Portfolio I
Professor Liza Featherstone
Thursday 9:00 am-12:40 PM
Spring 2016

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 midnight on the Tuesday before class. I want us to have Wednesday to read each other’s work carefully.

January 28
Pitching I
Listen to: The Art of the Pitch, Part I and Part II
Come to class with five potential story ideas, at least one of which is a profile.
Small groups: Decide which are your best two
Workshop: Ideas and pitch.

February 4
Pitching II
Again come to class with five potential story ideas.
Small groups and Workshop: Ideas and pitch.
February 11
Due: Rewritten Queries
In Class Discussion: Profiles I
Reading:
http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/9810/zizek.html

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

In class: Short interviewing exercise, followed by discussion

February 18
Due: First draft of piece #1
Workshop I

February 25
In-class: Piece #1, Workshop II
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-gigolo/361628/

March 3
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 10
Rewrite due: Piece #1
Workshop: Selected rewrites.
In class discussion.

NO CLASS MARCH 17

March 24
First draft of piece #2 due
In class: Workshop I
March 31
In class: Workshop II

April 7
In-class discussion: Interviewing
Reading: The Suicide Catcher, Mike Paterniti, GQ, May 2010
In-class interviewing clinic.

April 14
Rewrite, piece #2 due.
Workshop: Select Rewrites.

Reading:
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/?src=longreads

April 21
First draft piece #3.
In-class: Workshop I

April 28
In class: Workshop II

May 5
Due: Final draft of piece #3
In class Workshop: Select Rewrites
In Class discussion: What is next for your project?