



**University of Wollongong
Wollongong Campus
Faculty of Creative Arts**

SUBJECT OUTLINE

Subject Number: JOUR202
Subject Name: Feature Writing
Credit Points: 6 credit points
Pre-Requisites: Jour201
Co-Requisites: Nil
Session & Year: Spring 2006

Teaching Staff:

Position	Name	Room	Telephone No.	Email	Consultation Times
Subject Coordinator	Marcus O'Donnell	25.G05A	4221 3774 0433 078 225	marcuso@uow.edu.au	Wednesday 10.30-12.30 Thursday 3.30 – 5.30

TIMETABLE:

Day	Class	Time	Room
Wednesday	lecture	1.30 - 2.30	Building 20
Wednesday	workshop	2.30 – 4.30	17: Orion
Thursday	workshop	10.30 – 12.30	17: Galileo
Thursday	workshop	1.30 – 3.30	17: Orion
Friday	workshop	10.30 – 12.30	25:162

Subject Description: This subject focuses on story telling techniques for the print media, with consideration given to ethical and legal restraints. Topics covered include: feature story introductions; feature story structures; dialogue and characterisation; scene descriptions; feature length interviews; online and conventional research; and developing concepts.

Learning Objectives: On successful completion of this subject, students will be able to:

1. Write clear concise news and feature articles
2. Identify feature story angles in news events/issues.
3. Deploy a range of research strategies to develop story ideas
4. Conduct interviews that add significantly to a story's development.
5. Write news and feature stories that will appeal to a broad readership.

Graduate Attributes: In meeting these objectives, students will develop skills relevant to the following Attributes of a Wollongong Graduate:

1. A commitment to continued and independent learning, intellectual development, critical analysis and creativity.
2. Coherent and extensive knowledge in a discipline, appropriate ethical standards and, where appropriate, defined professional skills.
3. Self-confidence combined with oral and written skills of a high level.
4. An ability to analyse issues logically, as well as to evaluate different options and viewpoints and to implement decisions.
5. A capacity for, and understanding of, teamwork.
6. A basic understanding of information literacy and specific skills in acquiring, organising and presenting information, particularly through computer based activity.

ASSESSMENT DETAILS:

Students are required to attempt all assessment tasks in order to be eligible for a pass in this subject. The following task outlines will be supplemented with more detailed information in class handouts and on the subject website.

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

All written assignments are to be submitted by email by the end of the week due. Assignments will be accepted if they are received by the Sunday following the weekly lecture. For example the Classmate Profile is due in week 4 and submissions will be accepted until Sunday 13 August following the week 4 lecture on Tuesday 9 August.

Email submissions are to be sent to marcuso@uow.edu.au. They must come from the student's registered uow email address and the name of the assignment must be in the subject line. Mistakes such as "I forgot to attach the file" will not be accepted for failure to submit on time.

Assessment Task No 1: Blog

Description: Students will establish and maintain a blog where they will contribute three posts per week throughout the semester beginning in week two.

Posts will be published under three categories

- Writing exercises
 - Brief observations from everyday life which develop the writer's ability to observe and record detail in evocative ways. Topics might include: observations of nature, looking at faces, travelling around, overheard conversation, the built environment, the multitude of colours. These exercises must be observational and concrete, not mini opinion pieces about issues.
- Analysing features
 - Students are expected to read broadly from both magazine and newspaper features. In their blog students will include links to and excerpts from their reading with brief comments which demonstrate particularly effective or problematic examples of feature writing craft. The focus of these postings should be primarily on the techniques employed rather than on the content of the feature.
- Feature ideas
 - Each student will choose a "beat" that is of particular interest to them and post regularly about news and current events in their area of interest which could be developed into feature ideas. The focus of these postings should be on outlining possible feature ideas rather than just recording developments in the area.

Students should post at least once under each category each week.

Assessment criteria:

Students must demonstrate:

- a developing personal voice and a capacity to write in an engaging way from observation of everyday life events and images;
- an ability to analyse feature articles and their techniques;

- an ability to follow news and trends within a beat and generate interesting feature ideas;
- a developing sense of their blog as a cohesive online publication.

Marked out of 100 – Weighting 30% of total mark.

Weekly tasks due date: Three posts (each of 200-300 words) weekly directly onto their blog.

Final assessment folio due date: Students will submit a folio of 12 selected posts at the end of week 13.

Must attempt: Yes

Assessment Task No 2: Classmate Profile

Description: Each student will be assigned to produce a 750 word profile on a class mate. The exercise requires an indepth interview with the subject, an interview with at least one other source: friend, colleague or family member and observation of the subject going about their daily activity.

