

COURSE SYLLABUS
COJO 4110: Feature Writing
Fall 2015

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Office Hours: TBA
And by appointment
*You're welcome to drop by my office anytime as well. If I'm available, I will meet. If I'm busy, you will be asked to schedule an appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course critically examines how to produce content for a magazine and how to write feature stories. Among the topics covered are how to develop a good idea, analyze a target audience, gather information using interviews and research, write a feature article, edit your writing, and market a feature story.

Prerequisites: COJO 2100 (Reporting & Newswriting) and 6 hours in COJO

This course fulfills the Communication 3 (COM3) requirement of the 2015 University Studies Program. Students will develop skills in written, oral, and digital communication relevant to magazine and feature writing at the advanced level. Through repeated instruction, practice, and feedback, this course will hone skills for students' academic work and future careers in the media industry (specifically, magazine and feature writing).

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR COM3

1. Use the discourse of a discipline or interdisciplinary field to communicate that field's subject matter to academic or professional audiences through written, oral, and digital communication.
2. Find, analyze, evaluate, and document information appropriately as applicable to the discipline, interdisciplinary field, or professional setting as demonstrated by completing a substantial communication project that requires appropriate research skills.
3. Recognize and evaluate more advanced aspects of communication that respond to the purposes and needs of audiences in a discipline, interdisciplinary field, or professional setting.
4. Make effective use of multiple drafts, revision, computer technology, peer and instructor comments, and collaboration to show understanding of communication standards in a discipline or interdisciplinary field.
5. Observe the accepted conventions of spelling, grammar, organizational structure, punctuation, delivery and documentation expected in disciplinary, interdisciplinary, or professional contexts.

6. Deliver presentations in a confident and professional manner, consistent with the standards of the discipline or interdisciplinary field.
7. Interact effectively with audience members, engage opposing viewpoints constructively, and demonstrate active listening skills.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS COURSE

We will review all of the reporting and newswriting basics in the first few weeks of class in order to solidify our grasp of AP style, grammar, attribution, and news editing. At the same time, we will be critically reading some of the best news feature stories and magazine articles from 2014, and we will use our textbook to understand the ideas and concepts behind excellent feature stories.

There will be three feature stories you will write throughout the semester. Each feature story will be about a different topic and go through an instructor and peer-editing process (i.e., you will submit a draft and then make corrections before submitting the final version). Ideally, you would use these three stories in your work portfolio that you submit to potential employers when you look for a job in this business. **This part of the course fulfills the “written” communication element of the COM3 requirement. Learning outcomes completed are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.**

Additionally, you will analyze and write a report about a magazine and make a formal, professional 10-minute oral presentation to the class of your results. Your classmates and I are the audience members, and you will field several questions from us and actively engage in a discussion about your magazine and research analysis results. In your future career, you may be asked to conduct an audience analysis for your publication or media organization. You may be asked to present your research findings to the organization’s editorial board, writers, or advertisers. Thus, this oral presentation should prepare you for such a research endeavor and presentation. Before the formal presentation, you will be required to meet with the instructor to discuss the magazine and presentation, and will be required to do a practice presentation to a peer in the class. **This part of the course fulfills the “written” and “oral” communication element of the COM3 requirement. Learning outcomes completed are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.**

Finally, you will begin and maintain a course blog via the WordPress platform. On this blog, you will develop and hone your editorial voice. The blog posts must be professional, well-researched, well-articulated, and well-written. The instructor will guide you through the WordPress platform and how to setup and maintain the blog. **This part of the course fulfills the “digital” communication element of the COM3 requirement. Learning outcomes completed are 1, 2, 4, and 5.**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To learn the elements of good feature writing — scene, dialogue, characterization, structure — by studying some of the best examples out there and by experimenting with your own writing
2. To sharpen research, interviewing, listening, observation, and writing skills so you get bylines instead of slush pile rejections
3. To expand your understanding of narrative styles and possibilities using feature writing
4. To write with creativity and flair but also with an audience in mind
5. To edit and critically evaluate your own writing and others' writing
6. To edit and critically evaluate your own oral presentation and others' oral presentations
7. To work on several different assignments simultaneously throughout the semester
8. To analyze magazines and magazine articles in such a way that makes you a better marketer of your work and a better feature writer
9. To effectively give a market research presentation to an audience
10. To communicate via a blog in a professional manner and to understand how to maintain a WordPress blog (which is a media industry standard)

