Portfolio I
Professor Liza Featherstone
Wednesday 9:00 am-12:40 PM
Spring 2018

Portfolio I is the first in a two-course workshop, during which you will learn the basic building blocks of literary reportage: generating ideas, refining those ideas into pitches, and developing those pitches into pieces of roughly 1,500-3,000 words. As we work through this process, we will discuss interview and reporting techniques, structure and outlines, scenes, and dialogue. We will also refine the art of the reported essay: advancing ideas and arguments through reportage and narrative.

This class also provides an opportunity for you to explore your thesis-in-progress idea with several smaller pieces. It is better to discover which thesis ideas will work now, rather than wait until later.

Assignments
There will be three assignments, one of which should be a profile.

1) a long web feature/short magazine piece of roughly 1,500 words.

2) a magazine piece of roughly 3,000 words.

3) The length of the third is up to you, but it must use original reporting to advance an argument, whether in the form of a long newspaper op ed (850 words) or a much longer essay that you might read in a magazine like the Nation or a journal like n+1. This is a reported essay; it may have a personal element, and it must be opinionated.

Deadlines. All work is due by 5:00 PM on the Tuesday before class.

January 24
Pitching I
In-class: Try to generate 4-5 story ideas, drawing on whatever you have percolating
Small groups: Decide which are your best two
Workshop: Ideas and pitch.

January 31
Pitching II
Listen to: The Art of the Pitch,
Come to class with five more potential story ideas.
Small groups and Workshop: Ideas and pitch.

February 7
Due: About four Rewritten Queries
In Class Discussion: Profiles
Reading:
http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/9810/zizek.html

http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/05/05/the-marx-brother

Discussion of reading and of upcoming works in progress.

February 14
Due: First draft of piece #1
Workshop I

February 21
Reading: James Baldwin, “Notes on a Native Son,” title essay begins on p. 85
Vivian Gornick, The Situation and the Story, read the intro beginning with “A pioneering doctor…” and read the section titled “The Essay.” Buy the Kindle version from Amazon; it will appear on your device immediately and is well worth the $9.99. Or buy the physical book if you are planning ahead.

Discussion of reading

KEITH GESSEN GUEST?

February 28
In Class Discussion: Structure
Reading:
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/01/14/structure

In-class: Clinic on structure: what structure challenges are you facing, writing piece #2 and rewriting piece #1? We will do an outline exercise.

March 7
Rewrite due: Piece #1
Workshop: rewrites.
In class discussion.
NO CLASS MARCH 14

March 21
Reading: “Silent Woman,” part II.
First draft of piece #2 due
In class: Discussion of reading, Workshop piece #2

March 28
Reading: Silent Woman, part III.
In class: discussion of reading
Revision troubleshooting

April 4
Spot Writing/reporting local foray: Washington Square Park

April 11
Rewrite, piece #2 due.
Workshop: Select Rewrites.
Reading:
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/?src=longreads

April 18
First draft piece #3.
In-class: Piece #3 Workshop
https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/12/magazine/choosing-a-school-for-my-daughter-in-a-segregated-city.html?_r=0

April 25
https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/05/06/living-room-leopards
Discussion: Reading
Revisions troubleshooting
[Washington Square rain date]

May 2
Due: Final draft of piece #3
In class Workshop: Select Rewrites
In Class discussion: What is next for your thesis project and for you as journalists?