

J336J/395

Spring 2017

Lifestyle Journalism

08145/08320

Class: Mondays & Wednesdays 12 – 1:30 p.m. CMA 6.146

Professor: Renita Coleman, Ph.D.

Office: BMC 3.330

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30 to 3 p.m. and by appointment

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Textbooks:

There are no required books for this class. You will be expected to read the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, Pitchfork, Paste, other sources of good lifestyle journalism, and readings posted on Canvas.

Overview:

Lifestyle journalism has experienced enormous growth in the media over the past two decades, but it is still sometimes seen as “not real journalism” or criticized as “soft” news or too closely aligned with advertising and public relations. Yet this type of journalism is increasingly popular with audiences. Lifestyle stories can start important discussions about issues such as race, economic equality, cultural differences, and more. This course will incorporate an understanding of journalism beyond “hard news” and the “watchdog” role. It is a combination of practical skills and conceptual understanding of how this form of journalism is increasingly relevant for the 21st century. It will teach students how to do lifestyle journalism with integrity, exploring the broader lifestyle field while focusing on a variety of sub-fields such as travel, music, movies, arts and food, along with students’ special interests. The course will stay on top of the important stories in the news, such as the demise of Gawker, lack of diversity at the Oscars, and more. Social media and multimedia will be incorporated. There are no tests or textbooks. Students will primarily write reviews and stories, and also reflection papers contemplating, for instance, how travel writing promotes understanding of other cultures. Readings will draw from a diversity of good quality lifestyle and arts writing from blogs, websites, magazines, and newspapers. Other readings from various sources will include textbooks, scholarly research, and media criticism. Guest speakers will share their expertise.

Course goals:

At the end of this course you will have:

- Read the work of highly accomplished lifestyle journalists, and heard from them in class as guest speakers.
- Written critiques of lifestyle stories in various venues.
- Explored the issues of lifestyle economics, culture and diversity, and ethics through class discussion and reflection papers.
- Have applied what you learned by writing four major stories – a review, food story, travel story, and multimedia piece on a lifestyle topic of your choice.

- Have your work published on a class web site and used social media to drive traffic to your stories, which we will monitor with Google analytics.

This course carries the Writing Flag so you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Grading:

There are no tests in this class, but that does not mean it is an 'easy A.' This is a professionally focused course. Think of this class as being in the newsroom with your editor and reporter colleagues. Our time in class will be devoted to arming you with the tools needed to do your job, working on your journalism products, ie: stories, multimedia and art. Absence from class will be treated exactly as an absence from work. Grades (think of these as your paycheck, performance review, and general reputation in the newsroom) will be based on the following:

Review story	20%
Food Story	20%
Travel story	20%
Multimedia story	20%
Participation & Reflection papers	20%

All stories require at least one photo, to be put on the website, and trafficked via Twitter, Facebook and other social media. All stories are to be typed and double-spaced. Turn in by email to me by the deadline. We will workshop stories and get feedback from our peers; to do this, email copies of your stories to me and at least one other classmate. Instructions will be given in class.

Workshop days devoted to pitching, peer reviewing story drafts, and putting the finished stories on the website will be incorporated into this part of the grade. These are not optional attendance and no grades are dropped. You will be expected to come with significant progress made on your story and be prepared to show it to your editor (me) and discuss it with your peers, and revise it during class time. You also will provide feedback on others' stories.

The story assignments are:

1-Review – Attend a movie, music performance, theater, art show, or read a book or listen to a new album and review it. 450-550 words. With art. Details to be provided.

2-Travel story – 1,300-1,600 words with art. Can be a main story and sidebar or video. Details to come.

3-Food story – 750-1,100 words total with art. Can be a main story and sidebar or video. Details to come.

4-Your Choice in Video – Something you are interested in within the realm of lifestyle journalism – fashion, health & fitness, garden, home, etc. 1:30-2:00 plus 300-500 words. If you know Adobe Premier, FinalCut, iMovie or some other multimedia software, you may do your project using it. Otherwise, I will teach you SoundSlides in class and you can use that. Details to be given in class.

