

J650 Magazine Writing–Advanced Media Spring 2018

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Course goals

Magazine writing is writing that has voice and reporting written with a specific audience in mind. It is storytelling in several forms, from short articles (everything from infographics and narratives to Q&As) to long ones. It is a form that emphasizes reporting and the craft of writing. Magazine-style writing appears in many places, from actual magazines to websites to newspapers. It is a style of content that is highly versatile.

For this class, you will write four types of articles: the as-told-to article, the Q&A, the department and the long feature. You will write primarily for the online magazine Style on the Hill (styleonthehill.com), a student-produced magazine for a student audience. SOTH offers the opportunity to have your work published.

You will generate your own story ideas. You will learn how to write in your own voice and how to work with an editor.

The classroom portion of this course has these purposes:

- To teach you what a magazine is and how it differs from a news source
- To teach you about different kinds of magazine articles and how to write them
- To develop your ability to focus and write stories for a diverse audience
- To develop your research and interviewing skills
- To develop and strengthen your writing and editing skills
- To develop your ability to conceive different, and appropriate, ways of telling stories
- To critique and learn from work produced by you and your peers

How the course works

The course will be structured around class discussion and individual conferences for stories. You will learn by reading and doing.

Course requirements

	Points
Writing assignments	
1. How It Feels story	50 points
2. Q&A	100 points
3. Department	100 points
3. A feature of about 1,600 words total	250 points
4. Story pitches (2)	50 points each
Critiques of articles (at least 2)	25 points each
Professionalism (Ability to meet deadlines, attendance)	75 points

Required texts

- *The Associated Press Stylebook*
- Readings as handed out in class

Pitches

You will pitch every story you write in this class. A good pitch is a story plan, and it helps you (and me) to see if you have a story well suited to SOTH and its audience. I will give you a pitch format in class. Your pitch will require some reporting and thinking about story structure.

Department

You will write one magazine department story. This story, about 500 to 600 words, will need to have at least two live sources, experts and anecdotal sources (people who have experienced what you are writing about.) and/or experiential reporting (you DO the thing you're writing about) plus additional research integrated into the text.

Q&A and How It Feels

The Q&A and the as-told-to stories are common story forms in magazines and other media. For How It Feels you will find a person with a good story to tell about an experience and write it from a first-person perspective, as though that person is telling the story. Q&As are similar—you are getting a person to provide a personal perspective and stories related to one topic. For example, last year students interviewed students about why they chose to study journalism. You can find these on the journalism school website under **Student Opportunities > Faces of the J-School**.

Feature

You will write a magazine feature of about 1,700 words. This story must have at least **SIX LIVE** sources, plus additional cited research. This story will give you experience writing a longer story with deeper reporting, which is important at magazines and online. Deadlines for these stories will be paced throughout the semester. You will meet with me at least once on your story. These stories may run in SOTH but you also may submit them to another publication.

Readings summaries

When we talk about different types of magazine articles, I will give you articles to read and ask you to write one-page summaries to help prepare you for class discussion. If you do the work and turn in a critique on the day it is due, you will get 50 points. If you don't turn in a critique, you will get a 0. One or two 0s can drop your overall grade by half a letter. In other words, instead of an A, you might get an A-. These grades count in the Preparation and Participation part of your grade.

Grading

All of you come to this class with varying levels of knowledge and experience. Some of you already have worked for magazines; others have just had the intermediate reporting class. You don't have to know how to do everything at the start of the semester, but you do have to show early and consistent progress. When you make mistakes, learn from them. When you get edited heavily, learn from that. **Consistent improvement over time is the key to a good grade.**

DEADLINES/PENALTIES

Attendance

You must attend class each week. You will be allowed one unexcused absence from class. More than one unexcused absence will result in a C in the Participation part of your grade.

Deadlines

You have to meet them. Late work loses 5 points a day. If you are having trouble with a story or sources, TELL ME; I may adjust a deadline. "Trouble with sources" does not mean you waited until the week a story is due to try reaching them. *The key to meeting deadlines is giving yourself two weeks on each department and a month on the feature.*

Inclement weather and disabilities

In the event of inclement weather, the decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials. To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call 864-7669 (864-SNOW). The staff of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), 135 Strong, coordinates accommodations and services for KU courses. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodations in KU classes and have not contacted SSD, please do so as soon as possible.

