Course Syllabus

Feature Writing

MCM 309.090

Fall 2017

Name:  Dr. Gary H. Mayer
E-mail:  gmayer@sfasu.edu
Phone:  Office: 936-468-1273; Administrative Office: 936-468-4001
Office:  Boynton 205
Office Hours:  10-10:50 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 2-3 p.m.
Monday-Friday, and by appointment
Department:  Mass Communication
Class meeting time and place:  11-11:50 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and
Friday in Boynton 209

Course Description:  Types of special articles and writing techniques
best adapted to marketing material in newspapers and magazines.
Writing enhanced.  Prerequisite:  MCM 205 (or the equivalent) with a
grade of C or better.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs):

1.  Demonstrate the ability to write effectively across a variety of
    platforms appropriate to the discipline.
2.  Gather, organize and analyze discipline-appropriate research
    and communicate information about it.
3.  Understand the role of media in society.
4.  Comprehend legal and ethical principles relating to media.
5.  Demonstrate the application of media technology, terminology
    and techniques.

Journalism Concentration PLOs:

1.  Demonstrate appropriate writing and editing skills across
    diverse multimedia platforms.
2. Gather, analyze, organize and synthesize information on contemporary topics to develop a news story.
3. Demonstrate the application of contemporary technology, terminology and techniques in the news-gathering process.
4. Understand effective visual language and how to apply it to convey messages and enhance the communication process.

Text and Materials:

2. Handouts.

Course Requirements: Requirements include five feature stories, a mid-semester exam and a semi-comprehensive final.

Considerations:

1. Information will be forthcoming on the assigned feature stories.
2. No late work is accepted without an acceptable excuse—*acceptable*, of course, is defined by your instructor.
3. The mid-semester exam and the final will be based on material discussed in class, assigned chapters in the text, handouts, guest speakers, etc. The final will include everything covered since the mid-semester exam plus review material.
4. I do not email grades or give them out on the telephone.
5. *Plagiarism* is defined as "literary theft." It includes taking someone else's wording and/or ideas without giving credit, that is, without giving proper documentation. Plagiarism is a serious offense that can result in an automatic F in this course and appropriate disciplinary action, including expulsion from Stephen F. Austin State University.

Course Calendar: attached.
Grading Policy:

Five feature stories  = 65%
Mid-semester exam     = 15%
Final exam            = 20%

Attendance Policy:

1. Each student is allowed 3 unexcused absences. Following, for each unexcused absence, 2 points will be deducted from the final course average. For most absences to be excused, they must be documented.

2. Three tardies counts as 1 absence. (Please see me the period you are late if you believe your tardy should be excused.) If you come in 15 minutes or later after the class has begun, you are absent. But I reserve the right to lock the door 5 minutes after class has begun.

Academic Integrity (AY1): Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any
information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping
or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism
is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own.
Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s
own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2)
submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an
Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of
an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic
integrity.asp

Withheld Grades Semester Policy (A-5): Ordinarily, at the discretion of
the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director,
a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the
course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete
the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which
they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students
register for the same course in future terms, the WH will automatically
become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of
computing the grade point average.

Students with Disabilities: To obtain disability accommodations, alternate
formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the
Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room
325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once
verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the
accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request
services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For
additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disability_services/.

Additional Considerations:

1. Early tests (major exams, final) will not be given.
2. No one is exempt from the final.
3. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed.
   Please check with another student in the class. See me if you missed a
   handout, homework assignment, etc.
4. Students are expected to conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen.
   Such behavior as whispering, talking, reading, studying material for
another class, etc., will not be tolerated. The above are grounds for dismissal. **Students are expected to remain in their seats throughout the period unless there is a dire emergency, which should be explained at the end of the period. Living the classroom, returning and not explaining why will result in an absence for that period.**

5. Texting (text messaging) during class is crude, rude and socially unacceptable. Anyone caught doing this will be asked to leave and possibly will be dropped from the class. The same holds true for sending and checking emails.

6. Cell phones—or anything that looks like a phone, for that matter—should be clearly placed out of sight, especially during tests. If a student is caught with a cell phone on his/her desk, she/he will be asked to leave the classroom. If this should occur during a test, he/she will receive a zero on the test. Please turn off all cell phones.

7. Course feedback (grades on assignments) is provided throughout the semester.

8. Makeup exams are given only to students who have acceptable excuses. (“Acceptable” is defined by the instructor.)

9. Children are not welcome in this class, which in no way functions as a day-care center. Anyone who brings a child to class will be asked to leave with the child. On the other hand, dogs and cats are very, very welcome, though, alas, university policy does not permit them to attend.
TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS


Fri., Sept. 1: Getting ideas for features.

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Wed., Sept. 6: All about human interest.

Fri., Sept. 8: The personality profile. Assign Feature #1.

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Mon., Sept. 11: The personality profile (model/s for study).


Fri., Sept. 15: Interviewing a real person. Feature #1 due.

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Mon., Sept. 18: Handling quotes.


Fri., Sept. 22: The utility article.

Wed., Sept. 27: Transitions, bodies, endings.

Fri., Sept. 29: Transitions, bodies, endings.

Mon., Oct. 2: Doing research for features.


Fri., Oct. 6: Seasonal/holiday/anniversary features.


Fri., Oct. 13: Law and ethics (in all journalism courses!).

Mon., Oct. 16: Law and ethics. Feature #3 due.

Wed., Oct. 18: MID-SEMESTER EXAM.


Mon., Oct. 23: Confessions and collectives.


Fri., Oct. 27: Guest speaker.
Mon., Oct. 30: Guest speaker.


Fri., Nov. 3: Sidebars. **Feature #4 due.**

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Mon., Nov. 6: Color stories.

Wed., Nov. 8: News features.

Fri., Nov. 10: The feature series.

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Mon., Nov. 13: Magazines: the freelance writer. **Assign Feature #5.**

Wed., Nov. 15: Magazines: the freelance writer.

Fri., Nov. 17: The magazine article.

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**THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!!!**

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Mon., Nov. 27: The magazine article.

Wed., Nov. 29: The magazine article. **Feature #5 due.**

Fri., Dec. 1: The magazine article.

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Dead Week: Review and synthesis.