JAMS 306/Feature and Magazine Writing: SYLLABUS
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Department of Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies
Instructor: Erik Gunn

My name is Erik Gunn. I’ve worked as a freelance journalist and magazine writer and editor since 1995 and before that for 15 years as a daily newspaper reporter. I’ve taught this class since the Fall Semester of 2014. I am most easily reached through my UWM email address: gunnh@uwm.edu. Should you need to reach me by telephone, call 262-361-3745.

JAMS 306 – Feature and Magazine Writing is taught with a journalism focus, employing the standards and perspectives of professional journalism. Student work is expected to be grounded in journalistic style, practices, and principles.

Course Objectives

1. To provide experience in writing feature stories suitable for publication in print or online.
2. To expose students to examples of published feature articles from which they can profitably learn the craft.
3. To provide opportunities for students to further journalism skills, including:
   - news judgment and critical thinking;
   - fact-gathering through primary and secondary sources, including interviews, direct observation, and documents;
   - story-telling that is accurate, concise, and compelling;
   - mastery of standard mechanics for contemporary professional writing;
   - a commitment to the ethical practice of journalism and to the continuing role of journalists amid continuing change in society, culture, and media technology.

Workload Statement

This class meets the standards set forth by the university for expected in-class and out-of-class workloads. Reading for this class requires less time than many classes; the bulk of out-of-class time is spent on reporting and writing for assignments. The estimated total workload over the 15 weeks of the semester is just under 140 hours, divided as follows:

- Lecture: (twice a week, 75 minutes a lecture): 37.5 hours
- Reading: 20 hours
- Short assignments: 30 hours
- Projects: 50 hours

For more on UWM policies regarding grading, absence, and related matters, see http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf.

Grades are based upon:

1. Attendance; Participation/In-Class Activities – 20% (combined).

Absences will be counted as unexcused unless you provide medical documentation or you have notified the instructor in advance, and received approval of a compelling reason for your absence. Being late or leaving class early without prior approval counts as ½ an absence. Attendance is 10% of the grade.
Participation and Effort demonstrates your willingness to engage with the course material and with the assignments. Be prepared to respond to questions, engage in dialogue, and discuss your work. The degree of effort you show in applying yourself to assignments also contributes to this portion of your grade.

Participation also is measured through In-class Activities, including individual and small-group work tied to out-of-class assignments as well as in-class lecture material. They are graded Pass/Fail and cannot be made up due to absence.

Participation in all its forms adds up to 10% of the grade.

2. Short Assignments – 20%

Short Assignments include free-standing reporting/writing assignments, building blocks for major projects, and project First Drafts. Other short assignments ask students to reflect on reading for the class or are tied to events such as class guest speakers.

3. Three Major Projects – 60%, divided accordingly:

   I. A Profile of an individual – a living person of interest or relevance, whom you must interview; 800-1,000 words; 10%.

   II. A Place story rooted in a physical place or institution that you must visit as part of your reporting for this project; 1,000-1,200 words; 20%.

   III. A Magazine Story on a subject of compelling reader interest; 1,500-2,000 words.; 30%.

Course Components

1. Written Assignments.

2. Class Meetings (Lecture). The class meets according to the established schedule. Exceptions will be made clear in both in-class and online communications. Attendance will be taken. Class meetings will consist of lectures, discussions, and a variety of in-class activities.

3. Reading. There are two required reference texts. You will be expected to consult them regularly as you write and edit your work. They are:

   - The AP Stylebook.

Additional required reading will be posted on the class content management site.

A number of excellent books on journalism and narrative-based feature writing are included in the Recommended Course Text list. Source materials for assigned readings include:

   - William Reuhlmann, Stalking the Feature Story (out of print)
   - James B. Stewart, Follow the Story (Simon & Schuster/Touchstone)
   - David Fryxell, How to Write Fast (While Writing Well) (Writer’s Digest)
   - Anne Lamott, Bird by Bird (Anchor)
   - Naveed Saleh, The Complete Guide to Article Writing (Writer’s Digest)

Updated 4/30/2018
Procedures, Expectations, and Standards

This class is among those field-testing the new Canvas Content Management system being adopted by the University of Wisconsin System. Assignments, calendars, reading, and resources will all be posted at the class Canvas site, along with reminders and relevant news for students.

1. Assignment Memos. All assignments will include an Assignment Note with instructions on what is required.

2. Submission and Deadlines. Submit all written assignments as required by the assigned deadline. The assignment memo will indicate if a particular assignment must be submitted electronically, on paper, or both. *Penalties will be imposed for late work without an approved extension.*

3. Rubrics. Detailed rubrics will be posted in connection with each assignment. Review them for a clear understanding of the standards against which assignments will be assessed.

4. Reporting and Writing Expectations. The three Major Projects and most Short Assignments are based on your original reporting, written in a journalistic style and format. This class pays equal attention to Reporting – gathering, verifying, and selecting information – and Writing. Student journalists enrolled in this class will be expected to

   - interview people;
   - read and understand reliable document sources for background information;
   - employ your own personal observation.

You cannot write well without accurate, and thorough reporting. You cannot serve your reporting – your story – adequately without strong, accurate, and compelling writing. Both short and long reporting and writing assignments are assessed against standards that include:

   - Thoroughness, accuracy, and perspective in reporting;
   - Compelling, concise, and coherent writing;
   - Command of writing mechanics, consistent style, and journalism conventions; and
   - Adherence to prescribed formatting instructions and a required source list. See the Formatting supplement to this syllabus for additional details.

5. Original Work, Source Conflicts, and Plagiarism

   - **Work for this class must be original to this class.** Work previously written for another class, any publication, or your employer will not be accepted.

   - **Avoid source conflicts of interest.** People you interview for stories cannot be family members or close friends. The only exceptions are *if we discuss your plans in advance* and demonstrate to my satisfaction compelling and sound reasons for including an individual with whom you have this sort of personal relationship.

   - **Do not plagiarize.** Plagiarism – presenting another person’s words and ideas as your own – is equally unacceptable in academia and journalism. *Intent is irrelevant.* Plagiarism can be grounds for failing an assignment or the course.

Updated 4/30/2018