

## **Advanced Reporting: New York Characters (Print/Online track)**

**Course Number:** JOUR-UA 301.001

**Day & Time:** Thu | 10:00 AM – 1:40 PM

**Location:** 20 Cooper Square, Room 743

**Instructor:** [Mary W. Quigley](#)

**Prerequisites:** The Beat JOUR-UA 201 (Print sections)

New York City pulsates with constant change, driven by people who push boundaries, experiment with ideas, inspire creativity. In this **long-dorm** writing course, you'll learn how to report on one of the most fascinating aspects of New York: its gorgeously diverse people. You'll be immersing yourself in your chosen beat all semester, so it's best if you're passionate (or at least very curious) about it—i.e. New Yorkers in the arts, in politics, religion, sports, education, fashion, business, food, media, health care, criminal justice and on and on. Your "New York Characters" may be "regular folks" or luminaries, born-and-bred New Yorkers, recent transplants and/or members of immigrant communities.

We will tell these stories using long-form narrative, aka storytelling, applying the writing devices of fiction to nonfiction. A narrative lets the story unfold through plot, scene, dialogue, character, and action. A narrative also develops a theme and, though the author's voice, a relationship with the audience.

To help with both research and story ideas, students will choose a subculture as a beat. We'll put a spin on the traditional profile in several ways. As Malcolm Gladwell noted, a profile is "not so much about the individual as about the world that he or she inhabits, the 'subculture.'" So beyond the people, we'll explore communities and cultural milieus to allow for deeper meaning and sophisticated long-form narrative-writing techniques.

The writing assignments will include a Q&A, a 1,000-word news feature, a journalist case study, and a 3,000-word capstone for the journalism major. Students will also complete mini-assignments as well as classroom exercises to inspire creativity and stretch the writing muscle.

### **Learning Objectives**

In this course, students will:

- Demonstrate awareness of journalism's core ethical values
- Write clear, accurate and engaging prose in an audience-appropriate manner
- Interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information
- Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diverse perspectives
- Demonstrate awareness of journalism's core ethical values, especially as they relate to long-form narrative writing
- Learn about story structure, character development, point of view, attribution, and other aspects of good journalistic writing

- Be exposed to some of the finest long-form narrative writing from the past and the present

**The Beat**

The purpose of the beat is to learn how to thoroughly research a subject area using first-hand sources, books, articles, experts, websites, and other information. Through extensive research, you will learn to develop sources and dig deep for information and generate story ideas. After you chose a beat the first step is identifying sources (people) and resources (organizations and websites) and research (books, articles, and so on).

By a beat we mean a specific subject area--cultural, political, social, and for this class, particular to wherever you are living this semester. The challenge is to find a beat not so expansive that it takes you weeks to find a focus or so narrow that two articles about covers it. The other crucial element is that you can get access to the players. How can you slice and dice a big topic into manageable beat? Go with your strengths and interests. What fascinates you? What do you want to write about?

In previous semesters students have profiled sneakerheads, end-of-life doulas, Instagram dog-owner influencers, stylists specializing in black hair, sex toy designers, super foodies, professional indoor rock climbers, practicing witches, tropical fish hobbyists and the last typewriter repairman, mental health care workers for Latinos, Korean beauty purveyors, abortion advocates, sommeliers, harry Styles stans, drag queens, independent film makers, unemployed actors, TiTok stars,

The goal of this class is to help you grow as reporter and blossom as a writer through multiple assignments and rewrites.

**The Assignments**

All will get rewrites except for the first one. We will workshop every piece you write. At 3,000-words, the capstone requires multiple drafts.

Assignments	Wednesdays, 9 a.m.
Wednesday, January 30	Observation
Wednesday, Feb. 5	Beat memo
Wednesday, Feb. 12	Q&A draft 1
Wednesday, Feb. 19	Q&A draft 2
Wednesday, Feb. 26	News feature draft 1
Wednesday, March 5	News feature draft 2
Wednesday, March 12	Journalist case study
Wednesday, March 19	Idea pitch for capstone
Wednesday, March 26	Spring break
Wednesday, April 2	Annotated proposal for final
Wednesday, April 9	Draft one capstone
Wednesday, April 16	Draft two capstone

Wednesday, April 23	Draft three capstone
Wednesday, April 30	Draft four capstone
Wednesday, May 7	Final capstone

**All assignments are due, via email as a word doc. by noon Wednesdays.** Please “slug” your attachment with your last name first followed by the assignment name. Your name, date and the word count must be in the upper-left- hand corner.

