

COMM 3493: Features Writing

tulsa u • spring '02 • section one • t-th 1100a-1215p • rm 135-A oliphant hall

A new century – heck, a new millennium – and after a shocking day in September, a brave new world order. Things are happening out there, as far away as Afghanistan and as close as 11th and Harvard. People want the news, but than that – they want the color, the texture, the face of the news. The basic information they get on the front page; for the news which passeth all understanding, they turn to the feature stories. They want it (no, they need it), and here's where we learn how to give it to them. Buckle up and knuckle down, and count yourself extremely lucky. You get to write the stories of the new era

Instructor

Thomas Conner. 581-8473. tconner29@home.com. No campus office.

Purpose

You'll develop feature-writing skills to apply in a variety of situations and in various media, from newspaper staffs to online freelancing.

Books

Magazine and Feature Writing, Rick Wilber, Hiley Ward; Mayfield, 1993.

Pulitzer Prize Feature Stories, ed. David Garlock; Iowa UP, 1998.

An Associated Press Stylebook, of course.

Department

This class flies under the banner of the Communications Department. Our fearless leader is John Coward, 631-2542. His invaluable assistant is Jan, 631-3805.

Work space

It's a writing class, so you need someplace to write. If your home is not thusly equipped, or if you do your work on campus, Macs are available at the Adwan Computer Lab in Oliphant Hall. PCs, if you must, are available in a computer lab on the library's main level.

House rules

Learn 'em: (1) If it's late, keep it. This work is about deadlines, and they're called that for a reason. (2) Be here. Be on time. You have entered into a business contract for these regularly scheduled meetings. Welcome to the real world. (3) Participate in class, ask questions and be respectful of your mates. The only dumb question is the one that isn't asked. (4) Type all assignments. Place a heading in the upper right corner with your name and the name of the assignment. Put your name on all pages, too; they get lost in the shuffle. And most importantly: You will deliver each feature story in as many copies as there are fellow students, plus one for me. We will spend a week in class discussions of everyone's work. You are, after all, learning to write for publication.

Grading

All assignments will be graded and returned as fast as my aging eyes will read them. The assignment breakdown is as follows:

- 7 reading reports for 20 points each (140)
- 6 pop quizzes for 10 points each (60)
- 5 exercises for 20 points each (100)
- 3 feature stories for 200 points each (600)
- 1 final feature story for 300 points (300)

It all adds up to 1200 points possible, meaning 1080-1200 is an A, 960-1079 is a B, 840-959 is a C, 720-839 is a D, and 0-719 is an F.

The following schedule includes due dates for all assignments except pop quizzes and exercises.

The schedule

Here's the plan for the semester. Like all things in life, this is subject to change at any moment. Reading and working assignments are listed on the day they are due.

01 T Jan. 15

Introduction, syllabus

02 TH Jan. 17

Feature writing overview

Read: Ward 1-7

03 T Jan. 22

Getting ideas

Read: Ward 27-29

00 TH Jan. 24

••• No Class! •••

04 T Jan. 29

Evaluating ideas

Due: Reading report 1

05 TH Jan. 31

Researching markets

Read: Ward 7-25

06 T Feb. 5

Queries, freelancing

Read: Ward 29-54

07 TH Feb. 7

Backgrounding

Read: Ward 56-64

08 T Feb. 12

Backgrounding

Read: Ward 204-218

Due: Reading report 2

09 TH Feb. 14

Interviews

Read: Ward 86-96

10 T Feb. 19

Interviews

11 TH Feb. 21

Interviews

12 T Feb. 26

Personality profiles

Read: Ward 97-115

Due: Reading report 3

13 TH Feb. 28

Leads

14 T March 5

Anecdotes

Read: Ward 66-85

15 TH March 7

Travel writing

Read: Ward 246-254

Due: Story 1

00 T March 12

!!! Spring break !!!

00 TH March 14

!!! Spring break !!!

16 T March 19

Discuss Story 1

Due: Reading report 4

17 TH March 21

Style (technical)

Due: Story 2

18 T March 26

Discuss Story 2

Due: Reading report 5

19 TH March 28

Discuss Story 2

20 T April 2

Story structure

Read: Ward 144-163

21 TH April 4

Style (flair)

Read: Ward 164-194

22 T April 9

Arts features

Read: Ward 234-238

Due: Reading report 6

23 TH April 11

Arts criticism

Due: Story 3

24 T April 16

Discuss Story 3

25 TH April 18

Discuss Story 3

26 T April 23

Ethics and legalities

Read: Ward 299-341

Due: Reading report 7

27 TH April 25

Careers, the future, the end

Read: Ward 346-355

Finals week, TBA

Due: Story 4