

Feature and Opinion Writing (COMM 262)

Fall 2018

Wednesdays 7-9:30 p.m.

School of Communication - Room 013

(Note: Proper attribution is of the utmost importance in journalism. In keeping with that, I'd like to note that this syllabus was created with great help from past syllabi by Prof. Dodie Hofstetter and Dean John Slania.)

Class Description:

Students will learn about writing feature stories, from idea generation to detail-oriented reporting to crafting engaging stories for both print and online readers. They will then focus on opinion writing in formats ranging from tweets to full-length columns and learn the reporting skills needed to communicate impactful opinions.

Instructor contact information:

Rex Huppke

Email: rhuppke@luc.edu (preferred) or rhuppke@gmail.com.

Cell: 312-203-8064

Office hours: By appointment.

Required texts and materials:

“Writing Opinion For Impact” by Conrad C. Fink. (This book won't be necessary until midway through the semester.)

AP Stylebook

Local daily and Sunday newspapers (print or online)

Class objectives:

Simply put, I want students to become better writers. I want each individual to begin the process of finding an authentic writing voice. That's not easy, but this will be a start. We'll hone in on the reporting skills necessary for

powerful feature and opinion writing and examine the craft that is behind any good feature story or opinion piece.

What students should expect each week:

- A news quiz. Along with basic questions about notable local and national news, students will sometimes be asked to give a short opinion or analysis of one major news story or suggest a feature story idea off the news. There may also be questions from the week's reading.
- A reading assignment.
- A class discussion of the week's reading assignment.
- An in-class writing drill. This could range anywhere from crafting a lede to writing a short feature or opinion piece (on deadline) to simply writing a cogent tweet in response to a news event.
- Discussion and review of work produced during in-class writing drill.

What I expect from students each week:

- Honesty and accuracy. Those are the two most important qualities any journalist can possess. If you make a mistake, say so. Own it and make it right. But try REALLY HARD to not make any mistakes.
- Engagement. This class will work best if we are talking and exchanging points of view. I expect you to ask questions and share opinions and not be afraid of any idea that might bubble up in your head. Everyone's voice is valuable, and I expect to hear all your voices each week.
- Professional, ethical behavior and respectful dialogue.
- Hard work. The point of this class is to learn and get better. That takes work, and I can assure you that effort will be weighed heavily in grading. The best students will not necessarily be the ones who are the most naturally gifted writers.

Grading:

A. Grades for quizzes and writing assignments will be posted on Sakai, generally within a week.

B. If requested, a midterm evaluation will be presented to student by instructor one-on-one or via phone.

C. Written assignments with a grade of C+ or lower may be redone and re-evaluated once if they are handed in the next week after receiving grade. If the second draft of the written assignment shows sufficient improvement, the student's grade for that assignment will be raised a maximum of half a letter grade. (C+ would go up to a B-, a C- would go up to a C etc...)

D. Students will be graded on class participation, written assignments, quizzes, attitude and attendance.

E. Late work/missed assignments will be accepted and will be graded down by one full grade. All assignments must be completed, but no credit will be given later than one week after original due date. If assignments are not completed, student will not pass the course.

F. **Attendance is crucial for this class.** We only meet once a week, so if you miss a class, you're effectively missing an entire week of the semester. In the case of an absence, it is a student's responsibility to contact the instructor to report the absence and to receive homework assignments AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. After one excused absence, additional absences due to illness will require a doctor's note. Additional absences for any other reason must be cleared in advance by the instructor, but the reason will have to be quite compelling. Absences will negatively impact your class participation grade.

G. Spelling, grammar and style mistakes will be subtracted from an assignment's grade.

H. Students will NOT be graded based on instructor's agreement or disagreement with the point of view/position taken by student in an opinion piece.

Total possible points for the semester: 1,000

Breakdown of points:

- News quizzes: 100
- Columnist/editorial page summaries: 100
- Class participation: 100

- Feature story 1: 100
- Feature story 2: 200
- Column 1: 100
- Column 2: 100
- Final Exam Piece (Feature Story or Column): 200

Full-semester grade scale:

- A: 1,000 - 940
- A-: 930 - 900
- B+: 890 - 880
- B: 870 - 830
- B-: 820 - 800
- C+: 790 - 780
- C: 770 - 730
- C-: 720 - 700
- D+: 690 - 680
- D: 670 - 630
- D-: 620 - 600
- F: 590 - 0

Academic Dishonesty Policy:

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher.
- Providing information to another student during an examination.
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination.
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor.
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom.

- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines.
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc...
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material.
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit.
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://luc.edu/english/writing.shtml#source>.

