

**Magazine Article Writing
Rowan University
Spring 2008**

CRN 20786/JRN 02313-3
Monday and Wednesday
9:25 a.m. – 10:40 a.m.
Boz 30

Mark Berkey-Gerard

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A practical course in journalistic reporting, writing, and editing for magazines.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Gain an understanding of the craft of journalism and how it applies to magazine publications.
- Write short news articles, a review, a personal profile, and a feature article suitable for publication.
- Improve overall writing skills with special attention to structure and the use of description, detail, scenes, dialogue, and tone.

TEXTS:

A packet of magazine articles that will serve as the primary text. You will be introduced to some of the best writers in the business. You are also encouraged to read specific magazines that interest you throughout the semester and bring examples of specific kinds of articles to class.

Also Elements of Style by William Strunk and E.B. White (ISBN 0-205-30902-X).

TEACHING METHODS:

This is a practical magazine journalism course. The bulk of the work will be writing assignments. You are expected to report, write, and rewrite assignments as if you are writing them for publication (and I hope that some will be published). I will serve as your editor and will give the same instruction and suggestions that I would give to professional journalists. There are also substantial reading assignments, discussions, and in-class activities. Please plan ahead for your assignments. It will be impossible to wait until the night before an assignment is due and try to complete it on time. Use the full time given for each assignment.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is essential for academic success in this course. Students will receive a class participation grade: 50% of this grade is attendance, 25% is reading and preparation for class, and 25% is your contribution to discussion and class activities. Students are expected to be in class on time.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Do not use words, phrases, or ideas without proper attribution. This includes copying content from the Internet. When in doubt, ask if it is ok to use something or how to attribute it accurately. For the university's complete academic honesty policy, see the Rowan University Student Information Guide. The university Web site also features a tutorial on how to avoid plagiarism at <http://www.rowan.edu/library/public/tutorial/honesty.htm>

STUDENT DISABILITY POLICY:

If you have documented educational needs, please see me at the beginning of the semester. Students must also provide documentation to the Academic Success Center to

receive university services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center is located in Savitz Hall, 3rd floor.

OFFICE HOURS:

I welcome conversations with students outside of class. My regular office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. I will also be available other times as well. If you would like to make an appointment, feel free to email or call. If you have questions about assignments anytime throughout the week, please email me and I will respond as soon as I am able. I will also email you between classes, responding to your work and offering suggestions. Please check your email throughout the week so that you receive messages.

GRADING:

In addition to your class participation grade, evaluation is based on five writing assignments: two news articles, a review of art/music/literature/film, a profile of an individual, and a final feature article. Assignments will be evaluated on clarity, structure, mechanics, ingenuity, and if the article meets the stated objectives outlined.

The point value for each assignment is:

News Article I	5 points
News Article II	10 points
Review	10 points
Profile	25 points
Final Feature Article	40 points
Class Participation	10 points
<u>Total</u>	<u>100 points</u>

All assignments must be typed, double spaced, and include a list of people you talked to with their contact information (phone and/or email).

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date assigned. Please note: **NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.** Please plan ahead. If you cannot be in class when an assignment is due, you must send it to class with someone or email it to me **PRIOR** to the time class starts.

You may rewrite an assignment if you are not satisfied with the grade. In fact, I encourage you to rewrite assignments. Writing is rewriting. Rewriting does not mean just correcting errors, but often doing more reporting and sometimes completely reworking an article. You can rewrite any assignment with the exception of your final project. The final feature article will go through two drafts. The first draft will not be graded, but it must be your best draft.

CLASS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE – SPRING 2008

Wed, Jan 23 – FIRST CLASS

Lecture: Introduction and cover syllabus

Assignment: Read Intro to the "Best Magazine Writing of 2005" by Nicholas Lemann
"Encounters with Clowns, Kings, Singers, and Surfers" by Susan Orlean

Mon, Jan 28

Lecture: Does Writing Matter?

