COJO 350: Magazine Writing

THE ESSENTIALS
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Office hours: Noon - 3 p.m. Tuesday through Friday
Class time: 5:30 p.m. - 7:15 p.m. Monday and Wednesday
Classroom: OEC 303
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ABOUT THIS CLASS
Nonfiction magazine writing is much like other journalistic writing, only more so. It requires more care in selecting a subject, more reporting, more attention to story structure and more independence in your working habits. Our goal is to learn a process for writing and selling these kinds of articles. It isn’t the only process you could use, but assuming that you are new to magazine writing, it’s a process you will be expected to follow closely, step by step.

We will learn by doing. We’ll look at magazines and the articles in them. We’ll come up with story ideas. We’ll research and report, and we'll write a few magazine articles. A final goal is for each student to produce one magazine story worthy of publication.

This is a writing-intensive class! Occasionally I'll have a student who tells me he really doesn’t like to write. I once had a student tell me he didn’t read books. If you are either of these students, this class is not for you.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES
Most of what you learn will not come during your class periods. You will hear a lot and see some things in class, but 90 percent of your learning will come from the activities you perform outside of class. Our principal learning activities will be:

1. Read and study the assigned materials.
2. Be prepared to take the assigned quizzes.
3. Be attentive in class. Come prepared to contribute to the discussion, then join in without being asked.
4. Fulfill the writing projects to the best of your ability.
5. Attend coaching sessions with the instructor. Listen to what he has to say cheerfully and with a minimum of argument.
6. Discuss the writing projects with your colleagues and with the whole class.
7. When asked to edit what a classmate has written, be thorough and offer constructive advice.
8. Do not take criticism personally.

GENERAL SCHEDULE
The general outline will be lecture and discussion on Mondays to introduce the principal themes, with Wednesdays to work with me on your projects, take quizzes, and review and evaluate your work. On some weeks, we will meet individually rather than hold formal class sessions.

This class requires responsibility and initiative on your part, just as magazine writing takes in the real world. What you do outside of class, working on your own to gather information and write your stories, will determine how well you do.

TEXT
We have one required text for this class:


YOU DO NOT NEED A KINDLE TO BUY AND READ THIS BOOK! Amazon offers free downloads that allow you to read Kindle books on your PC, Mac or smart phone at amazon.com.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS


• The Writer’s Market 2010. Cincinnati: Writer’s Digest, 2010. I will have a copy of this available.

GRADING
Your performance will be measured by these activities:

• Quizzes, 10 percent: These periodic quizzes will be designed as learning experiences. Any quiz will be announced one class period ahead.

• Writing activities, 20 percent: You’ll perform several writing and editing assignments during the semester. These will include:

• Short papers analyzing magazine stories you have read.

• Magazine briefs.

• Query letters.

• Audience analysis.

• Peer editing of your classmates’ work.
Research notes, citations and other supporting material.

A magazine-style essay.

A magazine feature, 20 percent: A feature is magazine work between 1,000 and 2,000 words.

A magazine article, 40 percent: An article is a magazine work longer than 2,000 words. For this class, your article will be at least 3,000 words.

Class participation, 10 percent: Part of this component is attendance. Most of this is for what you bring to class as an individual, what you see, what you read, what you think.

See the assignments page for detailed instructions.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK

- Submit each written assignment as a Word document attached to an e-mail to: mjodonnel@stthomas.edu.
- Follow this format:
  - black text on white 8¼-by-11-inch paper
  - Courier or Courier New font, 12-point type, double-spaced
  - 1-inch margins all around
  - I've provided an example of a correctly formatted story; we will go over the mechanics of using Word to format your document.
- Use only the St. Thomas e-mail system to cut down on technical problems.
- With your final draft of every article, submit complete fact-checking material
  - names and phone numbers for sources
  - citations for the sources of all stated facts
- Put each complete assignment — multiple briefs, or story and fact-checking material — into one Word file before printing and sending.
- For hard copies, attach loose pages neatly with a paper clip.

