

Feature Writing

Course Logistics and Instructor Contact Information

Course Title: Feature Writing

Course Number and Section: MCOM 3301.001

Scheduled Class Days and Times: 8 to 8:50 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday

Instructor Name: John "Danny" Mogle

Office Location: 204A

Phone Number: 903-617-8196

Email: jmogle@uttyler.edu

Best way to contact: text or call

Office Hours: Days/Times AND by appointment: 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday or by appointment. I welcome and encourage office visits.

Course Information

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of the purposes, character, and subject matter of different forms of feature stories -- most notably narrative writing. Emphasis is placed on writing and marketing the feature for multimedia platforms. Students will learn feature writing techniques and devices; how to plan and execute a feature; and how to market writing. Students will write four different types of stories: 1. A place (common with travel writing); 2. A review. 3. A human interest or profile 4. A story that uses feature writing techniques to explore an, issue trend or problem.

Prerequisite: MCOM 2311

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

Write correctly and clearly using the formats and compelling storytelling styles appropriate for the audiences and purposes of public relations/integrated communication or multimedia journalism; write professional-quality feature stories with images that meet specific needs; analyze feature stories and recognize the literary devices and techniques used in storytelling.

Competency: Legal and Ethical Principles

- Demonstrate an understanding of and be able to apply the First Amendment and other legal principles for strategic communication, integrated communication and multimedia journalism. Recognize what constitutes libel, appropriation, intrusion, false light, and publicity about private facts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and issues involved in journalism, advertising and public relations
- Demonstrate an understanding of ethical behavior in mass media industries including social media.

Competency: Writing/Storytelling

Apply grammar, spelling punctuation to feature stories of various formats

- Use literary techniques more commonly found in fiction writing to create compelling stories
- Demonstrate the ability to use interviewing skills and observation as part of the storytelling strategy
- Demonstrate the ability to use scheduling, outlining and subheads as ways to organize complex stories
- Adapt feature writing to the needs and expectations of different markets and audiences

Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

- Conduct research and evaluate information using methods appropriate to integrated communication or multimedia journalism professions.
- Apply First Amendment and other legal principles integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism.
- Apply professional ethical principles and issues for public relations/integrated communication and/or multimedia journalism.

Competency: Media Literacy

- Demonstrate the ability to identify different types of media and the messages they are sending.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze, evaluate and create media in different forms.
- Demonstrate the ability to critically understand the nature, techniques and impacts of media messages on one's life and the life of others.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- Associated Press Stylebook. New York: Associated Press. Also available online at www.apstylebook.org ([Links to an external site.](#)). No older than 2019 edition.
- Select readings assigned in class and posted in Canvas over the course of this semester.
- Select readings assigned in class and posted in Canvas over the course of this semester. You will be required to read several different types of features stories and analyze each.

RECOMMENDED MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Immerse yourself in mass media to get the most out of this class. Read newspapers and magazines in print and online. Watch news programs and listen to NPR. Examine press releases and advertising campaigns. Look at YouTube, Facebook and other social media in the context of this class.

Other recommendations:

- Clark, Roy Peter. (2006) *Writing Tools, 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*.
- Strunk Jr., W., & White, E.B. *The Elements of Style* (4th Ed.), New York: Longman.

SPECIAL COURSE NOTES

Basic Requirements

This course requires that you have access to a reliable computer and that you have access to a reliable internet connection. You will also need the Associated Press Stylebook. You will be required to go off

campus to conduct some interviews and collect information for some of the stories. There are additional expenses, such as an admission to Caldwell Zoo, that is involved in this class.

Communication

If you have a question or a concern, or just want to talk about something related to class call or send me a text at 903-617-8196. I will get back to you as soon as possible. Tell me your name, that you are a student and why you are calling or texting.

- You can also send me an email.
- Check the Announcements tab of Canvas regularly.
- If there is any valid reason that you cannot turn in work on time (such as becoming extremely sick), you must contact me or you will get a grade of 0 for the assignment in question.

