

Feature Writing

JOUR 4165/6165-M50

Spring 2022

Online/Canvas

Prof. Dana Albright, M.A. (she/her)

Office Hours: Virtual, by appointment

Email: dpaisley@memphis.edu

Social Media: @dana_l_albright (Twitter)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Catalog description

Advanced practice in reporting, writing and editing feature stories for magazines, newspapers and the Web; finding and developing publishable ideas; freelance techniques; advanced reporting skills; writing techniques with emphasis on clarity, focus, structure, word choice, narrative and explanatory approaches; editing and revision.

Prerequisites

JRSM 2121

JRSM 3526 or PBRL 3421

Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Required: [Holt, S. \(Ed.\). \(2021\). *The Best American Magazine Writing 2020*. Columbia University Press. ISBN: 978-0231198011](#)

[Associated Press Stylebook. 55th Edition.](#)

Microsoft Word or other word processing program that allows .doc/.docx file format

CLASSROOM FORMAT

This is an asynchronous online course, which means that we will not be meeting virtually or otherwise at any point this semester (except when requested by the student on an individual basis). You will be expected to log in to Canvas throughout the week to participate in discussion and critique. Staying apprised of deadlines in this course requires self-discipline and the time management skills expected of advanced undergraduate or graduate students in an academic setting.

Reading

Reading selections will be posted from the textbook that has been assigned for this class. These selections will give students an opportunity to see the principles of good feature writing at work. In addition, you should already be reading news from reputable outlets each day. You will be asked to submit and provide critique of examples you have found in the publication(s) of your choice.

Discussion

To aid in the development of ideas and engagement with the material and your classmates, students will be expected to participate in discussion. Each week, I will post a guiding question for you to consider and respond to. Each student will be expected to post a substantive original response to the question, as well as *at least* one substantive reply to another student's post by the weekly deadline of Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Examples of what constitutes a "substantive" entry will be provided at the start of the semester. In general, however, merely agreeing or disagreeing with another student's post without qualification or explanation will not meet this requirement.

Writing Assignments

Students will complete a total of five writing assignments this semester. Plagiarized or fabricated work will receive a grade of zero, with no opportunity for a rewrite. Subsequent instances of plagiarism or fabrication will be reported to the department chair for further disciplinary action.

This course presumes knowledge of Associated Press style. Therefore, all writing assignments for JOUR 4165/6165 will be written in correct AP style. In addition, your work must be submitted in Microsoft Word format (.doc/.docx). No other file format will be accepted.

Writing assignments must be accompanied by at least one multimedia component. More information will be provided as the semester progresses.

Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis eLearn home page: <http://elearn.memphis.edu>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Spring 2022 course list, click on the link for JOUR 4165/6165 to enter the course and read the instructions on the welcome page.
4. **Please do not use the internal Canvas email system on the course web page.** Use your regular University of Memphis email to correspond with me at dpaisley@memphis.edu. I may not see these emails, as they do not alert me in a manner that allows me to see your message as it comes through.

Grading Scale

A+ = 96.5-100%; A = 92.5-96.4%; A- = 89.5-92.4%
B+ = 86.5-89.4%; B = 82.5-86.4%; B- = 79.5-82.4%
C+ = 76.5-79.4%; C = 72.5-76.4%; C- = 69.5-72.4%
D+ = 66.5-69.4%; D = 59.5-66.4%
F 0-59.4%

Grade Breakdown: Undergraduates (4165)

Four minor writing assignments: 30%
One major writing assignment: 35%
Discussion posts and responses: 30%
Portfolio: 5%
TOTAL: 100%

Graduate Students: In addition to the course requirements already described in this syllabus, graduate students enrolled in this course must submit a 1200-word research paper on an issue

related to the ethical practice of journalism in long-form feature writing. Topics will be chosen and approved on an individual basis. Each paper must cite at least eight original sources, five of which must come from a peer-reviewed academic journal. Graduate students' grade will be broken down as follows:

Grade Breakdown: Graduates (6165)

Four minor writing assignments: 20%

One major writing assignment: 35%

Discussion posts and responses: 20%

Research paper: 20%

Portfolio: 5%

TOTAL: 100%

OTHER ISSUES

DEADLINES: Unless otherwise specified, all assignment deadlines are Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

Deadlines for this course are firm and posted at least two weeks in advance. All work must be turned in via Canvas. Emailed assignments will not be accepted for any reason, nor will corrupted files. Check your work after it is uploaded to make sure the file works. The time to let me know you are having issues with Canvas is before the work is due.

