

Communication 5750
Feature Writing
Spring 2010

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Patricia Ferrier
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Office hours: 9:30 to 11 a.m. and 1 to 2 p.m. Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday, Thursday; and by appointment

COURSE TEXT: Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines:
The Pursuit of Excellence by Edward Jay Friedlander
and John Lee
Writer's Market (You may want to investigate subscribing to
Writer's Market online at writersmarket.com. The cost is \$5.99 per
month.)

COURSE OBJECTIVES: To polish general writing skills, to focus writing for a
specific purpose and audience, and to learn to write informative, entertaining articles for
magazines and trade journals

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Instruction and practice in writing feature articles for trade
journals and magazines

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: You will have the opportunity to demonstrate your
progress through writing two query letters, two major (5 to 10 typed pages) articles and
one revised article for magazines, trade journals or newspaper magazine supplements. As
long as you stick to public, nonfiction feature writing, you have much latitude in what
you may choose to write. The firm requirements are that:

1. you hand in at least five typed pages for each paper,
2. all articles have information from at least three personal interviews,
3. you write for two different magazines or journals, and
4. in addition to the final article and cover letter, you need to hand in interview
notes, copies of any library or Internet resources consulted, and at least one rough
draft. You also need to furnish me with telephone numbers of people discussed or
quoted in the article so that I may call to verify information in your stories.

DISABILITIES: Any student who has a condition that may affect academic
performance is encouraged to make an appointment with me or with the coordinator of
disability issues, Beulah Oldham, 130 Clement, telephone 648-6230, to discuss this
matter.

Students must read the “Code of Student Conduct” in the new *Student Handbook* for an understanding of what will be expected of them within the academic setting.

GRADING: The two articles will account equally for half of your final grade. The rest of your grade will consist of the average of your workshop articles, other assignments, the revised article, the Story of the Week assignments and your Discussion Board entries.

It is especially important that you are comfortable with the Discussion Board, which will be used to exchange information between your colleagues and your instructor. In this class we will use the discussion board as a writer’s workshop. Because it is difficult to critique your own work, many professional writers will join groups of writers in order to get others to read and critique their work. I am asking you to work as a writers’ group to offer suggestions for shaping stories to fit a magazine’s requirements and for improving the finished piece. You will need to respond to story ideas or rough drafts from at least two other people in the group.

Tentative work schedule for COMM 5750, Feature writing
This schedule is subject to change

Week 1 Jan. 11-16

Reading: Friedlander, Chapters 1 and 2

1. Assignment: Self-analysis. Due in Discussion Board by 8 a.m. Jan. 18. (Instructions are listed on the Content page.)
2. Comment on two others' analysis papers by 8 a.m. Jan. 20.

Week 2 Jan. 17-23

Reading: Friedlander, Chapter 3 and "Do the writing only you can do". The article is available on the D2L site under "Content" and here:

http://www.poynter.org/dg.lts/id.5381/content.content_view.htm

1. Exercise: What's the Big Idea? Due in Discussion Board by 9 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20. Using a newspaper, come up with five possible ideas for magazine stories. List the ideas, the audience that might be interested in those stories and, using your Writer's Market, at least two magazines you could query about sending each story.
2. Comment on postings by at least two other students by midnight, Friday, Jan. 22.

Week 3 Jan. 24-30

Readings: Chapters 4 and 5

1. Story of the Week No. 1 Post story in Discussion Board by midnight Jan. 24.
2. Comment on two stories due in Discussion Board by midnight, Jan. 28.
3. Assignment: Interview exercise to be announced. Due by midnight, Jan. 30.

Week 4 Jan. 31 – Feb. 6

Reading: Chapter 6

1. Pay special attention to the discussion of anecdotes in this chapter. Then think about what you have done today or in the past few days and tell us the story of one event, using an anecdote. In the Discussion Board, post a 50- to 100-word anecdote that recalls the event or a person involved in it. The key to exceptional writing is to show the reader – don't tell. Paint a picture to show the reader what you are saying. Due by midnight, Feb. 4.
2. Comment on two others' anecdotes. Comments due by midnight, Feb. 6
3. Story of the Week No. 2. Post story in Discussion Board by midnight Feb. 1.
4. Comment on two stories in Discussion Board by midnight, Feb. 3.

Week 5 Feb. 7-13

Reading: Chapter 8 in Friedlander and in the Content area of D2L (How to write a query letter)

1. Draft of first article due in Discussion Board by 8 a.m. Monday, Feb. 8

2. Comment on at least two articles by 8 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 10.
3. Post draft of query letter for your first story to the Discussion Board by Feb. 9, give suggestions for two classmates by Feb. 11.
4. Post revised query letter to Dropbox by 8 a.m. Monday, Feb. 15.

Week 6 Feb. 14-20

Reading: Chapter 7 in Friedlander

Rewrite your first story using comments from other students and submit it in the Dropbox for grading by 8 a.m. Monday, Feb. 15.

Week 7 Feb. 21-27

Reading: Chapters 9 and 10 in Friedlander

1. Post first draft of second article on Discussion Board by 8 a.m. Monday, Feb. 22.
2. Critique two drafts by 8 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 24.

Week 8 Feb. 28-March 6

Assignment: Rewrite your second story using comments from other students and submit it in the Dropbox for grading by 8 a.m. Monday, March 1

Week 9 March 7-13

Final article due in Dropbox by 6 p.m. March 13.

The final article is a final revision of either Story 1 or Story 2 and must include a market analysis of the target magazine, explanation of why this article fits the magazine, a query letter, finished draft of article and telephone numbers of people discussed or quoted in the article. Instructions for a market analysis are on the Content page.

You must mail your query letter, story and the telephone numbers to the appropriate editor of your target magazine. Please include a self-addressed stamped envelope or proof that you have mailed your. "Proof" could include a receipt from the Post Office, an e-mail confirming receipt of your article, etc. Failure to include proof of mailing will cause a 20 percent deduction in your grade for the final story.