Your work will be critiqued by me and peer edited by your classmates; then you will have the opportunity to revise it for a final grade. Pay very careful attention to the comments for improvement that you receive; failure to correctly incorporate improvement via those comments will result in a suboptimal grade. This is not a guarantee of a certain grade, but if you make all the changes well, your grade will reflect that.

Participation & Reflection Papers: Participation is assessed in various ways that are linked – by short written “reflection” papers, critiques of published stories, questions for guest speakers, and your contributions to class discussion. Do all of the readings before class is held. All students will be expected to contribute to class discussion with insightful questions, informed opinions, and intelligent comments. You also may bring in articles or other examples pertinent to the day’s topic to share with others. Participation when guest speakers are scheduled will be more heavily weighted than on other days. Texting, emailing, and being late on days guest speakers are scheduled will result in a grade of zero for that day. You will also read the works of our guest speakers and write 2 questions so that you will be prepared to ask insightful questions of the speakers. Participation points cannot be earned by turning in papers but not coming to class; your presence is required along with any written assignments in order to earn participation points. Because I understand that occasionally, we all have to miss a class for some not-UT-approved reason, I will drop the 3 lowest participation grades.

Graduate Credit: Master’s students will do an additional assignment. This can be another story (500 words), or a 1:30-minute video piece to go with one of your assigned stories, or a 20-min. presentation to the class on a topic you are interested in and approved by me. Due any time up to the last day of class; for feedback, submit two weeks in advance. Graduate student grades will be based on the following:

Review	20%
Food Story	20%
Travel story	20%
Multimedia story	20%
Graduate Credit Assignment	5%

Participation & Reflection papers 15%

Assignments will be graded based on this scale:

A - Outstanding work. Strong in every category, especially newsworthiness. Copy is usually publishable with little or no editing.

B - Good work. Many strong points. Copy is usually publishable with minor editing and revision.

C - Satisfactory work. Some strong points. Copy needs additional reporting/rewriting.

D - Serious problems with reporting and/or writing. Weak news value. Copy contains major factual, structural, writing or usage flaws.

F - Unacceptable work. Copy fails to meet even minimum standards for the assignment. Not newsworthy. Not grammatical English. Or, missed deadline.

Missing a deadline will result in a failing grade for that assignment, 0 (zero). I do not take off a certain number of points for each day an assignment is late; assignments turned in late by any amount of time at all will receive a zero.

Spelling, grammar, punctuation and style errors will be penalized accordingly:

5 points for every spelling, grammar, punctuation and style error.

10 points for every fact error, including misspelling a name.

Sourcing: These stories will require at least 2 human sources that you speak to in person or on the phone (except for the review). Email interviews must be approved first and a good reason is necessary. You may use online sources for background information, but you must verify everything through actual contact with a human being. Online sources (even with human contact for verification) are not to be used in lieu of original reporting, and quotes are not to be taken from online sources. In addition, you must attribute *all* sources of information and provide a contact list for every source. At least 1 secondary data source must be used in the travel story.

It is always important to know who your audience is. We are writing for the general population of adults in Austin who read lifestyle stories online. Your stories will be showcased on the class website. Target your stories for this audience, not for college students; no stories focused on or relying heavily on college students as sources or subjects will be allowed. Neither are you allowed to use friends and family as sources; it is a conflict of interest. We use AP style for online audiences; we are not writing in broadcast style.

Make-ups, late and missed deadlines: This is journalism, and the one thing we value most after truth telling is the deadline. Therefore, turn in all assignments on the day they are due at the beginning of class, in class. Late assignments and those turned in by the incorrect method, in my mailbox, under my office door, brought by a friend, etc. will not be accepted and will result in a grade of zero. You will not be allowed to make up assignments whose deadline you miss. The only exceptions to the no-make-ups rule are death in your immediate family, incapacitating illness, and UT approved special

curricular requirements. All of these require documentation showing that you were in the hospital, at a funeral, or playing football on the day that the assignment was due. If the absence is planned (eg: playing football), turn the assignment in before the due date. If you do not know that you are going to be absent when an assignment is due, turn it in by email as close to the due date as possible along with your excuse. (This does not apply to participation assignments; I drop 3 of those grades, which should be sufficient). In all cases, be sure to send me an email and make an appointment to see me to create an action plan as soon as possible. I will never ask you for specifics about your absence; we will use discrete language such as medical reasons, unexpected personal situation, on-going health needs, family situation, etc.

