

Communications 372, Feature Writing**Thursdays, 5:45 p.m.-8:45 p.m.****Instructor: Mike Leidemann****Phone: 525-5460 (work); 263-5627 (home)****E-mail: mleidemann@honoluluadvertiser.com**

About feature writing: Feature stories are non-fiction pieces that entertain, inform, inspire and persuade readers about every-day and controversial subjects. Like news stories, good features have a clear organization and make good use of interviewing and research. They tell a story, often in a narrative fashion, using colorful detail, multiple voices and opposing points of view.

Course description: This course is designed to help students recognize the essential qualities of good feature writing in all of its many forms: sports, travel, profiles, entertainment, column writing and many others. It also is designed to offer a number of basic practical skills and exercises so that students can write their own feature stories and get them published.

Course objectives: By the end of the semester, our goal will be to have every student produce a feature length story suitable for publication in a professional outlet.

Working towards this end, we will:

- * provide an understanding of the feature writing process
- * develop interviewing skills and techniques
- * practice note-taking and fact-checking
- * identify potential markets for stories
- * write a query letter to establish interest in our stories
- * practice revision and editing to achieve the best possible story
- * produce a full-length story and submit it for publication.

Required texts: There are no required texts for this course. The instructor will provide a number of handouts throughout the semester and will assign regular reading of newspapers, magazines or other publications. Students will be asked to identify examples of good feature writing that they see in their regular reading and share them with other students in the class for class discussion on a weekly basis.

Recommended texts: Although not required, students will be expected to be familiar with The Associated Press Stylebook and Writer's Market. If you don't have regular access to these, you may want to consider buying them.

Course requirements:

Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Since the class meets only once a week, I don't see this as a problem. Unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction of 2 percent for every time you miss a class. Students will be asked to sign an attendance sheet at the beginning of class.

* Late work is unacceptable. All journalism is based upon deadlines. All homework must be turned in at the beginning of the class on the day it is due. No exceptions.

* Class participation is mandatory. This class will be built around reading and evaluating good examples of feature writing. Everyone is expected to come to class having read all the assignments and prepared to discuss them. You will be asked to turn in brief written notes about the readings we do -- what works, what doesn't, what made you laugh, what made you think.

Class assignments and grading:

* The major portion of your grade in this class will be based on the final story you produce -- a story which should be suitable for submittal for publication by the end of the class. In most cases you will work on one story for the semester, improving it over time. Because several of the early assignments will be draft versions of the final paper, there will be plenty of opportunity to improve the quality of your work, thus offering everybody a chance to achieve the satisfaction of seeing their final paper in print and receiving a respectable grade. I expect this work to account for about 75 percent of your final grade.

- * The other 25 percent of the grade will be based upon class participation, and the short weekly homework assignments that you will be asked to bring to class.
- * We also will do a number of writing exercises in class. These will not be graded.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is theft and totally unacceptable in both the academic and journalism world. Any student caught plagiarizing will receive an automatic failing grade for the course.

Papers: All class submissions must be typed, double spaced with one-inch margins and 12 point font.