



School of English, Journalism  
& European Languages

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## UNIT OUTLINE

HEJ201/301  
Feature Writing

Semester 1, 2006

[www.utas.edu.au/units/HEJ201](http://www.utas.edu.au/units/HEJ201)

<b>Convenor:</b>	<b>Dr Libby Lester</b>  Room: HUM 546 Phone: 6226 7542 Email: <a href="mailto:Libby.Lester@utas.edu.au">Libby.Lester@utas.edu.au</a> Consultation hours: Tues 10-10.50am, Wed 10-10.50am
<b>Unit description:</b>	Feature writing requires a combination of skilled observation, advanced interview, research and reporting techniques, and fine writing. Students will explore the field through practice, producing two major stories as part of assessment. They will also critically analyse historical and contemporary examples of feature writing. They will consider the roles of narrative, ethics and the audience.
<b>Unit aims and objectives:</b>	On completion of this unit, you should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pitch, research and write a feature story of publishable standard</li><li>• Critically analyse the work of others</li><li>• Understand the place of feature writing within the broader tradition of non-fiction narrative</li><li>• Understand past and present media environments and the place of feature writing within them</li></ul>
<b>Learning outcomes:</b>	Students taking this unit will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build <i>knowledge</i> and enhance skills in the areas described in the Unit aims and objectives (above)</li><li>• Enhance skills in <i>communication</i>, both written and oral, through assignments and workshops</li><li>• Enhance skills in <i>problem solving</i> through assessment tasks and workshopping activities</li><li>• Develop their <i>global perspective</i> through the analysis of texts from a range of national and cultural contexts.</li></ul>
<b>Required texts:</b>	Unit reader. Students should also read two feature stories from magazines of their choice (one must be Australian) every week before workshops and be prepared to discuss in detail. Where relevant, please relate to lecture topic of that week, for example, a profile in Week 4.

<b>When taught:</b>	Semester 1, 2006  Lectures: 11:00 – 11:50am Tuesday GEOL LTH 1 (wks 1-7) Workshops: 1 x 2-hrs weekly (wks 2-13)
<b>Assessment:</b>	1,500-word pitch and publication critique (20%), 1000-word profile, 500-word research notes/reflexive critique, workshopping and redrafting (35%), 1500-word feature, 500-word notes/reflexive critique, workshopping and redrafting (45%)
<b>Workshops:</b>	All students must take part in the workshopping process. Assignments Two and Three will be workshopped before proceeding to a final draft. You will be allocated times in which to present your drafts for workshopping. You must provide a copy of your draft to your tutor by email <b>one week</b> before you are due to workshop for distribution to your group. <i>Drafts and final assignments should be typed, double spaced and across A4 pages.</i> Students cannot workshop individually with tutors.
<b>Recommended reading:</b>	Carey, John, ed. <i>The Faber Book of Reportage</i> . London: Faber and Faber, 1987. Dunlevy, Maurice. <i>Feature Writing</i> . Geelong, VIC: Deakin University, 1988. Granato, Len. <i>Newspaper Feature Writing</i> . Geelong, VIC: Deakin University, 1999. Jackson, Dennis, and John Sweeney, eds. <i>The Journalist's Craft: A Guide to Writing Better Stories</i> . New York: Allworth Press, 2002. Kaplan, Bruce. <i>Editing Made Easy</i> . Camberwell, VIC: Penguin Books, 2003. Orwell, George. 'Politics and the English Language.' In <i>Inside the Whale and Other Essays</i> . Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1946. Ricketson, Matthew. <i>Writing Feature Stories</i> . Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2004. Sedorkin, Gail, and Judy McGregor. <i>Interviewing: A Guide for Journalists and Writers</i> . Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2002. Strunk, William, and E.B. White. <i>The Elements of Style</i> . 4th ed. Allyn and Bacon: Boston, 2000. Wolfe, Tom. <i>The New Journalism</i> . London: Picador, 1973.