Assignment: Read "Why I Write" by Joan Didion
"Voiceless, Defenseless and a Source of Cash" by Clifford Levy
Bring in a magazine article you like to next class

Wed, Jan 30

Lecture: Structuring a Story and Writing a Good Lead

Assignment: Read "Covering the Cops" by Calvin Trillin
"Love in the Time of Coloring" by Deirdre Dolan
Bring 5 story ideas for first article

Mon, Feb 4

Lecture: How to Improve Your Writing in "Ten Easy Steps"

Assignment: Read pages ix - 33 in Strunk and White
Read: "Why French Fries Taste So Good" by Eric Schlosser
Work on News Article I

Wed, Feb 6

NEWS ARTICLE I DUE TODAY

Lecture: Use of Description, Detail, Scenes and Quotes

Assignment: Read pages 34-65 in Strunk and White
Work on News Article II

Mon, Feb 11

Lecture: Tone – What is It? How Can You Control It?

Assignment: Read pages 66-85 in Strunk and White
Work on News Article II

Wed, Feb 13

Lecture: The Art of Interviewing

Assignment: Read "Rules for Reporting" by Lillian Ross
Work on News Article II

Mon, Feb 18

Lecture: Use of Dialogue

Assignment: Read "The Shit-Kickers of Madison Avenue" by Lillian Ross
Work on News Article II

Wed, Feb 20

NEWS ARTICLE II DUE TODAY

Lecture: Writing a Review

Assignment: Read "Fever Pitch" by Sam Kashner
"A Paler Shade of White" by Sasha Frere-Jones
Bring in a magazine review that you like

Mon, Feb 25

Assignment: Read "American Pseudo" by Frank Rich
Prepare your review pitch for next class

Wed, Feb 27

REVIEW PITCH DUE TODAY

Assignment: "Space Case" by Anthony Lane
"Life as Ellington's Son Was Mostly Mood Indigo" by Michiko Kakutani
Work on Review

Mon, March 3

Editing Conferences

Work on Review

Wed, March 5

REVIEW DUE TODAY

Lecture: Writing a Personal Profile
Assignment: Read "Introduction to Life Stories" by David Remnick
"American Man at Age Ten" and "Maui Surfer Girls" by Susan Orlean

Mon, March 10

Assignment: Read "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" by Gay Talese

Work on Personal Profile

Wed, March 12

Assignment: Read "The Runner" by David Samuels

"American Communion" by David Kamp

"Walking His Life Away" by Gary Smith

Work on Profile

March 17 and 19 – NO CLASS/SPRING BREAK

Mon, March 24

Assignment: Read "Anything Pink Rocks" by Alec Wilkerson

Work on Profile

Wed, March 26

Editing Conferences

Assignment: Work on Profile

Mon, March 31

Editing Conferences

Assignment: Work on Profile

Wed, April 2

PERSONAL PROFILE DUE TODAY

Lecture: Elements of a Feature-Length Article
Assignment: Read "The Marriage Cure" by Katherine Boo
Assignment: Read "Innocence Lost" by Nina Martin

Mon, April 7

Assignment: Read "Goodbye to All That" by Joan Dideon

"My Big Fat Question" by Michael Wolff

Work on First Draft of Final Feature

Wed, April 9

FINAL FEATURE PITCH DUE

Assignment: Work on First Draft of Final Feature

Mon, April 14

Assignment: Work on First Draft of Final Feature

Wed, April 16

LEAD AND OUTLINE FOR FEATURE DUE

Assignment: Working on First Draft of Final Feature

Mon, April 21

Assignment: Working on First Draft of Final Feature

Wed, April 23

FIRST DRAFT OF FEATURE DUE

Mon, April 28

First Draft Returned

Editing Conferences

Assignment: Work on Final Draft

Wed, April 30

Editing Conferences

Assignment: Work on Final Draft

Mon, May 5

FINAL FEATURE ARTICLE DUE

Lecture: So Now What?

May 7-10 – FINALS WEEK

Self Evaluation and Course Evaluation