story due in my office. Final date will be posted on class ICON page and announced in class.*
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 will learn to...**

1. to write correctly, clearly and well
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 accurately

**We will 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 will explore...**

10. mass communication theories and concepts
11. media institutions and practices
12. the role of media in shaping cultures