## LECTURE/SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Week	Beginning	Lecture	Lecturer	Reading	Workshop
1	27 Feb	What is a feature? Introduction to the unit.	Libby Lester		None
2	6 March	Feature writing in one easy lesson.	Libby Lester	'Plague in Athens', 'The Death of Socrates', 'The Eruption of Vesuvius', 'Dinner with Attila the Hun,' 'A Viking Funeral', 'The Green Children'	Presentation of Assignment One
3	13 March	Well, two...	Libby Lester	Laurence, 'Atomic Bombing of Nagasaki...' Hersey, 'The Unforgettable Fire'	Presentation of Assignment One
4	20 March	The living and the dead: interviews, profiles and obits.	Bruce Montgomery	Barber, 'You know, I'm not everyone's cup of tea!' Ross, 'Portrait of Hemingway'	Interview practice
5	27 March	New journalism, old journalism: the literary giants, make-believe – and you.	Susanna Rodell	Didion, 'Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream' Thompson, 'The Kentucky Derby is decadent and depraved' Rodell, 'Yunggaaa!!!'	Workshopping profile
6	3 April	Writing opinion: leaders, columns, reviews and associated risks.	Susanna Rodell	Neil, 'Santa's Little Helper' Lane, 'The Maria Problem' Breslin, 'Life in a Cage'	Workshopping profile
7	10 April	Selling your story: pitches, presentation and pics.	Bruce Montgomery	Walkley Winners, 2005. Whittaker, Magazine feature. Hooton, Coverage of Sport.	Workshopping profile
8	24 April			Keller, the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing, 2005.	Workshopping profile
9	1 May			Capote, 'In Cold Blood'	Workshopping feature

10	8 May			Gladwell, 'The Pitchman'	Workshopping feature
11	15 May			Talese, 'The soft psyche of Joshua Logan'	Workshopping feature
12	22 May			Kleinfield, 'A creeping horror'	Workshopping feature
13	29 May				Unit wrap-up

## ASSIGNMENTS

<b>Assignment One: Pitch and publication critique (worth 20 per cent)</b>	
<b>Description</b>	Analyse a newspaper or magazine of your choice and pitch a story that would be suitable material for the publication. You may pitch an idea for your major assignment. You can choose any newspaper or magazine with a strong feature content. They can be broad or special interest. You will briefly pitch your story to your workshopping group for feedback, but you will also provide it in written form for assessment. This should be accompanied by a critique of the publication. All students should be prepared to pitch in Week Two.
<b>Length</b>	1500 words (comprising a pitch of 2-300 words and a 1200-word critique). The workshop pitch should last only a couple of minutes.
<b>Assessment criteria / guidelines</b>	<p>Assessment will be based on the depth and analysis included in your evaluation and the originality and suitability of your pitch. Your critique should be in academic style and properly referenced. In evaluating the newspaper or magazine, consider such things as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content, including stories, photographs, graphics, design, headings and advertisements.</li> <li>• Social, political or moral orientation</li> <li>• Target audience (age, gender, education...)</li> <li>• Circulation, readership figures, ownership, etc</li> <li>• Its industrial/institutional contexts</li> <li>• Types and lengths of features published (news, profiles, analysis, opinion, first-person, travel, lifestyle...)</li> <li>• Topics and themes covered in the features</li> <li>• Style and variations in feature writing</li> <li>• Intros, including length, tone, style, effectiveness</li> <li>• Endings</li> <li>• Overall quality of publication.</li> </ul> <p>In pitching a story, take all the above into account. Treat the workshop group as the publication's editors. You should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Succinctly say what your story is about</li> <li>• Describe a possible treatment (i.e. style, length, tone)</li> <li>• Suggest possible intro, headline and images to accompany the story</li> </ul> <p>Be prepared to defend your thinking.</p>
<b>Date due</b>	Pitch in workshops in Weeks Two and Three Written pitch and critique, start Week Four, Monday 20 March, 5pm

**Assignment Two: 1000-word profile, 500-word research notes/reflexive critique, workshopping and redrafting (worth 35 per cent)**

**Description**

Write a profile story of 1000 words. You must interview the subject of the profile. (Do not profile family members or close friends, and the subject should have nothing to do with your major feature idea. Your subject will be required to sign an interviewee's release form, which will be provided to you by your lecturer.) You will also need to do other research - which may involve interviews - on the background of the subject. Keep a research diary/notes, which will include interview details, development of your story, and reflections on both the story and its broader context, and is to be handed in with your assignment. This should be 500 words in length and be properly referenced.

You will be allocated a time for workshopping a draft of your profile in weeks 5-8. A list will be placed on the JMC noticeboard opposite Room HUM566 during Week Four. You will need to email the draft of your profile to your tutor one week before you are due to workshop for distribution via email to other members of your workshopping group. Drafts and final assignments should be double-spaced, across A4 pages.

**Length**

Profile of 1000 words plus reflexive notes (500-words)

**Assessment criteria / guidelines**

Assessment for the profile will be based on the following:

- Structure
- Grammar and punctuation
- Intro and ending
- Use of speech
- Use of description
- Use of anecdotes
- Style and tone
- Research, including interviews
- Presence of news ingredients
- Workshopping and redrafting
- Understanding of the genre

You must attach completed Interview Consent Forms, one for each interviewee.