REQUIRED BOOKS

Sumner, D., & Miller, H. (2013). *Feature and magazine writing: Action, angle and anecdotes*. Wiley.

Recent edition of the *AP Style Guide*

The American Society of Magazine Editors. (2014). *The best American magazine writing 2014*. Columbia University Press.

GRADING SCALE

90%-100%	A
80%-89%	B
70%-79%	C
60%-69%	D
Below 60%	F

COURSE EVALUATION SUMMARY

	POINTS (% OF GRADE)
3 Story idea assignments	50 (5%)
3 Feature stories	400 (40%)
6 Peer-editing assignments	150 (15%)
4 Editorial blog posts	200 (20%)
1 Magazine research report and oral presentation	200 (20%)
Total	1000

COURSE EVALUATION DETAILS

3 Story idea assignments (50 pts)

- Story proposals that outline the topic, angle, target publication and audience, and justification for the story

3 Feature stories (400 pts): This part of the course fulfills the “written” communication element of the COM3 requirement. Learning outcomes completed are 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

- First draft package that includes:
 - Interview questions
 - Source list
 - Notes and research used for story
 - Photography or illustration suggestions
 - Query letter
 - Copy of the first draft from peer editor 1 with their edits and signature
 - Copy of the first draft from peer editor 2 with their edits and signature
- Final draft package that includes:
 - Any additional interview questions
 - Any additional source lists
 - Any additional notes and research used for story
 - Any additional photography or illustration suggestions
 - Revised query letter (if asked to revise)
 - Copy of the final draft
 - Self-analysis after story is completed

6 Peer-editing assignments (150 pts): Learning outcomes are 4 and 5.

- Complete the peer-editing worksheet for each peer story you’re assigned
- In the assigned stories, circle any grammatical problems, AP style errors, or other issues
- Provide thoughtful suggestions and critique in full, legible sentences

4 Editorial blog posts (200 pts): This part of the course fulfills the “digital” communication element of the COM3 requirement. Learning outcomes completed are 1, 2, 4, and 5.

- Start and maintain a professional WordPress blog that expresses your editorial opinion, critical reviews, and commentary on various subjects.
- Post at least 4 critical reviews, editorials, or commentaries.
- The subject matter can be about politics, culture, sports, restaurants, entertainment (e.g., music, television, movies, books), or any other instructor-approved topic. The blog posts must include at least 2 different subject areas. In other words, you cannot write all 4 posts about movies. You must address at least 2 different subject areas across the 4 posts. Thus, you can have 3 posts about movies and 1 post about politics.
- The blog posts must be at least 400 words.

1 Magazine research report and oral presentation (200 pts): This part of the course fulfills the “written,” “oral,” and “digital” communication elements of the COM3 requirement. Learning outcomes completed are 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