Assessment Criteria: Students must show that they are developing:

- an understanding of feature writing conventions;
- an ability to obtain interesting and relevant material from an interview;
- an ability to choose an interesting story angle;
- an ability to convey a lively sense of another person through an engaging prose style.

Due date: End of week 4

Marked out of 100 – Weighting 15% of final assessment

Must attempt: Yes

Assessment Task No 3: News Feature

Description: A pitch document outlining the idea and possible sources for the feature and a 1000 word feature article developed and researched from an original idea chosen by the student. The feature must employ at least three original sources.

Assessment Criteria: Students must show that they:

- can confidently represent their ideas for feature articles;
- have researched the feature thoroughly;
- sourced and used original interview material;
- can write in an engaging and readable style;
- follow the conventions of media feature writing.

Due date: students will be required to develop an idea and “pitch” it to the tutor in class week 4. After feedback, research and write the feature to be submitted by the end of week 7.

Marked out of 100 – Weighting 15% of final assessment

Must attempt: Yes

Assessment Task 3: Illawarra Academy of Sport Project

Marked out of 100 – Weighting 20% of final assessment

Description: The Illawarra Academy of Sport is an organization that assists promising young sportspeople from the region. It is sponsored by the university and local councils and this year is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The UOW School of Journalism is assisting the Academy to develop a series of articles that will form part of a history of the group. Students will be allocated to a group of five and will work as a group to develop a series of features about a designated area of the Academy’s activities. The group will work collectively to come up with their feature ideas and individual students will each complete one major feature or profile.

Due date: Students will be allocated to a group in week seven and the group will present their features to class in week 10. Each student will submit a copy of their feature for assessment by the end of week 10.

Assessment Criteria: Students must show that they:

- have researched the features thoroughly;
- have sourced and used original interview material;
- can write in an engaging and readable style;
- have followed the conventions of media feature writing;
- have worked with other members of their group to produce a cohesive and varied feature series which covers their designated area from a number of different angles.

Must attempt: Yes

Assessment Task No 4: Reflective Portfolio

Description: The portfolio has two elements:

(a) A 2000 word reflective essay on the work that you have produced this semester. The essay should present:

- your understanding of the elements of good feature writing;
- an analysis of four pieces/projects of your own produced during the semester reflecting on what you have learned about feature journalism through researching and writing these pieces;
- a reflection on what you learned through the blogging exercises;
- a personal statement about what you believe the role of the journalist to be and what aspect of journalism you would like to pursue and why.

(b) A substantial rewrite of one of your major assignments with a brief explanation of how the changes you have made improve the piece.

Assessment criteria: You must show that you are developing:

- a thorough understanding of the conventions of feature journalism;
- a reflective, critical approach to your own work;
- a personal philosophy of journalism.

Marked out of 100 – Weighting 20% of total mark.

Due date: end of week 14

Must attempt: Yes

Performance Grades & Descriptors:

<p>HD High Distinction</p>	<p>85 – 100%</p>	<p>A High Distinction will be given for outstanding work that displays a thoughtful and creative approach.</p> <p>All such copy will be clean, showing that the writer takes editorial pride in their work and follows the appropriate journalistic or academic conventions.</p> <p>Journalism practice that achieves this grade will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be of publishable or near publishable standard; • display strong news judgement; • tell a story that is significant and relevant; • show a strong understanding of the subject matter being written about; • be presented in a lively and /or informative style; • display strong research and analytic skills (where required), and the ability to extract interesting or difficult to obtain information from interviewees. <p>In the case of essays, you will be expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have read widely • incorporate a range of arguments in your writing, • present a critical analysis of these arguments and a strong presentation of your own point of view.
<p>D Distinction</p>	<p>75 – 84%</p>	<p>To obtain a distinction, you will display above-average abilities. This will include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong writing and presentation skills. • clean and complete copy that follows appropriate journalistic or academic conventions <p>In the case of a journalistic task, your work will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reveal a good understanding of the subject under discussion; • a well-chosen and relevant topic; • demonstrate good research and appropriate use of talent. <p>In an academic piece, your skills will be displayed through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear presentation of material • good use of academic resources. <p>You will display a good understanding of the literature and of the arguments for and against a particular proposition.</p>

