

Magazine Writing 4610

University of Utah, Department of Communication

Syllabus subject to change.

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"The most original authors are not so because they advance what is new, but because they put what they have to say as if it had never been said before."
—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Prerequisites:

COMM 1610. If you haven't taken this course already, you need to see me ASAP. Really. I'm not a total stickler about the prereq, and I'm happy to consider other qualifications as fulfilling this requirement, but you **MUST** talk to me about it. Please email me with a list of other writing classes (i.e. Wrtg 2010) and/or journalism classes you've taken.

Class Objectives:

This course seeks to refine students' journalistic writing skills in the genre of magazine feature writing and sub-genres and will follow the premise that *good magazine writers are storytellers as much as they are purveyors of facts*. Students will explore creative writing techniques unique to magazine nonfiction and will hone their writing, editing, and research skills in preparation for careers in the magazine industry. *The goal is to develop students' abilities to analyze issues, brainstorm ideas, and write and edit quality stories for magazine publications.*

Class Format:

In contrast to newspaper writing, magazine writing is often the 'story behind the story' or event. It employs not only elements of journalism, *but also elements of creative writing*. Balancing reportorial skills with the creative writing techniques will be key for this course and attained through discussion of organization, voice, word choice and the writing of magazine articles.

For the first section of the course, we will focus on basic concepts of magazine writing and learn how to employ creative craft elements so that the reader gradually becomes conscious of a guiding human intelligence within the story conversing with the reader in print, instead of just a presentation of facts. We will explore these concepts via discussion, comparison, and the actual writing of a feature article, which we will then workshop and revise (throughout the semester) for a finished product worthy of publication. The second section of the course will focus on using our magazine writing skills to write within a variety of magazine genres. Writers often use their research from one story to fuel other stories for different publications. We will explore these dynamics, as well as the different expectations of various magazine genres. We will also workshop each story with the goal of producing publishable work. Lastly, we will explore business issues pertaining to the magazine

industry, including working with an editor, pitching stories, writing query letters, managing your time as a writer and understanding contracts.

As mentioned, **workshops and crafted revision are very important aspects of magazine writing**. Often the workshop aspect can seem daunting to new writers, however, it is part of the industry. More importantly, the editing process teaches you how to be a good editor, which is key to being a good writer. I also believe that the best writers read more than they write (and revise even more). Throughout the course, readings of published magazine stories will be used as a basis for comparison, and the in-class writing assignments will become the building blocks for students' own stories.

Important

The 'lectures' and instruction in this class are delivered via video. Please watch these videos, as they contain important tips and details about both the material for the course (assigned readings), as well as about writing assignments! Watching the videos is necessary for participation credit!

Course Objectives

By the end of Magazine Writing 4610, students should be able to ...

- Analyze a variety of writing situations
- Balance creative writing techniques with reportorial skills
- Adapt writing effectively to a given rhetorical situation and purpose, taking into account audience needs and expectations, and genre possibilities and constraints.
- Research and make rhetorical decisions within virtual writing environments.
- Understand the interview and research process required for magazine writing
- Write with an awareness of the ethical dimensions of writing.
- Use the collaborative dimensions of writing to best meet own writing purposes.
- Design and format documents according to conventions.
- Edit and revise based on intent, content and voice
- Attribute sources appropriately for a given genre or discourse.
- **Write with a minimum of surface error.**

Required Texts

The Art and Craft of Feature Writing by William E. Blundell

Writing Articles About the World Around You by Marcia Yudkin

Reading Compilation—Magazine Articles (Found on the pages where you view the video lectures)

You will also most likely need a voice recorder of some kind. I recommend one that allows you to get recording off the device and onto your computer. If you have an iPhone or other smartphone, those can also work quite well. Just make sure you know how to use the app very well before heading into the interview.

Assignments

- Feature Article (minimum 2,000 words, requires several interviews) 250pts
- Genre Assignment 150pts
- "Short" assignment 50pts
- Query Letters 100pts (50pts each)
- Magazine Reading Responses 100pts (10pts each)
- First-drafts of stories 150pts (100pts & 50pts)
- Peer Reviews (Workshop Process) 50pts
- Quizzes and Discussions (**Depends on how many we have!**)

*(Note: Late assignments are strongly discouraged. If late, you will be docked one letter grade each day the assignment is late, and you may not be eligible for instructor's feedback depending on schedule. **Reading Responses and Discussions MAY NOT be submitted late, for any reason.**)*

NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER ONE WEEK OF THE ORIGINAL DUE DATE.)

Assignments MAY NOT be turned in via email. All writing assignments submitted via Canvas.

Participation and Attendance

Participation counts toward your grade in this course (made up by your Reading Journal, Workshop Process, and general participation). The success of this course depends upon student participation.

General participation includes contributing to discussions, reading assigned readings, and participating in the feedback/workshop process. Participation will also include any small assignments (style exercises, writing prompts, etc.). Please be aware that viewing the Video Lectures is mandatory for full participation credit.

The Workshop Process points are determined by the quality of feedback you give the rest of the members of your group.

Important

Weekly Reading Responses

A good-sized percentage of the points in this class come from **the Weekly Reading Responses**. For these, you need to read a magazine article of your choosing (full-length feature, no “shorts”) and write a **3-4 paragraph** response to the article. The response is not just your opinion of the article, but a thoughtful analysis of **WHAT** the author did and/or did not do well, how the article was constructed, what worked and what didn't, etc. Preferably, use some reflection regarding the chapter readings assigned for that that week. *These responses will then be posted to the corresponding discussion section on Canvas.* They are worth 10 points apiece, so you are required to do 10, total. **Note there are 14 weeks possible: if you do 14 that's extra credit.**

Important

Please note: This is a difficult class, demanding both an ability to write in a manner both technically precise yet creative, lively and entertaining. The expectations for quality writing are very high.