Every assignment MUST include a list of sources at the end. This includes “live” sources: in person, over Zoom, on the phone, and via email even if they are not quoted in the final piece. You must also link to your top three research sources. Any assignment without the source list will be downgraded.

No dm on Instagram or Facebook are allowed to substitute for an actual interview. The number of interviews increases with each assignment. The final piece will require 10 interviews.

All assignments must be accompanied by an Instagram post. Our class account is NYUlongform and pw is 20cooper.

### Reporter’s Notebook

Several years ago, I heard the late [Pete Hamill](#), a journalism and fiction powerhouse, describe how he recorded story ideas, colorful details, slice-of-life scenes and other tidbits that he used to fuel his creative spark. He kept a stack of 3 x 5 file cards in his jacket pocket and jotted down notes every day. I’d like you to do the same and keep a notebook with your journalistic ideas and observations and, every Sunday by midnight, please email 50-150 words. No grade, just food for thought.

### Article Autopsy

One student each week will be assigned to lead the discussion about one of the assigned reading for each class. Some questions to consider include:

- Why do you think the author chose the lead they did? Was it effective and why?
- Where is the nut graf? Do you think it adequately describes the big idea of the story?
- Where did the story idea originate?
- How did the author structure this article? Do you think the structure served the piece? Why/why not?
- What narrative techniques does the author use? Scene setting? Dialogue? Description?
- How and where did the author provide context about the larger issues touched on in the piece?

- Why do you think the author chose to end the piece as they did?

### **Attendance and deadlines**

Class attendance is mandatory, and you cannot miss class to work on assignments for this or for another class. If you are ill and can't make it to class, please notify me the day of your absence before class begins. **If you miss more than three classes, you will risk failing this class.** If you miss a class, please reach out to your classmates for notes and any additional assignments. In addition to class attendance and participation, students will need to budget time outside of class to research, report, write and edit their work.

Late assignments will not be accepted, reviewed, nor critiqued. I do not chase down students for their work. If you need an extension of a deadline, you must email me at least 24 hours before deadline, tell me why you might miss the deadline and present a solution

**Free Pass:** Because life happens, everyone gets **one** free pass. Be it being late to class, missing a deadline etc. After you used your free pass though, that's it! Late assignments are downgraded.

### **Grades:**

#### **Grades:**

By December you will have several graded assignments. Your final grade will reflect your scores on your writing assignments and class participation. This is a collaborative class. We will workshop your pieces as a class. Everyone will have a vested interest in other students' capstones. For this class we need to be able to dive deep into the writing. So we will read some amazing journalism. Please be prepared to discuss the readings each week. Please see: [https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1\\_qbbizrgsE3iq6-cTdKk9hs01VTW5U8d](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1_qbbizrgsE3iq6-cTdKk9hs01VTW5U8d) Effort and progress will count.

Your final grade will be calculated using the formula:

Capstone	50 percent
Other assignments	30 percent
Participation and attendance	20 percent

Your progress over the semester – or lack of it -- is also considered. Your capstone weighs heavily into your grade because it should reflect everything that you've learned during the semester...and in your journalism studies.

### **Texts (optional)**

“Storycraft: The Complete Guide to Writing Narrative Nonfiction,” Jack Hart, University of Chicago Press; 2012

“Murder Your Darlings,” Roy Peter Clark, Little Brown

### **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 [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@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 Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute is committed to creating an anti-racist learning environment that embraces diversity, complexity, and honesty. We are an intellectual community enriched by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, sex, gender identity, class, ethnicity, sexualities, abilities, religion, and culture. Our student body is excitingly international. We welcome a multiplicity of perspectives. We acknowledge that listening to other perspectives on some of these issues may be personally challenging, and we accept that challenge. We further acknowledge that our profession, journalism, and our home, New York University, have participated in the systemic racism that underpins U.S. history. We are committed to teaching and practicing fair, rigorous, and engaged journalism that helps all our communities move toward justice and equality.

#### **Class 1: January 23**

Story ideas

Observation

What is narrative?

