



School of English, Journalism
& European Languages

Unit Outline

HEJ201/301
Feature Writing
Semester 1, 2008

<http://www.utas.edu.au/journalism>

Convenor:	Dr Louise North Room: SocSci 536 Phone: 6226 1930 Email: Louise.North@utas.edu.au
Consultation Hours:	Monday 12pm-2.00pm Friday 2.00pm-3.00pm.
Unit Description:	Considers contemporary and historical feature writing, and examines the roles of narrative, ethics, opinion and audience in the production of this style of journalism. The unit focuses on profiles, literary journalism and news features. For assessment, students will research, write and workshop feature stories, as well as analyse classic examples.
Unit Aims and Objectives:	On completion of this unit, you should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pitch, research and write a feature story of publishable standard• Critically analyse the work of others• Understand the place of feature writing within the broader tradition of non-fiction narrative• Understand past and present media environments and the place of feature writing within them
Learning Outcomes:	Students taking this unit will: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Build <i>knowledge</i> and enhance skills in the areas described in the Unit aims and objectives (above)2. Enhance skills in <i>communication</i>, both written and oral, through assignments and workshops3. Enhance skills in <i>problem solving</i> through assessment tasks and workshoping activities4. Develop their <i>global perspective</i> through the analysis of texts from a range of national and cultural contexts.
Required Texts:	Unit reader Students should also read at least one feature story from

	<p>magazines of choice (eg. <i>The Monthly</i>, <i>The Weekend Australian Magazine</i>) 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 weeks 5, 6, 7, 8; a feature in weeks 9, 10, 11 and 12.</p>
Recommended Texts:	<p>Eisenhuth, Susie and Willa McDonald, 2007, <i>The Writer's Reader</i>, New York, Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Kaplan, Bruce, 2003, <i>Editing Made Easy</i>, Camberwell, VIC, Penguin Books.</p> <p>Ricketson, Matthew, 2004, <i>Writing Feature Stories</i>, Crows Nest, NSW, Allen & Unwin.</p> <p>Strunk, William, and E.B. White, 2000, <i>The Elements of Style</i>, 4th ed., Boston, Allyn and Bacon.</p> <p>Additional reading list at end of outline</p>
When Taught:	<p>Lecture Tues 9am-9.50am, SB.Geo211. LT</p> <p>Tutorials Tues 11am-12.50pm, SB.Socsci313 - LN Tues 1.10pm-3pm, SB.SB.Engg335 - HB Tues 3.10pm-5pm, SB.Hum548 - HB Wed 3.10pm-5pm, SB.Engg335 - LN Fri 11am-12.50pm, SB.Hum346 - LN</p>
Assessment:	<p>1,500-word essay (pitch and publications critique) (20%),</p> <p>1000-word profile, 500-word research notes and workshopping (35%),</p> <p>1500-word feature, 500-word notes/reflexive critique and workshopping and redrafting (45%).</p>
Workshops:	<p>Workshop attendance is compulsory. All students must take part in the workshopping process and an attendance roll will be taken. 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 one week before you are due to workshop it 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.</p>
Extensions:	<p>No extensions will be granted without documented evidence (eg. a medical certificate). Do not email or phone your lecturer or tutor, rather attach the documented evidence to your submitted essay.</p>
Note:	<p>For journalistic assignments, you must not use material gathered for a story, including interviews, for assessment in more than one unit. If in doubt, please discuss with your unit coordinator.</p>

LECTURE/WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Date	Lecture	Readings	Workshop
Week 1, 26 Feb	Introduction to unit What is a feature?	None	None
Week 2 4 March	Types of features	NR Kleinfield, 'A creeping horror'. NR Kleinfield, 'A city awakes, only to reflect on a nightmare'.	Presentation assignment 1 of
Week 3 11 March	Generating ideas and researching features	Helen Garner, 'Death'. John Hersey, 'The unforgettable fire'.	Presentation assignment 1 of
Week 4 18 March	Writing a feature in one easy lesson	Hunter S. Thompson, 'The Kentucky derby is decadent and depraved'. Joan Didion, 'Some dreamers of the golden dream'.	Interview skills/practice
Easter Break – 20-26 March			
Week 5 1 April	New Journalism, old journalism and the literary giants	Cameron Stewart, 'Straight shooter'. Judith Brett, 'It's Bennelong Time'.	Workshop profile
Week 6 8 April	The Art of Travel Writing	Lillian Ross, 'Portrait of Hemingway'.	Workshop profile
Week 7 15 April	'What are columnists good for?'	Kate Legge, 'A long way to the top'. Jill Rowbotham, "I Forgive" .	Workshop profile
Week 8 22 April		Marie Brenner, 'I never sang for my mother'.	Workshop profile
Week 9 29 April		Malcolm Knox, 'Cruising: Life and Death on the High Seas'. 2006 Walkley winner	Workshop feature
Week 10 6 May		Andrea Elliott, 'An Imam in America'. 2007 Pulitzer Prize	Workshop feature
Week 11 13 May		Margaret Simons, 'Buried in the Labyrinth'.	Workshop feature
Week 12 20 May		Truman Capote, 'In cold blood'.	Workshop feature
Week 13 27 May			Unit wrap-up

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1: Pitch and publication critique (20 per cent)	
Description	Analyse a newspaper or magazine of your choice and pitch a story that would be suitable 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 2.
Length	1500 words (comprising a pitch of 200-300 words and a 1200-word critique). The workshop pitch should last only a couple of minutes.
Assessment criteria / guidelines	<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"> • Content, including stories, photographs, graphics, design, headings and advertisements. • Social, political or moral orientation • Target audience (age, gender, education) • Circulation, readership figures, ownership • Its industrial/institutional contexts • Types and lengths of features published (news, profiles, analysis, opinion, first-person, travel, lifestyle...) • Topics and themes covered in the features • Style and variations in feature writing • Intros, including length, tone, style, effectiveness • Endings • Overall quality of publication. <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"> • Succinctly say what your story is about • Describe a possible treatment (i.e. style, length, tone) • Suggest possible intro, headline and images to accompany the story <p>Be prepared to defend your thinking.</p> <p>This assignment will assess learning outcomes 1-3</p>
Date due	Pitch in workshops in Weeks 2 and 3 Written pitch and critique, Tuesday 18 March, 5pm

Assignment 2: 1000-word profile, 500-word research notes/reflexive critique, workshopping and redrafting (35 per cent)	
Description	<p>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 Consent Form, found on the school's website). 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.</p> <p>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 during Week 4. 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 on A4-sized paper and text should be double-spaced.</p>
Length	Profile of 1000 words plus reflexive notes (500-words)
Assessment criteria / guidelines	<p>Assessment for the profile will be based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>You must attach completed Interview Consent Forms, one for each interviewee.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>This assignment will assess learning outcomes 1-4</p>
Date due	Workshopped in weeks 5-8 Due Tuesday 29 April, 5pm

Assignment 3: 1500-word feature, 500-word notes/reflexive critique, workshopping and redrafting (45 per cent)

<p>Description</p>	<p>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, found on the school's website. 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 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 on A4-sized paper and text should be double-spaced.</p>
<p>Length</p>	<p>1500-word feature plus reflexive critique/diary (500 words)</p>
<p>Assessment criteria/guidelines</p>	<p>Assessment for the feature will be based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>You must attach completed Interview Consent Forms, one for each interviewee.</p> <p>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)</p> <p>This assignment will assess learning outcomes 1-4</p>
<p>Due date</p>	<p>Workshopped in Weeks 9-12. Due start Week 14 (Study Week), Monday 2 June, 5pm</p>

Additional Reading

Carey, John 1987, *The Faber Book of Reportage*, London, Faber and Faber.

Dunlevy, Maurice 1988, *Feature Writing*. Geelong, Deakin University.

Granato, Len 1999, *Newspaper Feature Writing*, Geelong, Deakin University.

Jackson, Dennis, and John Sweeney (eds) 2002, *The Journalist's Craft: A Guide to Writing Better Stories*, New York, Allworth Press.

Orwell, George 1971[1946], 'Politics and the English Language', in *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*, Middlesex, Penguin, pp.143-58.

Sedorkin, Gail, and Judy McGregor, 2002, *Interviewing: A Guide for Journalists and Writers*, Crows Nest, NSW, Allen & Unwin.

Wolfe, Tom 1973, *The New Journalism*, London, Picador.

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 or in the Student Information Handbook.

Assignment cover sheets are available from the School office or the School website. **Assignments submitted without a signed cover sheet will not be marked.** Students who submit assignments without a signed cover sheet will be contacted once via their UTAS email address; in such instances the cover sheet must be completed within two weeks of the due date.

All assignments must be submitted in hard-copy (not by email) 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 submitted on time will be returned within three weeks of the due date; once on time assignments have been returned no further late assignments will be accepted. All marked assignments will be returned in tutorials unless otherwise advised.

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
- Disability Adviser
- Careers Adviser
- Student Counsellor

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/tl/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 the Harvard style of referencing. Please see <http://www.utas.edu.au/journalism/> for a brief introduction. For journalistic writing, refer to the JMC Style Guide, also available at <http://www.utas.edu.au/journalism/>.

For journalistic assignments, you must not use material gathered for a story, including interviews, for assessment in more than one unit. If in doubt, please discuss with your unit coordinator.

Equipment

Please note that this unit may require access to sound and/or video recording equipment and that while the school will provide access to equipment during tutorials, access to equipment outside of tutorials is not guaranteed. Where the loan of equipment is possible students will be required to sign and agree to the terms and conditions of the loan, including the penalties for late return, as presented at the time of the loan. We encourage students, where possible, to purchase their own recording devices. Teaching staff will advise on suitable equipment.

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.

IT Support

Learning online—for online learning and Vista support – <http://www.utas.edu.au/coursesonline/>
Information Technology Services—for general IT Support (includes link to UTAS download website)
<http://www.utas.edu.au/servicedesk/student/index.html>
Library Services—for information literacy support – <http://www.utas.edu.au/library/>
Help Desk (email HelpDesk@utas.edu.au or 6226 1818, within University 1818)