- Meet with the instructor to choose a magazine for your research and analysis
- Write a typed, 12-point font, double-spaced, 4-page minimum analysis of the magazine. You must study at least 3 recent issues of the magazine. Answer these questions:
 - What issues does the magazine focus on?
 - Who is on the editorial board?
 - What are the different sections of the magazine?
 - What is its circulation?
 - Who is the target audience? What kind of demographic does it cover? What is its political or social leaning, if any?
 - What kinds of writing styles are featured in the magazine’s articles?
 - What advice do you have for a writer who needs to pitch an idea and send a query letter to this magazine?
- Give a 10-minute oral presentation to the class of your analysis and recommendations
 - Practice oral presentation with a peer to acquire feedback
 - Use PowerPoint, Prezi, or another instructor-approved presentation tool
 - Provide a 1-page, single-spaced, 12-point font handout of the highlights of your presentation
 - Field questions from the audience (your classmates and I) about your research
- Peer-review another student’s oral presentation
 - Use a peer-review worksheet to provide feedback on:
 - Professionalism of presentation (e.g., proper dress and voice projection)
 - Effective use of presentation visuals
 - Presentation handout communicates the necessary information
 - Clear communication of ideas and research

You will receive instructions and grading rubrics for the assignments as they come up during the course.

Assignment due dates appear on the tentative class schedule (see last pages of the syllabus). The instructor may change due dates if she feels it is necessary.

POLICY FOR LATE ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments are due on the designated date by class time. This means the WyoCourses “upload” time/date for the assignment should be at or before class time (Mountain Time) on the due date.

If you fail to upload by the beginning of class (Mountain Time) on the due date, then you’ll receive:

- 25 percent off if delivered after the deadline but less than 24 hours late.
- 50 percent off if delivered more than 24 hours but less than 48 hours late.
- 75 percent off if delivered more than 48 hours but less than 72 hours late.
- 100 percent off if delivered more than 72 hours late.

For example, if you handed in a 10-point assignment, and your grade was 8 out of 10, and you were 25 hours late -- your grade would be 4 (8 - 50%).

You have **two weeks** after an assignment grade is posted to contest the grade given.

EXTRA CREDIT

100 Points If...

Anyone who gets an article accepted by a regional or national magazine will get 100 points extra credit. To qualify for the extra credit, you must provide proof of acceptance before the end of the semester (e.g., via an email or letter from the magazine), although the article may be published later.

50 Points If...

If you get a personally addressed and encouraging response to a query letter from a magazine editor, you will you will get 50 extra credit points. To qualify for the extra credit, you must provide a copy of the magazine editor's response.

Research Participant (Points Dependent on Time Commitment and Effort Required)

You may also be provided with one or more opportunities to engage as a research participant in a research study. There is no guarantee any opportunities will arise. If they do, I will provide you with an IRB (Institutional Review Board) approved recruitment letter and details about the study. Participation is completely voluntarily. Depending on how much time commitment and effort is required for research participation, you will get an appropriate amount of extra credit points.

ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED

Attendance is REQUIRED. This class is based on hands-on learning. Your attendance, therefore, is crucial to your success and the success in the class. You are expected to be prepared for class—having done the reading and/or assignments for the day before arriving—and attentive during class. Do not plan to multitask during class meetings. Please do not come to class late or leave class early, doing so is disruptive to class.

Because attendance is required **if you miss more than 4 class meetings**, then I will begin to deduct points from your final point total in this class. After the 4th absence, then I will **deduct 25 points** from your final point total **FOR EACH ADDITIONAL ABSENCE**.

If you must be absent, please notify the instructor in advance and plan to obtain notes from a classmate. If you do not communicate with me and/or do not have any documentation of your absence, then the instructor reserves the right to mark you as absent.

UNIREG 6-713 states that University-sponsored absences are cleared through the Office of Student Life (OSL). Students with official authorized absences shall be permitted to make up work without penalty in classes missed.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

All students are encouraged to **participate in class discussion**. The goal of this class is to make each class session a lively, stimulating, and intellectually rewarding learning venture for everyone about feature and magazine writing. To a substantial extent, the benefits derived from this course are facilitated by students' willingness to expose their work to the scrutiny of the instructor and their peers. Although scrutiny can involve criticism and questioning, you are NOT permitted to be rude, aggressive, demeaning, disrespectful, condescending, or otherwise have a bad attitude toward others' opinions, writing, editing, thoughts, and oral communication skills.