Completing Work on Time

All assignments will be posted in Canvas and each will have a deadline. You must meet the deadline in order to receive the point value assigned to it. There will be graded discussions and assignments that require you to demonstrate mastery of skills or concepts presented.

Academic Honesty

The University's academy honesty policies apply. You, and only you, must do the work that you submit.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, unattributed use of others' work (including test and paper "banks"), disruption of class, and discourtesy to, or harassment of, other students or your instructor. Anyone caught cheating will earn a "0" for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit. Students caught plagiarizing will fail the assignment, may fail this class and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. Go here for more:

<http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php> (Links to an external site.)

ASSIGNMENTS AND WEIGHTS/POINTS VALUE

Each assignment has a posted value assigned to it in Canvas. Each assignment also includes an explanation of the purpose of the assignment as well as information on how the grade is determined. If there is confusion on how to carry out the assignment, call or text me at **903-617-8196** BEFORE you do the assignment.

The assignments fall into four general categories:

- graded discussions,
- skill-building assignments
- writing assignments
- attendance.

No assignment is weighted more heavily than any other.

Writing Assignments -- called jobs. 1,000 points. 45% of grade

Each job is worth 200 points. Jobs cover the different formats of creative narrative writing. They have specific criteria that must be met based on the target audience and requirement of the publication you will be writing for. Each job comes with a rubric and instructions.

- Job 1: Caldwell Zoo for family magazine
- Job 2: Caldwell Zoo for senior citizens publication
- Job 3: Writing a review for a movie, album or book
- Job 4: Writing a human interest/profile
- Job 5: Using narrative writing to explore an issue, challenge or trend

Competencies: Media Literacy, Writing and Storytelling, Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

Your blog -- 500 points; 23% of grade

You will write a short weekly blog of the topic and writing style of your choosing. Blog entries will be much shorter than the writing assignments. Specific criteria must be met.

Competencies: Media Literacy, Writing and Storytelling, Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

Case Studies -- 300 points; 14% of grade

For most writing assignments, you will be asked to analyze similar subject matter narratives. The purpose is to learn by example and to think more deeply about how such stories are constructed.

Competencies: Writing and Storytelling, Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

Quizzes, Assignment-- 200 points; 9% of grade

I will be presenting some PowerPoints with specific "learning points." The assignments/tests will cover these materials or specific materials contained in readings in Canvas. There are also some assignments in which you perform specific writing related tasks.

Competencies: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry, Media Literacy, Legal and Ethical Principles

Online discussions -- 100 points; 4.5% of grade

During the semester you will be expected to take part in online discussions in which you either answer questions or share your thoughts and then comment on other posts. The objective is to learn from one other and see things from different perspectives.

Competency: Analysis and Systematic Inquiry

Attendance-- 100 points; 4.5% of grade

GRADING SCALE

Your final grade is determined by the amount of points you have as a percentage to the total points available.

- A: 90-100%;
- B: 80-89%
- C: 70-79%
- D: 60-69%
- F: 59% and below

Check Canvas frequently for the status of your grade.

LATE WORK AND MAKEUP EXAMS

All assignments will come with a deadline. Those who do not meet the deadline will receive a deduction -- typically 50% of the value of the assignment. You will not be given an opportunity to do extra work to improve your grade. Work can be made up for illnesses, family emergencies or for any excused absence recognized by the University.

You are expected to be in class every time it meets. You will receive a 2-point deduction for each class missed and will not be able to make up a test or in-class graded work. Any tardiness beyond 10 minutes will count as an absence unless it is justified. Deductions will not be applied to excused absences or times the class does not meet for some other reason. Talk to me about absences.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

You are expected to come to class each time the class meets. Your future or current employer expects you to come to work each time you are scheduled. You will receive a 2-pt. deduction for each time you miss class.

The University of Texas at Tyler recognizes many things that constitute an excused absence. For a complete list of these policies [click here](#).

GRADED COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Writing Assignments -- Each writing assignment is worth 200 points. These assignments cover different formats of creative narrative writing. They have specific criteria that must be met based on the target audience and requirement of the publication you will be writing for. Each job comes with a rubric and instructions.