Readings:

- [Frank Sinatra has a Cold](#)
- [The Making of an American Terrorist](#)
- [MORE TK](#)

**Assignment: Observation, due Wednesday, January 29**

**In class: pitch beat**

**Class 2: February 6**

Q&A structure

Interview strategies 1

Readings:

<https://niemanstoryboard.org/stories/what-narrative-master-eli-saslow-learned-about-intimacy-interviewing-by-phone/>

[Janet Mock: Up-Front and Unafraid](#)

[A New York Minute With: E. Alex Jung](#)

[A New Food Magazine to Celebrate, Highlight & See Black Women'](#)

**In class: pitch Q&A**

**Assignment: Beat memo due Wednesday, Feb. 5**

**Class 3: Feb. 13**

Playing off the news

More ideas

Readings:

- <https://www.thelily.com/this-stylist-went-viral-for-helping-women-with-matted-pandemic-hair-im-detangling-their-lives/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2021/03/23/little-haiti-miami-custodian-meal/>
- [Uber but for Drag Queens](#)
- [Losing Gloria](#)

**In class: pitch news feature**

**Assignment: Q&A draft 1 due Wednesday, Feb 12**

**Class 4: Feb. 20**

Narrative story structure

Readings:

- [Understanding Story Structure with the Three Little Pigs](#)
- [The Case of Jane Doe Ponytail](#)

**Assignment: Q&A draft 2 due Wednesday, Feb. 19**

**Fall break next week**

**Class 5: Feb. 27**

Interview strategies 1

Readings

<https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2019/10/2/20891915/tiktok-famous-teenagers-haley-sharpe-yodeling-karen>

<https://niemanstoryboard.org/stories/what-narrative-master-eli-saslow-learned-about-intimacy-interviewing-by-phone/>

- [Mastering the Awkward Art of the Interview](#)
- [How to Deeply Listen](#)
- [Alone on the Open Road: Truckers Feel Like ‘Throwaway People’](#)
- backstory: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/22/insider/interviewing-truck-drivers-at-a-crossroads.html?emc=eta1>

**Assignment: News feature draft 1 due Wednesday, Feb. 26**

**No class on Tuesday, Oct. 12**

**Class 6: March 6**

Narrative techniques 1:

Color and detail: get the name of the dog

Readings:

- [The Subversive Joy of Lil Nas X’s Gay Pop Stardom](#)
- [Why Iowa?](#)
- [Something Extremely Bad is Happening Here](#)
- [When Green Becomes So Much More than Green](#)
- [Hemingway on Writing](#)

**Assignment: Draft 2 news feature due Wednesday, March 5**

**Pitch news feature**

**Class 7: March 13**

Narrative techniques: BBI

Readings

- [California Homeless Family](#)
- [Reporting the emotionally sensitive story through trauma and physical distance](#)

**Assignment: journalist case study due Wednesday, March 12**

**Class 8: March 20**

Narrative techniques: scenes

Readings:

- [The Peekaboo Paradox](#)
- [Six Tips for Crafting Scenes](#)
- <http://evalangston.com/2019/04/28/summary-and-scene/>
- [Narrative Nuggets](#)
- [Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Characters](#)

**Assignment: Idea pitch for capstone due Wednesday, March 19**

**March 26: spring break**

**Assignment: annotated pitch due Wednesday, Nov. 8**

**Class 10: Nov. 16**

Character

Theme

Readings:

- [The Epicenter](#)
- [14 tips for Building Character](#)
- [What is Theme?](#)
- [Good Stories Connect the Deeper Theme](#)

**Assignment: annotated pitch due Wednesday, Nov. 8**

**Class 11: Nov. 23**

Voice

Readings:

- [Can You Say Hero?](#)
- [What Voice Is and Isn't](#)
- [How to Fact Check](#)

**In class: workshop**

**Assignment: draft 2 due Wednesday, Nov. 22**

**Class 12: Nov. 30**

**One-on-one meetings**

Readings:

<https://www.bicycling.com/rides/a31245986/two-strangers-meet-bike-ride-journey/>

- [Five Life Hacks for Beating Writer's Block](#)
- [Blending Analysis and Narrative](#)
- [Writing rituals: Superstition or productivity?](#)

**Assignment: Draft 3 final due Wednesday, Nov. 29**



**Class 13: Dec. 7**

Rewriting Workshop

Readings

- [Nine Ways to Revise Your Writing](#)
- [How to Edit your Own Writing](#)

**Assignment: Draft 4 due Wednesday, Dec. 6**

**Class 14: Dec. 14**

Reading:

- [After Newtown shooting, mourning parents enter into the lonely quiet](#)

**Assignment: Final piece Tuesday, Dec. 14**