PERSONAL ELECTRONICS AND BEHAVIOR-IN-CLASS POLICY

Respect your fellow students and the instructor by turning off all cell phones before class. Additionally, you are not permitted to text, use Facebook, sleep, read non-requested materials, or engage in other distracting behaviors. The first violation of this rule will result in a warning. The second violation of this rule and beyond will result in 5 points being removed from your final calculated grade in the class for each violation. Moreover, you may be asked to leave the class and you will not be allowed to make up any missed points for that class period for the second violation and beyond.

STUDENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION POLICY

Email operates 24/7, but your instructor does not. I will endeavor to respond within one business day to your email, so please make your email communication with me count.

Email is a professional document, so please use salutations (e.g., Dear Dr. Landreville), complete sentences, correct grammar (i.e., no "texting" grammar), and include a signature in all email with instructors. In fact, all of your emails to professors, staff members, graduate students, potential employers, bosses, etc. should be professional and use these guidelines.

I want to emphasize that in-person office hours are the best way to resolve grade issues and assignment questions. Email should be reserved for short, specific, and quick questions only. If the email topic is not time-sensitive, I may not respond to your email, choosing instead to respond in class time.

I will occasionally email you clarifications to assignments and class announcements or reminders. Please check your email at least once a day and definitely the afternoon/evening before our next scheduled class session.

STATEMENT ABOUT ACADEMIC HONESTY

The University is built upon a strong foundation of integrity, respect, and trust. All members of the University community have a responsibility to be honest and the right to expect honesty from others. Any form of academic dishonesty is unacceptable to our community and will not be tolerated. Students should report suspected violations of standards of academic honesty to the instructor. Refer to UNIREG 6-802, section 3, for more details.

Your written work must be your own. If you wish to use someone else's idea(s) or word(s) in one of your writing assignments, YOU MUST GIVE THAT PERSON CREDIT in your text by correctly citing the source. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, a serious academic offense that brings with it such dire consequences as failure of this class, suspension from the University, and worse. If you have questions about citing sources, please ask the instructor. Ignorance and being too busy to do your own work are not defenses for plagiarism.

If you have questions about citing sources, please ask the instructor. There are no questions that are "dumb" in regard to plagiarism, cheating, and documenting your sources.

DISABILITY POLICY

If you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. You will need to register with and provide documentation of your disability to University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in SEO, Knight Hall, Room 330, 766-6189, TTY: 766-3073.

COJO SOCIAL MEDIA: For current information about internships, scholarships and other news, become a fan of the Communication and Journalism Department's Facebook page and blog. Go to <http://www.facebook.com/uwyo.cojo> and click on the Like button at the top to become a fan of our Facebook page. Go to <http://uwyo-cojo.blogspot.com/> and become a Follower of our blog.

DISCLAIMER

I reserve the right to change any of the dates or requirements of this course throughout the semester. An email to your UWYO account will be considered notification of any changes. I will also announce changes in class. If appropriate, I will distribute an addendum to the course syllabus.

TENTATIVE DAILY SCHEDULE (NOTE: DATES WILL CHANGE DEPENDING ON YEAR)

CLASS	DATE	LECTURE & DISCUSSION	READINGS DUE	ASSIGNMENT DUE	LEARNING OUTCOMES*
Week 1 Class 1	Tues. Aug. 27	Syllabus Review of Assignments Peer Introductions			*See learning outcomes on p. 1 of the syllabus.

