MAGAZINE REPORTING AND WRITING
JMC 3410:0001, SPRING 2020
T/Th, 2-3:15PM W332 AJB
Prof. David Dowling
Office: E334 Adler Journalism Building
david-dowling@uiowa.edu
Office hours: T/Th. 11AM-12:30PM drop in, or by appointment

Course Description
Whether it's sex, crime, money, politics, or sports, the fastest growing sector of magazine writing today is online in publications like Longreads, Deadspin, Jezebel, Vice, and Narratively. The best of the internet’s long tail of vibrant venues—from the music scene in Pitchfork to the alternative skate culture of Huck—are all committed to rigorous and daring reporting. In projects pitched to such digital magazines, we will experiment with embedded, undercover, and stunt reporting methods that test the boundaries of access. Writing will focus on honing the craft of narrative journalism, a form of nonfiction writing dedicated to fact-based reporting while employing storytelling techniques often associated with fiction. Work in this class entails corresponding with real editors to land real publications in the rapidly expanding world of digital journalism.

Required Textbook at Hawk Shop/University Bookstore
Sumner & Miller, Feature and Magazine Writing: Action, Angle, and Anecdote, 3rd edition
ISBN-13: 978-1118305133; $63.50 (or $16.53 at Amazon)

SJMC 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. Achieving these outcomes in magazine reporting and writing means the ability to:

- Explain their ethical approaches and reasoning about a particular dilemma in terms that can be understood by a diverse audience [law and ethics learning outcome]
- Understand that clear, concise, 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 [writing and storytelling learning goal and objectives 1-3].

Policies:

- Please stay focused; power down phones, laptops and any other electronic devices. Come to class on time and remain for the full class period. Do not pack your bags until class is over.
• **Attendance** is essential to your performance. In addition to readings, *assignments require a great deal of material presented in class only*. PowerPoint slides will appear in class only and will not be released. Research shows a *direct correlation between attendance and GPA, as well as broader measures of academic success such as time to graduation*. Your success depends on solid attendance.

• **Missed assignments** without forewarning automatically fail. If a calamitous event occurs that prevents you from taking an exam at the scheduled time, please contact me *before due dates; documentation must be provided 48 hours after absence*. A record of your clinic visit on MyChart will be acceptable.

• **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.

• **No email submissions.** Submit your written assignment to Canvas only.

**Assignments and Grades**

- Participation: 50 points
- Research and Development (R&D): 150 points (10 points/week x 15 wks.)
- 3 Stories: 100 points each (300 total)

Total: 500 points

**Participation** will be based on your contribution to a lively, engaged learning environment. I will assess your preparation through a series of Knowledge Checks on key concepts drawn from the reading material. KCs, as we call them, will occur on Tuesdays and consist of 3-5 items you will be asked to identify and discuss in writing. *Individual KC’s are not graded; instead they are collected and judged along with your posts to online discussions and compliance with course policies to arrive at your total participation grade*. Tuesday’s KCs will be drawn from a longer list provided for you in class the previous Thursday. Several discussions on Canvas will provide opportunities to discuss material with your classmates and to increase your participation grade. Compliance with policies regarding late arrival and early departure from class as well as technology use in class will also be factored into the participation grade.

**Research and Development** consists of work toward the completion of your assigned projects which can include arranging for, conducting, transcribing, and editing interviews, corresponding with editors, conducting background research on the topic and industry, and experimenting with reporting and writing techniques. Due each Friday and worth 10 points per week (for a total of 150 points) R&D will be assignments will be announced and explained in class only, thus attendance is required for its completion.
Three articles: profile, trend, and immersion 6-8 pages (2000-3000 words) each; 100 points each. This length is less than half the maximum 6000 words for articles in the magazine industry (Sumner & Miller, p. 294) and thus can be expanded or reduced to adapt to prospective publishers’ needs. To help you prepare, class time will be dedicated to preparation for these stories. Each requires inclusion of material presented in class only that does not appear in the reading. Each longform article will be submitted to the online journal of your choice. Acceptance at your target publication earns an automatic A on the assignment and in the course, pending acceptable participation and completion of all other assignments.