Your critique should be in academic style and properly referenced. It should discuss how and why your profile developed as it did, and locate your work within broader contexts, which may be drawn from your readings of other features and/or guides to feature writing (see Recommended readings)

**Date due**

Workshopped in weeks 5-8  
Due start of Week 9, Monday 1 May, 5pm

**Assignment three: 1500-word feature, 500-word notes/reflexive critique, workshopping and redrafting (worth 45 per cent)**

**Description**

Write a 1500-word feature on a subject of your choice. You must discuss your story idea with your tutor. Keep a research diary (500 words), which will include details of story development and reflections on both the story and its broader context, and is to be handed in with your assignment. Your reflexive critique and diary should be properly referenced. The story should include at least four to six interviews and substantial other research. Your subjects will be required to sign an interview consent form, which will be provided to you by your lecturer.

You will be allocated a time for workshopping a draft of your profile in weeks 9-12. A list will be placed on the JMC noticeboard opposite Room HUM566 during Week 4. You will need to email the draft of your feature to your tutor one week before you are due to workshop for distribution via email to other members of your workshopping group. Drafts and final assignments should be double-spaced, across A4 pages.

**Length**

1500-word feature plus reflexive critique/diary (500 words)

**Assessment criteria/guidelines**

Assessment for the feature will be based on the following:

- Structure
- Grammar and punctuation
- Intro and ending
- Use of speech
- Use of description
- Use of anecdotes
- Style and tone
- Research, including interviews
- Presence of news ingredients
- Workshopping and redrafting
- Understanding of the genre

You must attach completed Interview Consent Forms, one for each interviewee.

Your critique should be in academic style and properly referenced. It should discuss how and why your feature developed as it did, and contextualise your work in broader contexts, which may be drawn from your readings of other features and/or guides to feature writing (see Recommended readings)

**Due date**

Workshopped in Weeks 9-12. Due start Week 14 (Study Week), Monday 5 June, 5pm

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Submission of Assignments

Students are required to submit a signed cover sheet with every assignment. This includes a declaration that all material submitted is their own work except where there is clear acknowledgement or reference to the work of others and that they have read the University statement on Academic Misconduct (Plagiarism) on the University website at [www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism](http://www.utas.edu.au/plagiarism) or in the Student Information Handbook. Assignment cover sheets are available from the School office. All written assignments must be submitted in hard-copy (not by email or other electronic means) and placed in the essay box at the School office on or before 5pm on the due date. Students are required to keep copies of all submitted assignments. Assignments will be returned within three weeks of the due date; once assignments have been returned no further late assignments will be accepted.

### Late Assignments

Late submissions will be penalized as follows: 5% of the available marks for the first day, and then 2% per working day thereafter. Late work will be accepted without penalty if accompanied by a medical certificate for the relevant period or a letter from a counsellor in the case of a serious non-medical reason.

### Difficulties with your Studies

If you are experiencing difficulties with your studies or assignments, have personal or life planning issues, disability or illness which may affect your course of study, you should raise these with your lecturer and/or one of the following Student Services staff as soon as possible:

- Learning Skills Adviser
- Student Counsellor
- Careers Adviser
- Disability Adviser

### University Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

"**Plagiarism** is a form of cheating. It is taking and using someone else's thoughts, writings or inventions and representing them as your own; for example, using an author's words without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source, using an author's ideas without proper acknowledgment and citation, copying another student's work.

If you have any doubts about how to refer to the work of others in your assignments, please consult your lecturer or tutor for relevant referencing guidelines, and the academic integrity resources on the web at

<http://www.utas.edu.au/ti/supporting/academicintegrity/index.html>.

The intentional copying of someone else's work as one's own is a serious offence punishable by penalties that may range from a fine or deduction/cancellation of marks and, in the most serious of cases, to exclusion from a unit, a course or the University. Details of penalties that can be imposed are available in the Ordinance of Student Discipline – Part 3 Academic Misconduct, see <http://www.utas.edu.au/universitycouncil/legislation/> "

**The University and any persons authorised by the University may submit your assessable works to a plagiarism checking service, to obtain a report on possible instances of plagiarism. Assessable works may also be included in a reference database. It is a condition of this arrangement that the original author's permission is required before a work within the database can be viewed.**

### Assignment Presentation

The Journalism, Media and Communications discipline uses MLA Style, which is characterized by in-text referencing and a list of works cited. See the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th ed. Ed. Joseph Gibaldi (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2003).

### Marking Scale

The following distribution of marks and grades is applied in assessing your work:

- High Distinction (HD)—80-100%
- Distinction (DN)—70-79%
- Credit (CR)—60-69%
- Pass (PP)—50-59%
- Fail (NN)—0-49%

All marks are subject to moderation.