Class 2	Thurs. Aug. 29	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best Magazine Discussion 2. Assessment of Skills: Attribution & AP Style Editing 3. Attribution 4. AP Style Basics and A-E 5. Commas 6. Comma Quiz 7. Other Grammar Issues in Ch. 19 and Ch. 20 8. News Editing Exercise 1 	<p>Textbook: Ch. 19 “Advancing Beyond the Slush Pile”</p> <p>Best Magazine: <i>Joplin!</i> – Esquire – Featured Writing</p>		5 7
Week 2 Class 3	Tues. Sept. 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best Magazine Discussion 2. AP Style Quiz 1 (A-E) 3. AP Style F-J 4. News Editing Exercise 2 5. Lecture: Writing Interesting Stories 	<p>Textbook: Ch. 1 “What Makes a Story Interesting”</p> <p>Best Magazine: <i>Arms and the Dudes</i> – Rolling Stone – Feature Writing</p>		5 7
Class 4	Thurs. Sept. 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best Magazine Discussion 2. AP Style Quiz 2 (F-J) 3. AP Style K-O 4. Lecture: How to Brainstorm Story Ideas 	<p>Textbook: Ch. 2 “How to Find an Original Idea” & Ch. 4 “Digging Deep for Original Stories”</p> <p>Best Magazine: <i>Dewayne Dedmon’s Leap of Faith</i> – Sports Illustrated – Profile Writing</p>		5 7
Week 3	Tues. Sept. 10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best Magazine Discussion 2. AP Style Quiz 3 (K-O) 3. AP Style P-S 4. Lecture: Focusing Your Story 5. Story 1 Explanation 	<p>Textbook: Ch. 3 “Strong Angles and Focused Ideas”</p> <p>Best Magazine: <i>Game of Her Life</i> – ESPN the Magazine – Profile Writing</p>		5 7
Class 5	Thurs. Sept. 12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best Magazine Discussion 2. AP Style Quiz 4 (P-S) 3. AP Style T-Z 4. Lecture: Interviewing 	<p>Textbook: Ch. 5 “Talking Pointers: How to Conduct Great Interviews”</p>	Story 1 Ideas Due At Beginning of Class to	4 5 7

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Class Discussion about Story 1 Ideas Student Picks an Idea 	Best Magazine: <i>The Invisible Army</i> – The New Yorker – Public Interest	Dropbox	
Week 4 Class 6	Tues. Sept. 17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Best Magazine Discussion AP Style Quiz 5 (T-Z) Lecture: Analyzing Magazines and Query Letters Magazine Analysis Assignment Explanation Signup for Magazine Analysis Presentations 	Textbook: Ch. 6 “To Market, To Market: Shopping Your Words Around” and Ch. 7 “Pitch Perfect Query Letters” Best Magazine: <i>The Signature Wound</i> – Men’s Health – Public Interest		5 7
Class 7	Thurs. Sept. 19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture: Lead Writing Story 1 Lab Day 	Textbook: Ch. 8 “Where to Begin: The First 100 Words”		
Week 5 Class 8	Tues. Sept. 24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Peer Editing Instructions and Tips Story 1 Peer Editing Groups Writer Emails Story to Peer Editors Peer Editors Use Track Changes and Email Back to Writer and Instructor Peer Editing Groups Discuss Suggestions 		Story 1 First Draft Due: At Beginning of Class, Email to Peer Editing Partners and Upload to Dropbox In-Class Peer Edits to Writer & Instructor	1 2 3 4 5
Class 9	Thurs. Sept. 26	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Peer Editing, Continued Story 1 Lab Day 			
Week 6 Class 10	Tues. Oct. 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Instructor Returns Story 1 Drafts for Revision Students Work on Story 1 Revisions Lecture: Action and Anecdotes 	Textbook: Ch. 9 “Action, Brevity and Style” & Ch. 10 “Anecdotes: Mining for Gold”		1 2 3 4 5
Class 11	Thurs. Oct. 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Magazine Research Presentations, Round 1 			3 4