C Credit	65 – 74%	<p>Work that is awarded this grade will be fundamentally sound, but not particularly exciting. It will contain the core elements, although not of a standard that would warrant publication without considerable revision.</p> <p>This work will be deficient in at least one of a number of areas, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing, • structure, • inherent newsworthiness / relevance of the chosen topic • understanding of the topic.
P Pass	50 – 64%	Such work will generally reveal significant flaws. This might include, but would not be confined to, a lack of understanding, superficiality, or poor writing. One major potential flaw is a failure to follow recognised journalistic formats.
PC Pass Conceded	45 – 49%	This work will be of an inadequate standard, due potentially to a number of flaws, including an obvious lack of preparation or research on the part of the student, poor writing, editing and presentational skills. A student who has received this mark may have shown a lack of commitment to the subject.
PR Pass Restricted (not available at 300 level)	45 – 49%	The work will have failed to meet the required standards in a number of key areas. The student may have ignored assessment criteria, produced work that is not of a publishable standard, failed to follow journalistic formats, introduced potentially defamatory content into the story or shown little pride or interest in their work.
F Fail (unsatisfact ory completion)	0 - 49%	Work that is accorded a fail mark will not have met the required criteria. The writing will be of a poor standard, showing inadequate information and may reveal considerable punctuation, grammar or spelling errors. Research will be superficial or non-existent. In the case of journalistic features, the use of talent will also be inadequate.

Story Self Assessment

Before submitting work students should ask themselves some key questions in determining whether their news story has been completed to a satisfactory standard:

1. **Is the story worth telling?** – Current, relevant, significant to either a wide group or specifically target audience
2. **Does the piece nail it?** – Gets to the heart of the issue at hand
3. **Is it accurate and thorough?** – Balanced, fair and legally acceptable
4. **Is it told well?** – Clearly expressed, well structured with a good lead and good talent

Weekly Class Schedule

WEEK	LECTURE	READINGS	WORKSHOP	Assignment schedule
wk 1 19 July	Beyond the basics: introduction to news features and news packages	Sumner & Miller Chapter 1 pg 3 Chapter 2 pg 13	NO WORKSHOP	
wk2 26 July	Features as mythic stories	Sumner & Miller Chapter 5 pg 61 Chapter 12 pg 151	Setting up your blog Generating ideas exercises Intro to classmate profile	
wk3 2 August	Structure: Beginnings and endings and the stuff in between	Sumner & Miller Chapter 7 pg 89 Chapter 9 pg 115	News Feature analysis	
wk4 9 August	Anecdotes, colour and quotes	Sumner & Miller Chapter 6 pg 77 Chapter 8 pg 103	News Feature Pitches	Classmate Profile Due
wk 5 16 August	Writing for an audience	Sumner & Miller Chapter 3 pg 13 Chapter 10 pg 127	Classmate Profile group work	
wk 6 23 August	Sports Features	Sumner & Miller Chapter 4 pg 151 Chapter 12 pg 151	Classmate Profile group work	
wk 7 30 August	Illawarra Academy of Sport presentation		IAS Project planning	News Feature Due
wk 8 6 September	PROJECT RESEARCH WEEK - NO CLASSES			
wk 9 13 September	PROJECT RESEARCH WEEK - NO CLASSES			
wk 10 20 September	Essays and opinions	Sumner & Miller Chapter 17 pg 221	IAS Presentations	IAS Project Due
25- 29 September	MID-SESSION RECESS			

wk 11 4 October	How-to features	Sumner & Miller Chapter 14 pg 185	How-to feature	
wk 12 11 October	The backgrounder	Sumner & Miller Chapter 16 pg 207 Chapter 15 pg 195	Backgrounder	
wk 13 18 October	The journalist and the murderer: ethics		Backgrounder	Blog Portfolio due
Wk 14 25 October				Reflective Portfolio due

Textbooks:

These readings are recommended and not intended to be exhaustive. Students are encouraged to use the Library catalogue and databases to locate additional resources.

The set text for this subject is:

Sumner, David E. & Holly G. Miller, 2005, *Feature and magazine writing: action, angle, and anecdotes*, Iowa: Blackwell Publishing.

Required equipment:

Each student must have a digital or tape recording device for conducting interviews. Students must bring this to each class.

Other recommended readings:

Ricketson, Matthew, 2004, *Writing feature stories: how to research and write newspaper and magazine articles*, Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin

Blundell, William E., 1988, *The art and craft of feature writing : based on the Wall Street Journal guide*, New York: New American Library

Dunlevy, Maurice, 1988, *Feature writing*, Deakin University: Deakin University Press

Hennessy, Brendan, 2006, *Writing feature articles*, Boston: Focal Press

L. Sheridan Burns, *Understanding Journalism*, Sage, 2002.

D. Conley and S. Lamb, *The Daily Miracle*, 3d ed., Oxford, 2006.

S.J. Tanner, *Journalism: Investigation and Research*, Longman Pearson, 2002.

Style: A Guide for Journalists, Sydney: News Ltd, 2003

Please note: this list is not comprehensive. You should supplement these recommendations with readings you discover through your own research, both online and in hard copy.

E-readings

A series of e-readings will be compiled and will be accessible through the library catalogue and the course WebCT site.