Additional journalism school policies

No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester.

Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without the student's consent.

The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting.

The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state aid. Students who receive any form of Financial Aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours and grades to qualify for and retain that aid.

Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

Plagiarism

Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

How Articles are Graded

Reporting:

Your stories need to have multiple, sources, experts and participants. Because your audience is diverse, your sources also need to be diverse—in racial and ethnic background, age, gender, political and religious beliefs. You will need to consult many more sources than you actually will cite in your stories. Reach for the best sources for your stories—not just the most convenient ones. Quality of sources counts as much as quantity.

You will have to interview live sources for your stories, preferably in person or over the phone. You cannot use e-mail interviews unless a source is overseas. You may use the Internet for background research, but you may not use websites as sources for stories.

Writing:

In magazine writing, you want to tell stories, not push information. Don't just string together quotes from various sources. There has to be both logic and grace to the organization; as a rule, it is a good idea to place similar information together. Your leads need to compel your reader. There should be a sense of character, complication and resolution (an effective ending). Also there should be good transitions throughout. I appreciate interesting and original style, but never at the expense of clarity. Good writing makes efficient use of words. Use every word that is needed, not one more. Good grammar is essential.

Completeness:

For each story, you will need to write a SEO title. You need to copyedit your stories using Associated Press style.

Professionalism:

All articles must be submitted on time, with all required components. If you get in trouble with a story (for example, a source backs out or you discover there is no story), talk to me as soon as possible.

Grading criteria:

90 to 100%

Outstanding. This grade is for work of clearly professional caliber. The focus is clear and relatable. The reporting is complete (at least 2 LIVE sources for departments, 6 for the feature + additional research) and leaves no significant questions unanswered. It shows depth of understanding of the topic and a grasp of storytelling or of the form used. The writing is clear and well organized and follows proper grammar and style. It requires only minor editing. All forms are concise, smooth and well edited. Includes all needed pieces.

80% to 89%

Good. This grade is for work that could be raised to professional standards without radical reworking. Work needs minor revisions such as rewriting, fine-tuning mechanics or providing more or better sources. "B" work doesn't necessarily have anything wrong, but it could be better, often with a stronger topic or subject, a more artistic presentation, better information, or improved form.

70% to 79%

Adequate. Work needs significant revision in at least one major area. Does not measure up to professional quality but could be salvaged. Reporting may be incomplete, or timid, or factually flawed. The idea may be weak or lack focus. Writing shows the seams in the story.

69% and below

Unacceptable performance. The writing is confused and ungrammatical. The reporting is flawed and may contain major factual errors and/or omissions or may show poor judgment about what's appropriate. Any story with only one source is a failing story in this class.

J650 Magazine Production—Campus Media
Course Schedule [SPOILER ALERT: subject to change]

Week 1 | Jan. 17

Introduction to class

Week 2 | Jan. 22

Nature of magazines and magazine articles

Mission, audience, personality, parts

For Jan. 24: Read How It Feels articles

Jan. 24

Writing the as-told-to article

How It Feels assigned | DUE Feb. 5

Week 3 | Jan. 29

Finding and focusing ideas for
stories—pitches

For Jan. 31: Read department articles + write one-page critique

Jan. 31

Discussion: Department articles

For Feb. 8: Read features

Week 4 | Feb. 5

Pitch for department article DUE

Feb. 7

Discussion: Features

Week 5 | Feb. 12

Writing the Q&A article

Q&A assigned | DUE March 5

Feb. 14

Pitch for feature DUE

Week 6 | Feb. 19

Department conference

Feb. 21

Department conference

Week 7 | Feb. 26

Department conference

Feb. 28

Department conference

Week 8 | March 5
Feature list of sources and preliminary research DUE

March 7
Pitching ideas to magazines
Department DUE

Week 9 | March 12
Discussion about features

March 14
Revision: The soul of good writing

Week 10 | March 19 – 23
Spring Break! Yay!

Week 11 | March 26
Guest speaker

March 28

Week 12 | April 2
Feature meet #1 and #2

April 4
Feature meet #3 and #4

Week 13 | April 9
Feature meet #5 and #6

April 11
Feature meet #6 and #7

Week 14 | April 16
Feature meet #8 and #9

April 18
Feature meet #10 and #11

Week 15 | April 23
Feature meet #12

April 25

Week 16 | April 30

May 2
Course wrap-up