Grading Scale

Rounding only at .5 to the next whole number; .4 will not be rounded up.

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COURSE CALENDAR

Weeks 1-5: PROFILE

Week 1: Getting Started

Jan. 21: Introduction

Jan. 23: Why’s this so good?

Week’s Reading: Chapter 1 (pp. 1-13) Feature and Magazine Writing (FMW); The Most Read “Why’s This So Good?” Essays, Nieman Storyboard

Week 2: Intriguing Profile Subjects

Jan. 28: Discovering Ideas

Jan. 30: Developing Topics

Week’s Reading: Ch. 2, FMW

Week 3: Telling True Stories

Feb. 4: Exemplary models
Feb. 6: Anti-models

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 12, FMW

**Week 4:** Research and Leads

Feb. 11: Data Gathering

Feb. 13: Probing Deeper

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 4

**Week 5:** Market Analysis

Feb. 18: Targeting Publications

Feb. 20: Drafting Queries **PROFILE DUE, 6-8 pgs.**

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 6; *“The Pitch,”* Nieman Storyboard

**Weeks 6-10: TREND**

**Week 6:** The Trend Story

Feb. 25: Characteristics of Trends & Issues Stories

Feb. 27: Finding Trends to Explore

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 16

**Week 7:** Openings and Action

March 3: The First 100 Words

March 5: Adding Action

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 8 & 9

**Week 8:** Anecdotes for Narrative Journalism

March 10: Crafting the Anecdote

March 12: Narrative Structure

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 10 & 13
Spring Break: March 15-21

**Week 9:** Winning a Digital Audience

March 24: Cultivating Community

March 26: Online Storytelling’s Multi-modalities

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 17 & 18

**Week 10:** Preparing the Final Draft

March 31: Taking Inventory

April 2: Last Edits **TREND DUE, 6-8 pgs.**

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 19

**Weeks 11-15: IMMERSION**

**Week 11:** Stunt, Embedded and Undercover Methods

April 7: Developing an Angle for a Stunt

April 9: Safety & Ethics of Undercover Work

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 3; “Notable Narrative,” [Bauer](#) on Nieman Storyboard

**Week 12:** Interviewing

April 14: Conducting the Interview

April 16: Career Advancement Workshop: LinkedIn/Personal Branding

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 5; [Ted Conover on Immersion](#), Nieman Storyboard

**Week 13:** Pitching the Immersion Story

April 21: The Query Letter

April 23: Publishers of Immersion Journalism

**Week’s Reading:** Ch. 7

**Week 14:** Final Edits
April 28: The Checklist

April 30: Final Draft Preparation; IMMERSION DUE, 7 pgs., min. (Multimedia option: 8 minutes, min.)

Week’s Reading: Ch. 20

Week 15: Publishing Shortform Magazine Pieces

May 5: Spinoff Projects

May 7: Career Opportunities; Optional Extra Credit Revisions Due (+15 points max.)
No final exam

Week’s Reading: Ch. 21

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.

Expectation of Time Allocation

In a 3 semester hour course, students should expect (on average) 6 additional hours of outside work per week or a total of around 9 hours per course per week if classroom
time is included. A student taking 5 courses (3 s.h. each) should expect to spend around 45 hours a week on academic work.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Information for Undergraduates

Absences and Attendance
Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All absence policies, however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, including Holy Day obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences). Students may use this absence form to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused (https://clas.uiowa.edu/sites/default/files/ABSENCE%20EXPLANATION%20FORM2019.pdf).

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code).

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student is then responsible for discussing specific accommodations with the instructor. More information is at https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/.

Administrative Home of the Course
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and related policies. Other colleges may have different policies. CLAS policies may be found here: https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Communication and the Required Use of UI Email
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to the UI email address
Complaints
Students with a complaint about an academic issue should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the Chair of the department or program offering the course; students may next bring the issue to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. For more information, see https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities.

Final Examination Policies
The final exam schedule is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. Visit https://registrar.uiowa.edu/final-examination-scheduling-policies.

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (diversity.uiowa.edu).

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 must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, please see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.