					6 7
Week 7 Class 12	Tues. Oct. 8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best Magazine Discussion 2. Lecture: Profiles 3. Story 2 Explanation 	<p>Textbook: Ch. 12 “Profiles: Slices of Life”</p> <p>Best Magazine: <i>The Secret That Kills Four Women a Day</i> – Glamour – Personal Service</p>		7
Class 13	Thurs. Oct. 10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best Magazine Discussion 2. Lecture: Trends & Issues 3. Class Discussion about Story 2 Ideas 4. Student Picks an Idea 	<p>Textbook: Ch. 16 “Writing About Trends and Issues”</p> <p>Best Magazine: <i>Fractured</i> – Good Housekeeping – Personal Service</p>	<p>Story 1 Final Due At Beginning of Class to Dropbox</p>	1 2 3 4 5 7
Week 8 Class 14	Tues. Oct. 15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Magazine Research Presentations, Round 2 		<p>Story 2 Ideas Due At Beginning of Class to Dropbox</p>	3 4 6 7
Class 15	Thurs. Oct. 17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture: Calendar Stories 2. Story 2 Lab Day 	<p>Textbook: Ch. 15 “Making a Timely Calendar Connection”</p>		
Week 9 Class 16	Tues. Oct. 22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture: How-To Stories 2. Story 2 Lab Day 	<p>Textbook: Ch. 14 “Eliminating the How-Hum From the How-To”</p>		
Class 17	Thurs. Oct. 24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Story 2 Lab Day 			
Week 10 Class 18	Tues. Oct. 29	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Story 2 Peer Editing Groups 2. Writer Emails Story to Peer Editors 3. Peer Editors Use Track Changes and Email Back to Writer and Instructor 4. Peer Editing Groups Discuss Suggestions 		<p>Story 2 First Draft Due: At Beginning of Class, Email to Peer Editing Partners and Upload to Dropbox</p>	1 2 3 4 5

				In-Class Peer Edits to Writer & Instructor	
Class 19	Thurs. Oct. 31	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instructor Returns Story 2 Drafts for Revision 2. Students Work on Story 2 Revisions 3. Peer Editing, Continued 			
Week 11 Class 20	Tues. Nov. 5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecture: Short Features 2. Story 3 Explanation 	Textbook: Ch. 11 “Briefs: Shortcuts to Publication”		
Class 21	Thurs. Nov. 7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Class Discussion about Story 3 Ideas 2. Student Picks an Idea 		Story 2 Final Due At Beginning of Class to Dropbox	1 2 3 4 5
Week 12 Class 22	Tues. Nov. 12	1. Magazine Research Presentations, Round 3		Story 3 Ideas Due At Beginning of Class to Dropbox	3 4 6 7
Class 23	Thurs. Nov. 14	1. Lecture: Writing True Stories; Finding a Job in Magazines	Textbook: Ch. 13 “Writing Nonfiction Narratives”		
Week 13 Class 24	Tues. Nov. 19	1. Story 3 Lab Day	Textbook: Ch. 21 “Careers in Magazine Publishing”		
	Thurs. Nov. 21	1. Story 3 Lab Day			
Week 14	Tues. Nov.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Story 3 Peer Editing Groups 2. Writer Emails Story to Peer 		Story 3 First Draft Due: At	1 2

Class 25	26	<p>Editors</p> <p>3. Peer Editors Use Track Changes and Email Back to Writer and Instructor</p> <p>4. Peer Editing Groups Discuss Suggestions</p>		<p>Beginning of Class, Email to Peer Editing Partners and Upload to Dropbox</p> <p>In-Class Peer Edits to Writer & Instructor</p>	3 4
	Thurs. Nov. 28	No Class – Happy Thanksgiving!			
Week 15 Class 26	Tues. Dec. 3	1. Magazine Research Presentations, Round 4			3 4 6 7
Class 27	Thurs. Dec. 5	1. Story 3 Lab Day			
FINAL	Story 3 Final Due by 12:15 p.m. on Thurs. Dec. 12	<p>No Attendance Required</p> <p>Story 3 Final Due by 12:15 p.m. on Thurs. Dec. 12</p>		<p>Story 3 Final Due by 12:15 p.m. on Thurs. Dec. 12</p>	1 2 3 4 5