CLASS POLICIES: READ THIS TWICE

- Every piece written in this class will be published, either in a magazine if you choose to submit it or on the class Web site. That means you must adhere to the same professional standards as working journalists. Factual errors, bad grammar, conflicts of interest and missed deadlines are serious offenses and will hurt your grade. Follow the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics.
- Deadlines are part of the business.
  - Each story is due in my e-mail inbox no later than 5 p.m. on the due date.
  - The late penalty is one grade for each day the story is late, so an “A” paper that is turned in before 5 p.m. the day after it is due will receive a “B.”
  - A late deadline can be negotiated, but only before the regular deadline and only for exceptional reasons, such as an extended illness.
- Professional journalists do not recognize computer problems or appointments canceled at the last minute as valid excuses for missed deadlines. They plan ahead and work ahead.
- Professional writers represent their publications as well as themselves. When you interview someone for this class, you are representing the University of St. Thomas. Treat those you interview with courtesy, respect and fairness.
- This class will have zero tolerance for plagiarism and fabrication, as is the case for the journalism profession at large.
  - Fabrication is the intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information used in your writing.
  - Plagiarism is the deliberate use of another person’s ideas, words or statements as your own without attribution. The first defense against plagiarism, then, is attribution.
  - If you directly quote even a phrase, you must use quotation marks or set it off as a block quote.
  - If you summarize or paraphrase another’s words, clearly indicate where the summary or paraphrase begins and ends, and provide an attribution.
  - If you use another’s idea, give that person credit.
  - If you take words from another's written work, cite the written source in your text.
- The minimum penalty for fabrication or plagiarism is an “F” on that assignment, but more severe penalties might be in order. See the university policy on academic integrity for more on this.
- You may not turn in stories written for another class or previously published material. In some circumstances, you can build on earlier work, but the resulting piece must be original for this class. See me early in the process for an OK if you think you want to take this approach.
- I encourage you to submit the writing you do for this class to university magazines or other publications.
- A part of your grade is based on attendance and participation. Woody Allen said 70 percent of success was in just showing up. That estimate is high for this course, but my experience has always been that those who come to class do better than those who don’t. Attending class and contributing to the discussion is in your best interest.
- If you have any other questions about ethics as you write, research and report, ask me. You get no extra points for doing things like the Lone Ranger.
WRITING PROJECTS

NOTE: This is a writing-intensive class; 70 percent of your grade is riding on writing assignments. If you are unsure about anything in these assignments, ask now! I award no extra points for your being the Lone Ranger.

FRONT-OF-THE-BOOK PIECES (2)

A front-of-the-book piece must be tailored to the target audience of the publication. It is short, perhaps as few as 150 words, but can be as many as 500 words.

For this assignment you will write two FOB pieces for a magazine of your choice. Before you begin writing:
- Read Chapters 1 and 2 in Bugeja.
- Carry out the activities in The News Stand: Method to Picture the Market 1 at the end of Chapter 1. Use the Magazine Analysis Form (PDF) and be prepared to turn it in with your article.
- In Chapter 2, pay special attention to Preliminary Approaches. Make sure you understand thoroughly the informational, anecdotal and personal experience approaches.
- Carry out appropriate research to gather the three types of information: stored, observational, personal. Refer to Information at Its Source for more on this.

Deadlines:
- By Monday, Sept. 13, e-mail to me your analyses of at least two magazines that are likely markets for your FOB pieces. You should do many more than this, but I'm asking for just two.
- By Friday, Sept. 23, e-mail to me your finished FOB pieces in proper manuscript form in Word format (.doc).
  ▼ Be sure to read the complete guidelines for submission, especially the part about including fact-checking information (names, numbers, citations).
  ▼ Remember that the deadline is 5 p.m. on the due date.

Examples:
You should find the examples in the publication you choose for this assignment.

Things I will grade:
- Good, thorough audience analysis as manifested in your analysis forms and in your two FOB pieces.
- Suitability of subject matter to the publication and its target audience.
- Proper choice and use of approach: informational, anecdotal or personal experience.
- Choice of voice (formal, informal, first-person, second-person, third-person) appropriate to the subject matter and the publication.
- Proper grammar, punctuation and style.

FEATURE

A feature is a magazine piece of 1,000 to 2,000 words. A feature can be:
- A how-to piece: A work that presents practical, step-by-step information to readers (also known as a service piece).
- An essay: A formal or informal work by an author describing a personal experience or presenting an argument, often literary in tone with heavy thematic emphasis.
- A column: A work between 750 and 1,000 words, usually employing a narrator and taking a personal experience approach.
- A profile: A work that focuses on the life or accomplishments of a source.
- Criticism: This is more than personal opinion about a work of art, literature or architecture. See me if you choose this route.
- Any other type of story that is suited to your publication and target audience.