PORTFOLIO: Your student portfolio must be updated with at least one example of work from this class. You will be expected to email me a link to your portfolio within one week of the first day of the semester's start. This will be checked at the end of the semester and composes 5% of your final grade.

LATE WORK: I will not consider any requests for deadline extensions received less than 48 hours before the assignment deadline, and requests will only be approved in extenuating circumstances. Your first approved extension will be granted with no penalty as long as your work is received within three days of the published deadline. Subsequent late assignments will be penalized 10 points per calendar day, up to four days. After the fourth day, I will not accept your work.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT: Computers and network access can be finicky. However, tech problems are not an acceptable reason for missing deadlines. As a University of Memphis student, you are entitled to help from the IT helpdesk. It is in your best interests to call as soon as you are aware of the problem. There are two ways to access the University of Memphis IT helpdesk: call 901-678-8888, or log in to the website (umhelpdesk.memphis.edu) to open a ticket.

COURSE SCHEDULE*

**All dates are subject to change. Any changes will benefit the student.*

Week One, Jan. 18: Introduction to the Course

- Get to know the course, the instructor and your classmates
- Syllabus overview

Assignments: Discussion post 1; submit portfolio link

Week Two, Jan. 24: Types of Feature Writing

- Overview of feature writing types (with examples)
- News vs. features
- Coming up with good ideas

Assignments: Posted readings/lectures; discussion post 2

Week Three, Jan. 31: Ethics and Issues

- Plagiarism and fabrication
- Case studies
- Writing assignments discussed in detail

Assignments: Posted readings/videos/lectures; discussion post 3

GRADUATE STUDENTS: Begin thinking of topic for research paper. You may need to contact me via email, text, or schedule a Zoom meeting with me for this.

Week Four, February 7: Writing Profiles

- What makes a good profile?
- Examples of profile features

Assignments: Posted readings/lectures; discussion post 4; pitch and begin writing WA1

Week Five, Feb. 14: Like News, But Longer

- Coming up with good ideas
- Interview techniques

Assignments: Posted readings/lectures; discussion post 5; WA1 due.

GRADUATE STUDENTS: Research topic due. Upon approval, you will have the remainder of the semester to write this paper. DUE: April 29.

Week Six, Feb. 21: Tackling the Issues

- Bringing awareness to the masses
- Case studies; examples; critique

Assignments: Posted readings/lectures; discussion post 6; pitch and begin writing WA2

Week Seven, Feb. 28: Once Upon a Time

- The elements of time and place in non-fiction storytelling

Assignments: Posted readings/lectures; discussion post 7; WA2 due

Week Eight, March 7: Spring Break
Spring Break. Relax. Regroup. Recharge.

Week Nine, Mar. 14: Shaping the Narrative

- One story, three parts
- Good narrative leads

Assignments: Discussion post 8; pitch and begin work on WA3

Week Ten, Mar. 21: Striking Out on Your Own

- Freelance strategies
- What's best for your story?
- Putting yourself out there

Assignments: Discussion post 9; WA3 due

Week Eleven, Mar. 28: Multimedia Elements

- The role of multimedia in features
- Print vs. digital
- Case studies; critique

Assignments: Discussion post 10; pitch and begin work on WA4

Week Twelve, April 14: The Major Feature

- WA4 due
- Assign WA5

Assignments: Pitch and begin work on WA5 (major)

Week Thirteen, Apr. 11: Major Feature (continued)

WA5—first draft due

Week Fourteen, Apr. 18: Revision Round

- Begin WA5 revisions

Week Fifteen, Apr. 24: Final Story Due

- WA5 due Friday, April 29
- Graduate students: Research paper due Friday, April 29

Note: The semester ends Wednesday, April 27; however, I am giving students until Friday to complete the final assignment.

JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

Portfolio requirement

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and graduate students are to begin in JRSM 7002. Students are to contribute to it in every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experiences and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in their capstone courses.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. Students may use any content management system, but students are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix or SquareSpace. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but they must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional lives, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files and writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

Email

Students must have their UofM email accounts activated. Students using another provider, such as Google, are required to have all UofM email forwarded to that account. Students should go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UofM email. Students are required to check their email daily. They are responsible for complying with any email sent to by professors or others in the University.

Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism and Strategic Media. Students may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements with the class professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary).

Journalism and Strategic Media is a professional program, and students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students who have some problem making it to class on time should make arrangements to correct the problem or consider taking another class. Students should consider this class as a “job” in the educational process and be on time just as they would elsewhere.

Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (“C-”) in a class required by their program of study in Journalism and Strategic Media more than three times will be dropped from the program.

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student’s online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo).

Academic integrity

In addition to University-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses or students receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on their own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Punishment may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the University.

Further, as this is a journalism and strategic media class, students are expected to comply with copyright law and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for rating originality of your ideas. Also to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. As part of this process, you may require to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your work. Other instructions to follow may also be given. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all. (*Office of Legal Counsel, October 11, 2018*)

Online SETEs

Students are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once the instructor has posted grades, student can immediately see that grade, provided they have completed a the SETE for that class. To access evaluation forms, students should log in to MyMemphis using their UUIDs and email passwords; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Student feedback is essential and is appreciated.

Deadlines

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

AP Style and grammar

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. Students are responsible for learning these rules and checking their work for errors.

Disability and accommodations

Students who need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Diversity and inclusivity

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Media reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

Weather policy

Always check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the University is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.

Student support

Student who are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, should visit the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/saos/sos/crisis-resources.php>. Any student who faces personal challenges including, but not limited to securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Office of Student Accountability, Outreach & Support (901-678-2187) located in the University Center, Suite 359 for assistance. Students may also talk with course instructors about the challenges they are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting with campus or community support.

COVID-19 protocols for this course

COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy - Masks and Social Distancing

Faculty, staff, students and visitors are expected to monitor current health and safety measure requirements posted to our website and shared through other official communication channels including, but not limited to University email. Definitions related to those requirements and enforcement mechanisms appear in the [COVID-19 Health and Safety Policy \(GE2040\)](#). **Please be reminded that the University currently requires that all persons, regardless of vaccination status, wear masks indoors and in places where appropriate social distancing is not possible.**

Classroom experiences from recent semesters have shown that the campus community generally understands and complies voluntarily with the mask requirement. The policy does permit faculty members to take action for non-compliance of mask use. Additionally, if students have concerns about faculty or staff mask use, contact Human Resources at hr@memphis.edu or 901.678.3573. Faculty who are delivering on-campus instruction may remove their face mask to teach, provided they are located within a delineated teaching area that is no less than 6 feet from students.

Student Health

Students who are experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing or a higher than normal temperature should inform me by email so they can be excused from class and should stay home. Students should contact their health care provider or the Student Health Center at <https://www.memphis.edu/health/>.

Students who have a positive COVID-19 test should contact the Dean of Students at deanofstudents@memphis.edu or 901.678.2187.

Testing & Notification

The University will continue to provide testing for the entire campus community. The details regarding test availability and locations can be found [here](#). Do not come to campus if you are experiencing symptoms, are in isolation or quarantine due to positive test results or exposure, pending test results, or have reason to believe you have come in contact with the virus.

Student Resources

Students who need additional resources can contact the Dean of Students Office at <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php>.

Guidelines for classes, labs and equipment in Meeman Journalism Building in Spring 2022

- Anyone feeling sick should stay home.
- Social distance from all others at least 6 feet when possible.
- Wear a mask at all times when in University buildings and outside when social distancing isn't possible.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer regularly.
- No more than one person in the elevator at a time.
- Disinfect your workstation before and after use, including desks, keyboards, mice and screens. Wash your hands after cleaning.
- Air purifiers must run at all times during class meetings.