This is also a **reading-intensive** class, as I strongly believe that you have to **read** good writing to be able to **write** well. I recommend strenuously that if you haven't read *The Elements of Style*, by Strunk & White, that you go out and read it immediately. It's very short and very helpful!

Quizzes and Discussions

Throughout the course, there will be a number of short quizzes and graded discussions. Discussions will be credit/no credit—in other words, if you participate in the discussion you get points. If your response is minimal or does not contribute to the discussion, it won't count (I don't anticipate this being a problem!).

TECHNICAL AND OBLIGATORY INFORMATION:

Writing Center : Writing in college can be a challenge for anyone, from first-year student essays to resumes, to doctoral dissertations. At the University Writing Center, you can receive one-on-one advice on your writing, geared to your individual needs and challenges.

Writing Center tutors are students trained to help with a variety of writing issues. They are accomplished writers, and have undergone hours of training on tutoring and the elements of good writing from the faculty and staff of the University Writing Program. One half-hour session with tutor will improve your writing project and provide you with suggestions for additional improvements. Returning to the Center will allow you to improve in additional areas, simplify and improve your writing process, and build your confidence as a writer.

Best of all, writing center instruction is FREE to all University of Utah students.

Telephone: (801) 587-9122

Address: University of Utah Marriott Library

Second Floor, to left of reference desk

295 S 1500 East

Salt Lake City UT 84112

<http://www.writingcenter.utah.edu>Links to an external site.

Email: Maureen Clark maureen.clark@utah.edu

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION POLICY

ADA: The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you need such accommodation in this class, please provide reasonable prior notice to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 801-581-5020 (V/TDD), <http://disability.utah.edu/>.

CONTENT ACCOMMODATION POLICY

University policy (See section Q): <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>

Summary:

The University recognizes that students' sincerely-held core beliefs may make it difficult for students to fulfill some requirements of some courses or majors.

It is the student's obligation to determine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with the student's sincerely-held core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a content accommodation from the instructor. Though the University provides, through this policy, a process by which a student may make such a request, *the policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal.*

WITHDRAWALS

University policy: [Links to an external site.http://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/withdrawal.php](http://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/withdrawal.php)

Summary:

After the midpoint of the course, students may petition the deadline for withdrawal if they have a nonacademic emergency. Students should submit a petition and supporting documentation to the office of the dean of their academic college.

INCOMPLETES

Summary:

An Incomplete is given for work not completed due to *circumstances beyond the student's control*. The student must be passing the course and have completed at least 80 percent of the required coursework. Arrangements must be made between the student and the instructor concerning the completion of the work.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

University policy: <http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html>[Links to an external site.](#)

Summary:

Section V. A. Students must adhere to generally accepted standards of academic honesty, including but not limited to, refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct, misrepresenting one's work, and/or inappropriately collaborating.

Section V. B. A student who engages in academic misconduct ... may be subject to academic sanctions including but not limited to a grade reduction, failing grade, probation, suspension, or dismissal from the program or the University, or revocation of the student's degree or certificate.

Section I. A., para. 4 *Informal resolution of problems by mutual consent of all parties is highly desired and is appropriate at any time.*

There is a clear process with timetables if an instructor decides to invoke any sanction against a student. Instructors with questions about the process are encouraged to consult the department undergraduate director or department chair.

GRADE DISPUTES

University policy: <http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html> [Links to an external site.](#)

Summary:

Section IV. B. A student who wishes to dispute a grade must try to resolve the matter *first* with the instructor. The instructor has 10 business days to respond to the student. If the student and instructor cannot resolve the matter, the student may appeal to the department chair by notifying the department undergraduate director. The student must prove the grade is “arbitrary and capricious” (meaning there is no principled basis for it), and there are definite deadlines:

Action	Business Days—deadlines
Student contacts instructor	20, after receiving grade
Instructor responds to student	10, after contact by student
Student makes written appeal to chair	40, after receiving grade
Chair provides written response	15, after receiving appeal from student
Student appeals chair’s decision to College Academic Appeals Committee	15, after receiving chair’s decision

COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE

Copyright policy: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/6/6-7.html> [Links to an external site.](#)

Fair Use policy: <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/6/6-5.html> [Links to an external site.](#)

Section III. D. Fair use is a reasonable noninfringing use, including reproduction, of copyrighted material for such purposes as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, or research, as determined from consideration of all relevant circumstances, including (1) the purpose or character of the use, *e.g.*, for commercial purposes or for nonprofit educational purposes, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the

copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

FEDERAL LAW ON STUDENT PRIVACY (FERPA)

University link: <http://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/ferpa.php> Links to an external site.

Summary:

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) states that a student's educational records must be kept private unless the student authorizes their release. Instructors may *not* disclose grades to others, for example by posting grades outside an office door, revealing them in class, or discussing them with a parent.

An instructor may release information to a school official if that official has a legitimate educational interest, *e.g.*, the Disability Center.

“Educational records” are different from “directory information,” which may be disclosed unless the student has restricted disclosure through the Office of the Registrar. Common allowable directory information includes: name, address, phone number, e-mail address, field of study, and participation in officially recognized activities or sports.