In the case of longer term health conditions, you must go to the disability services office and be certified; SSD will then send me a letter outlining the accommodations I am to give you, and I will happily comply with those. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively, so do not wait until you have missed turning in an assignment to visit SSD.

None of this applies to routine medical appointments, illnesses below the threshold of doctor visits, jobs, job interviews, research for class assignments (including this one), family problems, family members' illnesses, transportation issues, emotional distress, relationship crises, bad weather, computer difficulties, picking someone up at the airport, etc. These are not approved absences. I appreciate you telling me when you will miss class for one of these reasons – it shows you are a courteous person – but it does not excuse you from class. You will still receive a zero for participation that day. If you know you will need to miss a class when an assignment is due, turn it in BEFORE that class begins. You may not turn in participation grade assignments without actually being in class; however, I drop 3 of these, so do not worry unless you miss more than 3.

I am not allowed to give extra time on assignments for computer crashes and other technology related reasons. Be sure to back up your work every time you change it. You can email it to yourself if you do not have a backup drive or cloud storage. Work not turned in on time because of a computer issue will receive a zero.

Attendance in this class is key to learning good lifestyle journalism. This is not designed as a correspondence or online course. There is no way to make up for loss of information gleaned through in-class discussions, critiques of your work by colleagues, and explanations by me. This material is not available online or on Canvas. Students who miss a significant amount of classes may not be able to fulfill course requirements. Therefore, missing more than 5 class days will require you to drop the class and take it at another time. Even if you have excused absences, or a disability accommodation, missing more than 5 days means you should focus on your health and take this class at another time.

Final grades

A = 94-100

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79
C = 74 -76
C- = 70-73
D+ = 67-69
D = 64 – 66
D- = 60 - 63
F = below 60 points

Please also note that I do not “round up.” An 89.99 is still a B+; it takes a full 90 earned points to receive an A-.

Grades are based on the final product, not the amount of time or effort put in or how hard you tried. Assignments are not accepted late. Late assignments will receive a grade of zero. No exceptions. I do not take off a certain amount of points for each day late; even one day late equals 100 points off. If you believe I have made a mistake in a grade, or do not understand something about your grade, please see me within one week of receiving your grade. If you are still not satisfied, see me within the next 3 days. No grade changes will be considered after this deadline.

Canvas

In this class, I use Canvas – a web-based course management system with password-protected access to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, and to post grades, but NOT to turn in assignments. I find it to be harder to use than if you email me your work. The schedule is subject to change and with it, the readings and dates assignments are due. You are responsible for keeping up with the latest schedule, readings, and due dates by checking the schedule posted on Canvas. I send announcement notices of changes, so keep your email updated and your inbox relatively open. Your failure to receive notice of changes is not a reason for extensions; you are responsible for checking Canvas for updates. You can find support in using Canvas at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Students with disabilities

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. A documented disability statement from Services for Students with Disabilities must be provided to the instructor in the first week of class or as soon as the certification is received, an in-person discussion about it held with me, and all regulations of SSD followed. Excused absences of up to 5 days must be related to your disability. Missing more than 5 days, even for disability reasons, means you will need to drop the class and take it at another time. For more information, contact the Services for Students with disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

