New York University
Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute
FEATURE WRITING
Spring 2020
Professor: Eliza Griswold
Tuesdays, 4 p.m. -7 p.m. EST
Location: Zoom

Course Description
We will explore narratives as they take on various social issues in an effort to create compelling and accurate nonfiction features. Students will revise their work based on instructor and fellow students’ comments, and hear from journalists about how they build their best stories. We’ll publish finished pieces on The Click, with students working to write, edit and publish stories, and find and post art and photos.

Learning Objectives
In this course, students will:

- Read some of the finest feature writing from the past and the present
- Explore the art and craft of feature writing through various real-world assignments
- Learn about structure, character development, point of view, attribution, ethics, and other aspects of good journalistic writing
- Demonstrate awareness of journalism’s core ethical values
- Write clear, accurate and engaging prose in an audience-appropriate manner
- Engage in critical thinking, independence, and creativity appropriate to the role of journalism in a democratic society
- Interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives

Course Structure
This is a master’s seminar, and you are expected to complete the week’s readings and assignments before joining the live class session in Zoom. Class sessions will begin with a short lecture or presentation followed by discussion.

When a guest lecturer will be joining us, each student will be expected to have independently researched the speaker--spending at least twenty minutes in advance of class reading a bio, relevant articles, and familiarizing themselves with the speaker’s general body of work. Each student is expected to engage with the course materials and one another. Your job will be to read/view/listen to the assigned material, and produce a range of writing assignments.
**Readings & Assignments**

**Feature Writing e-book:** The Weekly Materials tab contains a description of each week’s topic, required reading and assignments. Students will be assigned to “present” readings to the class, commenting on the idea, interviews, research, quotes, ledes, and nut grafs. We’ll have discussions in class and in Slack. Your stories will be written and edited in Google Docs and published on The Click. You will be responsible for posting your completed articles to The Click. If you have trouble publishing to The Click, contact Bartie Scott at bartie.scott@nyu.edu

The major assignments of this course are:

- **Profile (1,000 words)**
  - The profile should focus on one person, but you should have interviewed at least 2 other people about your subject.
- **Reported Personal Essay (1,200 words)**
  - Use personal experience or opinion to illuminate an idea or issue. At least 3 primary sources and 2 secondary sources.
- **Journalist Case Study (1,200 words)**
  - Interview a journalist of your choice and create a document (not necessarily in a narrative structure) articulating what you think is most interesting about this person and their work.
- **Final Feature (2,000 words)**
  - A subject to be chosen by the student. At least 5 primary sources and 3 secondary sources.

**Course Requirements**

We meet 14 times over the course of the semester and students are expected to attend all class meetings over Zoom. If you are ill or have another valid reason you must miss class (death in the family, religious holiday, a massive snowstorm knocks the power out) inform your professor before class. More than one absence, excused or otherwise, will affect your grade.

We will expect your full engagement during class. The professor is known to call on students using the Socratic method, in order to make sure that everyone is prepared and engaged.

**Grading & Assignments**

Final grades calculated as follows:

- **Discussions**: 20%
- **Writing assignments**: 60%, which include the following:
  - Profile 20% of writing grade
  - Reported Personal Essay 20% of writing grade
- Journalist Case Study 10% of writing grade
- Final Feature 40% of writing grade
- Editorial Professionalism**: 20%

*Discussions will be graded for:
1. Quality: Comments are original, reflective of the week's materials, and respectful of others’ postings
2. Creativity: Comments go beyond simply answering the question and attempt to motivate the group by introducing new perspectives and examples to stimulate thought and further discussion

**Editorial Professionalism refers to the quality of your attendance, participation, and etiquette throughout the course.

**Schedule**
*You’ll find the reading and assignments in the Feature Writing e-book.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Written Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 28</td>
<td>Introduction and rules for narrative nonfiction</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>February 4</td>
<td>Profiles</td>
<td>Profile Reporting Plan Due</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>February 11</td>
<td>Sourcing</td>
<td>Profile Draft Due</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>February 18</td>
<td>Reported essay</td>
<td>Reported Essay Pitch Due</td>
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<td><strong>NOTE:</strong> I’m traveling this day and need to schedule a makeup class. Stay tuned!</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>February 25</td>
<td>Pitching</td>
<td>Reported Essay Draft Due</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>March 3</td>
<td>Writing is rewriting</td>
<td>Final Feature Writing Project Pitch Due</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>March 10</td>
<td>Behind the story</td>
<td>✓ Profile Final Due</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>March 16-22</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK -- NO CLASS</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>March 24</td>
<td>Using data</td>
<td>✓ Case Study Final Due</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>March 31 -- <strong>NOTE</strong>: This week, we’ll meet from 5:30pm-7pm with our usual group to discuss your final feature reporting plans. Then join the section from 7pm-8:30pm for a meeting with our librarian, Katy Boss to talk about research and answer reporting questions.</td>
<td>Research -- Meet 5:30pm-7pm with our usual group to discuss your final feature reporting plans. Then join the section from 7pm-8:30pm for a meeting with our librarian, Katy Boss to talk about research and answer reporting questions.</td>
<td>✓ Final Feature Reporting Update Due</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>✓ Reported Essay Final Due</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>March 14</td>
<td>Pitching workshop</td>
<td>✓ Final Feature First Draft Due ✓ Revised Final Feature Pitch</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>One-on-one feedback sessions with instructor</td>
<td>✓ <em>Option to submit another draft of Reported Essay or Profile</em></td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 28</td>
<td>One-on-one feedback sessions with instructor</td>
<td>Final Feature Second Draft Due</td>
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<td>May 5</td>
<td>Narrative flair</td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>Read, read, read</td>
<td>Final Feature Due</td>
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**Accommodations**

Students with disabilities that necessitate accommodations should contact and register with New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at 212-998-4980 or mosecsd@nyu.edu. Information about the Moses Center can be found at [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

**Diversity & Inclusion**

The Institute is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. The Institute embraces a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions.