Spring 2016 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
11:30A to 1:20P TTH  W336 AJB
Instructor: Tricia Brown
Office: E350D AJB
Office hours: By appointment 8A to 5P M-F at 300 Plaza Centre One
tricia-brown@uiowa.edu

Departmental DEO: David Ryfe, director, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, 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.

JMC Learning Outcomes  
The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. You can find more information about these learning outcomes here: http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment. We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.

This course contributes to these learning outcomes by helping you achieve proficiency in understanding that clear, concise and correct writing is at the heart of journalistic expression and that reporting and communicating it effectively requires a knowledge and achievement of the highest, professionally-accepted standards in all work. Achieving these outcomes means the ability to:

- demonstrate the ability to gather factual story elements, and to evaluate and express them in logical, narrative forms for multiple media and audiences.
- display the ability to access and analyze data, report facts accurately, research and edit information responsibly and in a manner commensurate with professional standards.
COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

In news writing, we were taught to write in an inverted pyramid, with the five Ws 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 write about 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 in which it lives and the subject it addresses, you will be a journeyman, not a master craftsman.

One note: In addition to creative ideas and great copy, editors expect 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. Points for participation and class assignments are not included in the 15 percent. If you miss a class when a short assignment is conducted or is due, you will receive a zero on that assignment; your instructor will not accept assignments emailed in lieu of attending 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.

You are expected to be punctual. Being tardy is not courteous to your fellow students and the instructor. If a situation will get you to class late on a regular basis, discuss it with your instructor 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. In addition to class discussion and assignments, we will workshop your three main assignments in class. Your attention and feedback during the workshopping sessions will be factored into this part of your overall grade. Workshopping can be a valuable tool for improving your writing when everyone is engaged in the process.

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.)

3. DEADLINES
Deadlines in this class are absolute. Final versions of your three main 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.

Your profile, trend/informational and investigative articles account for 20, 25, and 30 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. Read their work. Offer your feedback in a polite and constructive way. Offering no feedback or vague feedback (such as “this is good” or “I like your lede” offers very little insight to the writer).
5. ELECTRONICS
Turn off cell phones and other communication 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 might not say anything to you directly at the time, but I will notice, and notes will be made in my files related to your participation in class.

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.

7. 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 many 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, IowaWatch. 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 through Thursday: 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
ASSIGNMENTS
A. One 350- to 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- to 1,200-word personality profile. This should not be the person from assignment A. This assignment is worth 20 percent of your grade.
D. One 1,200- to 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. This assignment is worth 25 percent of your grade.
E. One 1,800- to 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. This assignment is worth 30 percent of your grade.

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 evaluated by what they put down on paper. You are also evaluated 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, 25, and 30 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.

The first two main articles (profile and trend/informational) will be graded using the following point guidelines:
- **Meeting deadlines:** 20 possible points
- **Mechanics:** 20 possible points
- **Lede and ending:** 20 possible points
- **Sources:** 20 possible points
- **Responding to feedback:** 20 possible points

The final article (enterprise/investigative story) will be adjusted slightly to include:
- **Meeting deadlines:** 10 possible points
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
1/19
Welcome
Introductions, course overview, review of syllabus, review of first assignment due 1/26.
One subject we will discuss is the difference of reports vs. stories. If you have questions, start with tool No. 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.

1/21
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?”


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 1/26: Write a 350- to 500-word profile describing someone at work. Turn in paper version at start of class.
Assignment
Due at beginning of class: 350- to 500-word profile describing a person at work. This will be graded as a short assignment.

Introduction to your first main paper: Profile.

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.

1. “Goal judge at hockey game is lonely job that requires single-minded focus,” Cleveland Plain Dealer, Dec. 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?”

   1. “Broken,” Bicycling magazine,

1/28
Readings
1. “Writing Tools,” No.5 Watch Those Adverbs,” No. 6 “Take it Easy on the “-ings, No. 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**

2/2

**Assignment**

The draft of your profile must be uploaded to the ICON drop box by 5 p.m. 2/7. The final version is due at the start of class on 2/16.

Continue to refine your profile topic. Use Writing Tool No. 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 two to three 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**

   http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/18/science/bill-nye-firebrand-for-science-is-a-big-man-on-campus.html?emc=eta1
3. “The Power of Princess Jenna” Tricia DeWall, Iowa City Press-Citizen, the article is available as a PDF in ICON

2/4

**Readings**

Writing Tools, No. 8 “Establish a Pattern, Then Give it a Twist,” No. 9 “Punctuating with Power and Purpose,” No. 11 “Prefer the Simple Over the Technical”

Review workshopping principles (download worksheet from ICON).