University Honor Code

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructors. This includes work you do for media outlets such as Texas TV and the *Daily Texan*, or any other media outlet. If you want to do a similar assignment for another class or another media outlet, check with me first. You must always cite words and ideas that are not your own. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and those on the Student Judicial Services website and must adhere to them. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Visit the Student Judicial Services Web site: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
<i>Week 1</i>			
Jan. 18	Welcome & introduction to the course		
<i>Week 2</i>			
Jan. 23	Lifestyle news – problem or solution? Reporting, Writing & AP Style Review	Infotainment & Democracy – write a 1 page reflection paper	Infotainment Reflection paper due
Jan. 25	“We’ve come a long way, baby” – history of lifestyle news Music, movie, theater, art and book reviews	Washington Post, Rolling Stone, Pitchfork.com, Pastemagazine.com or some other outstanding news outlet’s reviews – read 4 reviews of whatever type you are going to review, and write a 1 pager on patterns you see (for book reviews go to http://www.nytimes.com/pages/books/review/index.html)	Reflection paper on reviews due Review ideas due Feb. 1; Review due Feb. 14
<i>Week 3</i>			
Jan. 30	The art of the review. Guest speaker Raoul Hernandez, Austin Chronicle	Read the stories by Raoul Hernandez on Canvas and write 2 questions	2 Questions due
Feb. 1	Pitching review ideas & approve		3 review ideas due
<i>Week 4</i>			
Feb. 6	Sweet Nothings – Gender in music writing	Sweet Nothings reading – write 1 page essay reflection.	Sweet Nothings Reflection paper due
Feb. 8	Workshop reviews – come to class with the first draft of your review		First draft of review due

<i>Week 5</i>			
Feb. 13	The Day the Music Died – Culture in lifestyle writing	The Day the Music Died reading – write 1 page essay reflection.	The Day the Music Died Reflection paper due
Feb. 15	Travel journalism	Travel book chapters: Intro, Ch. 1 and Ch. 4 – write a 1 page reflection paper	DUE Review 1 page essay due on travel chapters Travel story ideas due Feb. 22, story due March 27
<i>Week 6</i>			
Feb. 20	Guest speaker – travel writer Kristin Finian, Statesman	2 Questions on Kristin Finian’s stories	2 questions due
Feb. 22	Put reviews on website and promote on social media Pitch travel ideas and get approved	Come to class with your edited review and photo to put on the website	3 travel story ideas due; first draft due March 6 (background reporting)
<i>Week 7</i>			
Feb. 27	Travel stories – dissecting good ones Using secondary data	New York Times or Washington Post travel stories – write a 1 page critique Optional – Travel Oxnard and Travel Shanghai (examples of good and bad stories)	Reflection paper on Travel stories critique due.
March 1	Travel photos		
<i>Week 8</i>			
March 6	Workshop travel draft 1 – nail down your angle, get background info, and secondary data.		DUE: Travel draft 1 (background, secondary data, angle)
March 8	Off to write travel story		
<i>Week 9</i>			

March 13	SPRING BREAK		
March 15	SPRING BREAK		
<i>Week 10</i>			
March 20	Workshop – travel stories and photos	Bring your nearly finished travel story and photos to class	Travel draft 2 and photos due
March 22	Fashion writing & critiquing	Read Robin Givhan fashion stories and write a 1 pager	Reflection paper on Robin Givhan fashion stories due.
<i>Week 11</i>			
March 27	Travel stories due Food writing & story assignment		DUE: Final travel story and photos 3 food story ideas due April 3; final due April 17
March 29	Guest speaker – Addie Broyles, Austin American Statesman food editor	Read Addie Broyles food stories and write 2 questions	2 questions on Addie Broyles food stories
<i>Week 12</i>			
April 3	Pitch food story ideas & approve Put travel stories on website and traffic on social media	Bring your revised travel stories and photos to class and put on website	3 food story ideas due
April 5	Food stories – dissecting good one Food photos	Read 2 food stories from the Washington Post or some other good source for food stories – write a 1 page critique	Reflection paper on 2 food stories due
<i>Week 13</i>			
April 10	Food criticism - Jonathan Gold Workshop food stories – come to class with the draft of your food story & photos	Read food stories by Jonathan Gold & write a 1 pager	Reflection paper on Gold stories Food story & photos draft due.

April 12	Telling stories in video		3 video story ideas due April 19; draft due April 26; final due May 3 by putting on website
<i>Week 14</i>			
April 17	Query letters & freelancing		DUE Food stories and photos
April 19	Pitching video story ideas & approve		Video story ideas due
<i>Week 15</i>			
April 24	Graded food stories returned; put on website and traffic with social media		
April 26	Workshop video story – come to class with video/photos, and a rough draft of your story Class evaluations		DUE: Draft of video story
<i>Week 16</i>			
May 1	TBA		
May 3	Video story due; post on website and traffic with social media.		DUE: Video story. Put on website and I will grade it from there

** This schedule is subject to change. Check Canvas for the latest updates.*