

COMMUNICATION 372  
FEATURE WRITING  
SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR: FASSIOTTO

Keiffer Conference Room

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course will provide a workshop for the study and practice of writing newspaper, magazine, and video feature stories. Students will learn techniques to research, write, and market feature writing.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. To provide an understanding of the feature writing process.  
To introduce students to various types of feature stories.
3. To develop grammatical and stylistic accuracy.
4. To understand the role of tone in effective communications.

**COURSE COMPETENCIES:**

All written work must be typed.

Late papers will not be accepted.

Because the class will be handled as a writing workshop, attendance is mandatory. Final grades will be lowered one half point (from an "A" to an "A-") for each day missed. Two unexcused absences will lower the final grade by a full grade point.

The final grade for this course will be based on an average of all grades. The value of each grade in terms of the percentage for the final grade is as follows:

Assignments 1-6	60%
Assignment 7	30%
Final Portfolio	10%

The number and value of the assignments might be changed during the semester depending on the needs of the class.

While a text has not been ordered for this class, it is advisable that students have a copy of the *New York Times Stylebook* readily available.

## SCHEDULE:

All readings will be distributed prior to the class meeting for which they are assigned.  
Assignments are listed on the final page of this syllabus.

DATE	ASSIGNMENT
1/19	INTRODUCTION THE WRITING PROCESS NEWS STORIES VS. FEATURE STORIES <b>CHOOSING</b> A TOPIC ( <del>Audience, market</del> ) WRITING ABOUT PEOPLE (An Introduction) ROUGH DRAFT ASSIGNMENT ONE
1/27	GATHERING DATA WRITING ABOUT PEOPLE WRITING ABOUT PLACES (An Introduction) ROUGH DRAFT <b>ASSIGNMENT TWO</b> ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE
2/2	DETERMINING THE APPROACH WRITING ABOUT PLACES WRITING ABOUT <b>IDEAS</b> AND THINGS (An Introduction) ROUGH DRAFT ASSIGNMENT THREE ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE
2/9	SHAPING THE MATERIAL WRITING ABOUT <b>THINGS</b> WRITING ABOUT <b>IDEAS</b> (An Introduction) ROUGH DRAFT <b>ASSIGNMENT FOUR</b> ASSIGNMENT THREE DUE
2/16	EDITING THE MATERIAL INTERVIEWING ASSIGNMENT FOUR DUE
2/23	WRITING ABOUT IDEAS PREPARING THE <b>PACKAGE</b> (An introduction) ASSIGNMENT FIVE DUE
3/2	PREPARING THE PACKAGE ROUGH DRAFT <b>ASSIGNMENT SIXA</b> ASSIGNMENT <b>SIXB</b> DUE

**EDITING AND STYLE**  
**ASSIGNMENT ~~SIX~~A DUE**

**FINAL FEATURE PRESENTATION**

**PORTFOLIO AND FINAL FEATURE DUE**

## ASSIGNMENTS

1. **A. NEWS AND FEATURES:** In a short essay, compare a news article to a feature article. Be sure to summarize the content of each, then deal with the defining differences.  
  
**A. DESCRIBING A PERSON:** Write a description of someone you know. The overall focus of your description should be what this person looks like but these details should also give the reader a strong feeling about personality.  
  
**B.** Prepare a portfolio in which you present the topic of your proposed final article. This will include the proposal, a list of possible markets (with an explanation of why they are realistic markets), and your research strategy (what information you will need and where you will find this information). (Your presentation of the portfolio should not take longer than ten minutes.)
3. **A. DESCRIBING A NEIGHBORHOOD:** Describe a neighborhood in a brief feature story. Your purpose in this assignment is to allow your reader to *see* and to *understand* what makes this neighborhood special.  
  
**B.** Bring your notes and other materials you will use for your final article to class. Be prepared to discuss any changes you will need to make in your proposal and what data is still to be gathered. (Your discussion should take about five minutes.)
4. **A. DESCRIBE A THING:** Write a feature story in which you describe a thing. This "thing" might be a product, a monument, or an artifact; the choice is yours. Through your choice of details, we will learn not only everything we need to know about the object, but also why this is an interesting object.  
  
**B.** Prepare a short report in which you set out the approach you plan to follow in developing your story. (Your written report should not be longer than one page; your oral report should not be longer than five minutes.)
5. **B.** Submit your rough draft of the final article for editing.

6. B1. Draft a query letter for your article. Your letter should be addressed to the editor of a magazine, newspaper, or television station and should propose your story idea. Include a treatment of your story idea. Define your audience and the type of sources you will use.

B2. Editors will submit a *precis* of the editing they have done and will present this *precis* in a five-minute discussion with the class.

7. FINAL FEATURE: Write a feature story. Turn it in with a query letter.

**FINAL PORTFOLIO:** This is a chance to show your stuff. I would like a professional portfolio, which shows what you have done for this class and which includes any other piece of which you are especially proud. Your aim here is to impress the reader.