**Week 4**

All profile drafts must be uploaded to folder in ICON dropbox by 5 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 7. Please name your file (Last name)(Subject).

2/9

WORKSHOP

Read and be prepared to discuss drafts of your own paper and your classmates’ papers. Be prepared to offer meaningful and constructive feedback to your classmates.

2/11

WORKSHOP
Read and be prepared to discuss drafts of your own paper and your classmates’ papers. Be prepared to offer meaningful and constructive feedback to your classmates.

**Week 5**

2/16

Final (hardcopy) versions of your Profile are due at the start of class.

Introduction to your second main paper: Trend/informational.

**Readings**

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

2/18

**Readings**

1. Writing Tools, No. 15 “Pay Attention to Names, No. 28 “Put Odd and Interesting Things Next to Each Other,” No. 34, “Turn Your Notebook into a ‘Camera’”
   http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/03/magazine/47-hour-train-ride.html

**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. Students in previous semesters have tried. Most of them are not interesting to anyone outside a narrow demographic.

**Week 6**

2/23

**Assignment**

Continue to discuss trend/informational story ideas.

**In class exercise:** Turning a study into a feature.

2/25
Readings


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. **You will need to turn in printed sheets at the end of class.**

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**Week 7**

3/1

Readings


Assignment

Bring to class, ready to share, a further discussion of your trend story. Turn in to professor at end of class.

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3/3

**NOTE:**

Trend/Informational drafts must be uploaded to ICON folder by **5 p.m. on Sunday, 3/13.**

Readings


Assignment
Outline your final trend/informational story idea by sections, listing potential or interviewed sources. Include your mission statement. You will share your outline in class with other writers. Turn in at end of class.

**Week 8**

3/8  
**NOTE:**  
Trend/Informational drafts must be uploaded to ICON folder by 5 p.m. on Sunday, 3/13.

**In class activity/assignment:** Conducting a quality interview.

**Readings**

1. "Post Magazine Chat: Too Busy to Stop and Hear the Music,"

3/10

**Readings**  
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?

   [http://www.esquire.com/features/roger-ebert-0310](http://www.esquire.com/features/roger-ebert-0310) The story is also posted as a PDF in the Contents folder of our ICON site.

**CLASS TIME:** Be prepared to work on your drafts during the final part of class.

**NOTE:**  
Trend/Informational drafts must be uploaded to ICON folder by 5 p.m. on Sunday, 3/13. Trend/Informational story final print version due at beginning of class session, 3/29.

**Week 9**

**SPRING BREAK**

**NOTE:** *Trend/Informational story final print version due at beginning of class session, 3/29.*

**Week 10**
Trend/Informational Workshops
3/22
Workshop trend/informational story.

3/24
Workshop trend/informational story.

NOTE: Trend/Informational story final print version due at beginning of class session, TUESDAY 3/29.

Week 11
Trend/Informational story final print version due at beginning of class session, 3/29.

Introduction to your third main paper: Enterprise/investigative.

3/29
FIELD TRIP: TBA.

Readings

3/31
Readings
1. Writing Tools, No. 32 “Place Gold Coins Along the Path”
2. Writing Tools, No. 31 “Build Your Work around a Key Question”
3. Writing Tools, No. 33 “Repeat, Repeat, Repeat”

In class exercise: Identify your Gold Coin.

Assignment
Bring to class two to three ideas for Enterprise/Investigative story, including possible sources, in writing, to pitch to the class. Be prepared to discuss with the class. Turn in written versions at end of class session. Be prepared to discuss your ideas with the class.

Week 12

4/5
GUEST TBA
Readings


Assignment
Continue to refine your enterprise story. Bring to class the closest version to a mission statement, outline and list of sources.

Week 13

4/12
Readings


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.

4/14
GUEST TBA

In class exercise:
The Dessert Exercise

Week 14

4/19

In class exercise: TEAMING UP

4/21

Readings
See two documents posted to the contents folder in ICON.
The first document is titled The Shipbreakers. It contains a link to the first set of reading assignments. Please read all five parts.

Also, please read the PDF “Writing from beginning to end.” It’s a chapter from retired UI journalism professor Stephen Berry’s book, “Watchdog Journalism: The Art of Investigative Reporting.” Berry is a Pulitzer Prize-winner himself.
Week 15
4/26
Enterprise story draft must be posted to appropriate folder in ICON dropbox by 5 p.m. on Sunday 5/1.

In class exercise: AP STYLE QUIZ

Be prepared to spend part of class time working on your drafts.

4/28
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.


Week 16

12/8
Workshop

12/10
Workshop

Week 17

Exam week
5/10
Final version of Enterprise/Investigative story due to me from 11:30 a.m. to noon, Tuesday, May 10, in Adler Commons, first floor, AJB.
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