Before you begin writing:
- Read Chapters 3-5 in Bugeja.
- Do your audience research as you did for your FOB pieces. Use the Magazine Analysis Form (PDF) and be prepared to turn it in with your feature.
- In Chapter 3, pay special attention to Bugeja’s explanation of the difference between topic and theme. Make sure you understand thoroughly the what a theme is and how it relates to your target audience.
- Carry out thorough research of your topic to gather the three types of information: stored, observational, personal. Refer to Information at Its Source for more on this.
- If you want to conduct interviews (and I hope you do), schedule those early and be thorough in conducting them.

Deadlines:
- By Friday, Sept. 30, e-mail to me your analyses of the magazine you believe is a likely market for your feature. You should analyze several, but I'm asking for just your final choice.
- By Friday, Oct. 14, e-mail to me your best draft so far in proper manuscript form in Word format (.doc). Include fact-checking information (names, numbers, citations).
- By Friday, Oct. 21, e-mail to me your finished feature in proper manuscript form in Word format (.doc).
  ▼ Be sure to read the complete guidelines for submission, especially the part about including fact-checking information (names, numbers, citations).
  ▼ Remember that the deadline is 5 p.m. on the due date.
- We will have a peer editing session before the midterm break.
Things I will grade:
- Good, thorough audience analysis as manifested in your analysis forms and in your finished feature.
- Suitability of subject matter to the publication and its target audience.
- Proper choice and use of theme. Your piece should demonstrate a clear understanding of the difference between topic and theme.
- Thorough research and the use of a variety of information sources: stored, observational or personal.
- Strong use of quotations, with proper lead-ins and attribution.
- Continued strong use of approach and voice.
- Proper grammar, punctuation and style.

ARTICLE
An article is a magazine work longer than 2,000 words. For this class, you will write an article of at least 3,000 words, with an upper limit of 5,000 words. The key to writing such a long piece is research, research, research. When you get down to the final polishing, you should be looking for places to trim your copy rather than pad it out.

Before you begin writing:
- Read Chapters 6-8 in Bugeja.
- Do your audience research as you did for your FOB pieces. Use the Magazine Analysis Form (PDF) and be prepared to turn it in with your feature.
- In Chapter 6, pay special attention to Bugeja’s explanation of the different ways authors think of time, such as chronological or grammatical. Choose carefully your key moment in time that governs how you use verb tenses as you jump around with flashbacks or flash forwards.
- In Chapter 7, read carefully what he has to say about viewpoint and voice. Make sure you understand this so that you don’t have a lapse in voice. In long pieces this is easy to do.
- Carry out thorough research of your topic to gather the three types of information: stored, observational, personal. Refer to Information at Its Source for more on this.
- Schedule your interviews early and be thorough in conducting them.

Deadlines:
- By Friday, Nov. 5, e-mail to me your analyses of the magazine you believe is a likely market for your article. You should analyze several, but I’m asking for just your final choice.
- By Friday, Nov. 19, e-mail to me your best draft so far in proper manuscript form in Word format (.doc). Include fact-checking information (names, numbers, citations). The fact-checking info is the most important part of this. It should be extensive and thorough.
- By Friday, 3, e-mail to me your finished feature in proper manuscript form in Word format (.doc).
  - Be sure to read the complete guidelines for submission, especially the part about including fact-checking information (names, numbers, citations).
  - Remember that the deadline is 5 p.m. on the due date.
- We will have a peer editing session during the last week of class.

Things I will grade:
- Good, thorough audience analysis as manifested in your analysis forms and in your finished feature.
- Suitability of subject matter to the publication and its target audience.
- A strong theme that appeals to the target audience, with appropriate thematic breaks.
- Thorough research and the use of a variety of information sources: stored, observational or personal.
- Strong use of quotations, with proper lead-ins and attribution.
- Consistent, logical and properly executed use of the time element.
- Consistent viewpoint and voice, without lapses.
- Proper grammar, punctuation and style.