

JOURNALISM 310: WRITING, REPORTING & ETHICS III FALL 2009

Instructor: Scott Brown

Class Hours: Tue 7-9:45 pm (#10752) or Thu 9-11:45 am (#11088) Room: MZ 360

Office Hours: Tue & Wed 6-7 pm; Thu 12-2 pm in MZ 337

Phone: 818/677-2864 & 818/677-3135 (also, 310/208-0717 for evenings & messages; **do not leave messages on my office phone**)

PREREQUISITES: A grade of "C" or better in Journalism 210 or its equivalent and basic typing skills.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students will develop the skills and techniques for in-depth feature reporting, as well as learn about various genres of feature writing and of specialty journalism. They also will learn how to apply traditional and newer forms of explanatory storytelling to their work, with emphasis given to the ethical issues involved in longer-form journalism.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. *Feature and Magazine Writing: Action, Angle & Anecdotes* by Sumner and Miller
2. *AP Stylebook & Libel Manual* (any recent edition)

Recommended: *The Writer's Market* (any recent edition); *Shaking the Foundations* (ed. Shapiro)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Articles:

Three news-feature stories of approximately 1,250 words or five pages minimum. These stories can be on any special interest subject such as business, medicine, sports, health, etc. **Each of the stories must have a clearly defined news peg and angle** (this will be discussed further in class). One of the stories will be a personality profile. Each story must have a minimum of four live sources and must be turned in with reporting notes, as well as with a word count. You will have four to five weeks for each story.

Two articles of three pages or approximately 750 words. One of the articles will be an editorial. You will have at least two weeks to complete each piece.

In addition, there will be several short writing assignments, including sample query letters, and analyses of magazines and various readings. Drafts of stories also may be required (this also will be discussed in class).

Readings:

Readings will consist of chapters in the course text, as well as articles given out weekly via hard copy and e-mail. It is imperative that students check their email and download the readings before each class. Further readings are listed on the course outline (see following). Students are expected to have completed each week's assigned reading for discussion in class. There are no midterm or final exams.

COPY PREPARATION/COURSEWORK: All copy should be double-spaced and free of typing, spelling and grammatical errors. Your name, date and story slug must be included in the upper left or upper right corner of all stories. **Stories that are not double-spaced will not be accepted.** Grades will be markedly lowered if articles contain an undue number of spelling and grammatical errors and are shorter than the minimum word count. **Late and missed assignments cannot (repeat: cannot) be accepted or made up.** Unless noted, or in cases of in-class assignments, assigned coursework is due at the start of each class (but students may turn in work early). Assignments will not be accepted at any other time and work cannot be e-

mailed to me (please do not do so). Students may not use the printer during class to print out work. There are no extensions for assignments or homework.

GRADING: The three longer stories comprise 60% of the final grade (20% apiece), while the two shorter articles comprise 25%. The remainder of the grade (15%) will be computed from attendance, class participation, and from several short writing assignments. Word counts, particularly in regards to the several short assignments, are required and will be a basis for grading.

Attendance is mandatory and more than two unexcused absences will negatively affect the final grade. Two incidents of lateness (more than five minutes late) constitute one absence. Absences due to course-related work are not excused and class work missed because of absences cannot be made up. Leaving after break, unless cleared with the instructor, nullifies one's attendance for that class.

CLASS CONDUCT: Except for in-class work, or unless permission is given, computers must be shut off in class. Students who use computers in class will have their overall grade affected. There are no private conversations during lectures and cell phones must be off.

PLAGIARISM: All work must be based on original reporting. The Journalism Dept. is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and integrity. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are not tolerated. Anyone caught cheating automatically will receive a failing grade in the course and be reported to the University for possible further disciplinary action. For further explanation of the behavior defined as cheating, and a more details regarding disciplinary procedures, consult the current CSUN catalog. Please also note that much of the information on the Internet is protected by U.S. copyright laws. Passing this information off as your own violates CSUN's plagiarism policy and carries the penalties outlined above.

DIVERSITY: Students in this course are strongly encouraged to broaden their journalistic experiences, with the instructor's help, by including in their work people from ethnic, racial and religious minorities; the elderly, disabled and poor; gay men and lesbians; and other similar groups. This is to ensure that student work reflects the diversity of the community.

LAB FEES: You are required to pay a \$5 lab fee by no later than the third week of class or your records will be encumbered and you will owe an additional \$10 Business Obligation Fee.

AND LASTLY... This syllabus outlines the conditions and parameters of this class. Acknowledgement of its contents implies an agreement to abide by the standards set forth within. It is up to all students to familiarize themselves with the course syllabus and refer to it regarding class procedures.

COURSE OUTLINE (Subject to change and pending approval of furlough days for faculty. Readings also will be given out weekly):

Week of 8/24: Course introduction; review syllabus; discussion of feature and news-feature writing. *Assignment: Writing evaluation and feature/magazine analysis. Reading: Sumner & Miller, Chp. 1.*

Week of 8/31: **Writing evaluation and feature analysis due**; generating story ideas and the feature news peg; finding the angle. *Assignment: Research and prepare three story ideas (200-250 words each) for a special interest article (due week of 9/7) Reading: Sumner & Miller, Chps. 2-3, 18.*

Week of 9/7: **Three story ideas due**; class discussion of ideas; finding the "best" idea. *Assignments: #1 news-feature – 1,250 word (due week of 10/5); begin reporting! Reading: Sumner & Miller, Chps. 4-5.*

Week of 9/14: Story discussion continued (if necessary); interviewing and reporting techniques for long stories. *Assignment: bring story notes for next class session. Reading: Sumner & Miller, Chps. 8 & 10.*

Week of 9/21: Writing the long piece; story structure and techniques. ***In-class assignment: Write the opening of your article*** (this is for grade; you must have done enough reporting to complete this assignment). *Reading: Sumner & Miller, Chps. 9, 11- 12.*

Week of 9/28: Class discussion of stories and query letters. *Reading: Sumner & Miller, Chps. 6-7.*

Week of 10/5: **First news-feature due**; discussion of marketing stories. *Assignment: Write two different query letters for your story (due week of 10/12).*

Week of 10/12: **Query letters due**; discussion of editorial writing. *Assignments: Editorial (#1 short article) – 500-750 words (due week of 10/26); #2 news-feature – 1,250 words (due week of 11/9)*

Week of 10/19: Discussion of the personal essay.

Week of 10/26: **Editorials due**; discussion of profile writing; finding a profile subject. *Assignment: Find and propose a profile subject – 250 words (due week of 11/9). Reading: Sumner & Miller, Chp. 14.*

Week of 11/2: More discussion of profile subjects; discussion of alternative story structures and writing techniques.

Week of 11/9: **Second news-feature due; profile subjects due**; “community” reporting; “place” pieces. *Assignment: Personality profile (#3 news-feature) – 1,250 words (due week of 12/14).*

Week of 11/16: Arts reviewing. *Assignment: #2 short article – 500-750 words (due week of 11/30). Reading TBA from “Shaking the Foundations.”*

Week of 11/23: No class – Thanksgiving.

Week of 11/30: **Second short article (personal essay, editorial, arts review, etc., due)**; travel and medical writing.

Week of 12/7: **Profiles due on the day of scheduled final exam (date TBA)**; investigative reporting.