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Your blog -- You will write a short weekly blog of the topic and writing style of your choosing. The blog will be much shorter than the writing assignments. Specific criteria must be met.

Case Studies -- For most writing assignments, you will be asked to analyze similar subject matter narratives. The purpose is to learn by example and to think more deeply about how such stories are constructed.

Quizzes, Assignment -- I will be presenting some PowerPoints with specific "learning points." The tests will cover these materials or specific materials contained in readings in Canvas. There are also some assignments in which you perform specific writing related tasks.

Online discussions -- During the semester you will be expected to take part in online discussion in which you either answer questions or share your thoughts and then comment on other posts. The objective is to learn from one other and see things from different perspectives.

CALENDAR

Census Date: The census date for the Fall 2021 semester is Sept. 3. This is the final date for many enrollment-related actions, including adding new courses, changing sections, or dropping courses without incurring grades of “W” or “Q”. Census is also the second drop for non-payment date each academic session. See the Office of the Registrar website for additional details.

Final exam: There is no final exam given for this course.

Week by Week: Here is the week-by-week rundown of what will be covered. Sometimes circumstances require changes. Any changes will be minor and announced through Announcements.

THE WORLD OF FEATURES Aug. 23, 25 and 27

- Introduction to class
- PowerPoint Presentations
- Discussion

WRITER'S TOOLBOX: Aug 30, Sept. 1, 3

- Blog - 50 pts.
- Assignment: Case study: Battleground (1) - 50 pts.
- Assignment: Details and descriptions (due Sept. 5) - 20 pts.

SEDUCTION, REVEAL, PARTING KISS: Sept. 6, 9

- Blog - 50 pts.
- Case study: Battleground (2) -- 20 points
- Assignment: Great beginnings -- 20 points
- Discussion: Rate these leads - 15 points

GATHER, WRITE, REVISE/WRITING ABOUT A PLACE (week 1) Sept. 13, 15, 17

- Blog
- Assignment: Set a schedule - 10 pts.
- Assignment: Research - 20 pts.
- Assignment: Gather information - 20 pts.

Week 2: Sept. 20, 22, 24

- Blog
- Assignment: Getting started - 15 pts.
- Case study: Tigers in East Texas - 40 pts.

Week 3: Sept. 27, 29, Oct. 1

- Blog - 50 pts.
- Job 1 due; Caldwell Zoo for family adventure publication - 200 pts.

QUICK FIXES: Oct. 4, 6, 8

- Blog - 50 pts.
- Assignment: Applying quick fixes - 40 pts.
- Job 2 due: Caldwell Zoo for senior citizens publication - 200 pts.

- Discussion: Your favorite writing tips - 25 pts.

WRITING A REVIEW (week 1): Oct. 11, 13, 15

- Blog - 50 pts.
- Case Study: Album review - 20 pts.
- Case Study: Movie review - 20 pts.

Week 2: Oct. 18, 20, 22

- Blog - 50 pts.
- Case Study: Book Review - 20 pts.
- Discussion: Talk about reviews - 15 pts.
- Job 3: Review due - 200 pts.

THE HUMAN-INTEREST STORY (Week 1): Oct. 25, 27, 29

- Blog - 50 pts.
- Case Study: Moments of joy - 25 pts
- Case Study: She Can do it Too - 20 pts.

Week 2: Nov. 1, 3, 5

- Blog - 50 pts.
- Case Study: Fastest woman - 20 pts.
- Discussion: Human interest stories - 15 pts.
- Job 4: Human interest story due - 200 pts.

PITCHING STORIES: Nov. 8, 10, 12

- Assignment: Give me your pitch - 30 pts.
- Discussion: Let's talk about issue stories - 15 pts.

USING A NARRATIVE TO EXPLORE ISSUES (week 1): Nov. 15, 17, 19

- Case Study: Rescuers - 25 pts.
- Case Study: I'm still Here - 20 pts.
- Case Study: Offering benevolence - 20 pts.

THANKSVIVING HOLIDAY: Nov. 22, 24, 26

EXPLORING ISSUES (week 2)

- Discussion: Writing about issues - 15 pts.
- Job 5: Issue story due - 200 pts.