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make

certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

A complete description of the School of Communication Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <https://www.luc.edu/soc/resources/>

Student Accessibility Center (SAC):

If you have a special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact the SAC as soon as possible. Formal arrangements must be made through the office before course adjustments can be made. Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SAC website: <https://luc.edu/sac/sacstudents/>.

Mandated Reporter:

As a faculty member at Loyola University Chicago, I am committed to supporting students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. Therefore, if a student chooses to confide in me regarding an issue of gender-based misconduct, I am obligated to inform Loyola's Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Deputy Coordinator will assist you in connecting with all possible resources for support and reporting both on and off campus.

Class meeting schedule:

Disclaimer: This syllabus may change as the semester progresses. You will be notified ahead of time of any substantive changes. The homework assignments listed here are also subject to change. Students will be given clear homework instructions at the end of each class.

CLASS 1 (Jan. 16):

- Introductions and explanation of class goals
- What is a feature story?
- Feature story idea brainstorming session

Assignment for the following week: Read assigned feature stories and be prepared to discuss them in class; pick a columnist or editorial page you will follow throughout the semester; come up with an idea for a feature story and be prepared to discuss it in class.

CLASS 2 (Jan. 23):

- Guest Speaker: Mark Jacob, former Chicago Tribune metro editor
- News quiz
- Discuss reading and feature story ideas
- Writing drill — Crafting a lede

Assignment for the following week: Read assigned feature stories and be prepared to discuss them in class; decide on subject for Feature Story 1 and begin reporting; prepare a “doping” (a one-paragraph summary) for your story; write first evaluation of your chosen columnist or editorial page.

CLASS 3 (Jan. 30):

- News quiz
- Discuss reading and progress on Feature Story 1
- Writing drill or guest speaker

Assignment for the following week: Read assigned feature stories and be prepared to discuss them in class; work on Feature Story 1; submit doping for Feature Story 2.

CLASS 4 (Feb. 6):

- News quiz
- Discuss reading
- In-class drill - polishing interviewing and observational skills

Assignment for the following week: Read assigned feature stories and be prepared to discuss them in class; finish draft of Feature Story 1; continue work on Feature Story 2.

CLASS 5 (Feb. 13):

- News quiz
- Discuss reading
- Receive feedback on first draft of Feature Story 1
- Writing drill or guest speaker

Assignment for the following week: Read assigned feature stories and be prepared to discuss them in class; prepare final draft of Feature Story 1; continue work on Feature Story 2 and prepare one-page update on story progress; write second evaluation of your chosen columnist or editorial page.

CLASS 6 (Feb. 20):

- News quiz
- Discuss reading
- Writing drill — spot-news feature story

Assignment for the following week: Read assigned feature stories and be prepared to discuss them in class; prepare first draft of Feature Story 2.

CLASS 7 (Feb. 27):

- News quiz.
- Discuss reading
- Writing drill or guest speaker.

Assignment for the following week: Read assigned feature stories and be prepared to discuss them in class; write third evaluation of your chosen columnist or editorial page.

MARCH 6 - NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

CLASS 8 (March 13):

- News quiz
- Discuss reading
- Receive feedback on Feature Story 2 draft
- Pivoting to opinion writing

Assignment for the following week: Prepare final draft of Feature Story 2; Read Chapter 1 of “Writing Opinion for Impact.”

CLASS 9 (March 20):

- No news quiz!
- Discuss reading
- Having an opinion: Who cares what you think?

Assignment for the following week: Read Chapters 2 and 3 of “Writing Opinion for Impact”; prepare a doping for Column 1; write fourth evaluation of your chosen columnist or editorial page.

CLASS 10 (March 27):

- News quiz
- Discuss reading
- Writing drill or guest speaker

Assignment for the following week: Read Chapter 4 of “Writing Opinion for Impact”; write final draft of Column 1; decide whether you will write a feature story or an opinion column for your Final Exam Piece.

CLASS 11 (April 3):

- News quiz
- Discuss reading
- In-class writing drill — opinion on deadline

Assignment for the following week: Read Chapters 6 and 7 of “Writing Opinion for Impact”; prepare “doping” for Column 2; submit an idea for your Final Exam Piece; write fifth evaluation of your chosen columnist or editorial page.

CLASS 12 (April 10):

- News quiz
- Discuss reading
- Writing drill or guest speaker

Assignment for the following week: Read chapters 10, 11 and 13 of “Writing Opinion for Impact”; write final draft of Column 2; work on Final Exam Piece

CLASS 13 (April 17):

- News quiz
- Discuss reading
- In-class writing drill — tweeting an opinion; seeing both sides of an issue

Assignment for the following week: Prepare draft of Final Exam Piece.

CLASS 14 (April 24):

- Optional news quiz (Grade can sub-out your lowest previous grade)
- Guest speaker
- Go on to long and prosperous careers!