

**Oakland University**  
**College of Arts and Sciences**  
**Department of Communication & Journalism**

JRN 313/42566 Magazine Writing/Freelancing

<b>Class Time:</b>	6:30 – 9:50 p.m. T	<b>Instructor:</b>	Edward Nakfoor
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<b>Office Hours:</b>	MW 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., TR 12 – 1 p.m. + 3 – 6 p.m. ... generally always around + available	<b>Twitter:</b>	@EdwardNakfoor
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		<b>Media:</b>	hometownlife.com
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course offers practical training in writing long-form magazine articles – typically cover stories – as well as shorter pieces suitable for “front of the book” sections of magazines. Discussion includes how to write long-form pieces, legal liabilities and rights of freelance writers, an examination of U.S. copyright laws, and marketing strategies for freelancers.

#### **Course Objectives**

In JRN 313, students:

- Recognize why and how to plan ahead as magazines work on issues months prior to their publication dates.
- Show the ability to identify trends specific to the interests of magazine readers.
- Learn to organize information that is complementary to stories written in journalistic style.
- Write engaging, accurate stories that meet deadlines, follow the rules of grammar and adhere to Associated Press style.
- Exhibit knowledge of sourcing information fully and accurately in stories.
- Understand legal and ethical issues in journalism, as well as diversity and fairness in reporting.
- Leave for winter break with a collection of writing clips they can be proud to share at job interviews and, most important, the confidence in their journalistic and writing abilities to secure permanent or freelance employment.

## COURSE READINGS

**There is no textbook for this course.**

**Recommended (in print or digital) to stay informed, to develop your voice, to be entertained and to improve your vocabulary ... and your writing:**

Metro Detroit's dailies: Detroit Free Press, The Detroit News, The Oakland Press

National-scope dailies: The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal

News websites (left and right leaning): thedailybeast.com, bbc.com, slate.com, politico.com, gatestoneinstitute.org, Breitbart.com, drudgereport.com, thecollegefix.com

Specialty + Lifestyle publications and websites: HOUR Detroit, Detroit Design Entertainment Art + Fashion (ddeadmagazine.com), Columbia Journalism Review (cjr.org), Bloomberg Businessweek or bloomberg.com, Vanity Fair, The Wilson Quarterly (wilsonquarterly.com), wired.com, Quartz (qz.com)

And begin each day by solving a crossword puzzle or two

**Essentials to keep on your desk, in your backpack, on your laptop or on your phone:**

Rekulak, J., "The Writer's Block: 786 Ideas To Jump-Start Your Imagination"

dictionary.com and thesaurus.com

"The Associated Press Stylebook 2015"

"The Elements of Style" by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White

Flipboard ... your personally-curated digital magazine (download on the app store)

greatbigstory.com ... "a video network dedicated to the untold, the overlooked, and the flat-out amazing"

**Resources for trend, business, consumer stories (most have blogs and links to research):**

Pew Research (pewresearch.org) ... "numbers, facts and trends shaping our world"

Mintel (mintel.com) ... consumer trends

NPD Group (npd.com) ... consumer trends

Hartman Group (Hartman-group.com) ... food trends

Doneger Group (doneger.com) ... retail and fashion trends

Bain + Co. (bain.com) ... global consulting firm working across numerous industries

McKinsey + Co. (mckinsey.com) ... similar to Bain

edmunds.com ... auto research and trends

Valient Market Research (valientmarketresearch.com) ... specializes in "disruptive" (greatly innovative, industry-changing) product development

National Institutes of Health (nih.gov) ... part of the U.S. Department of Health + Human Services

Gallup (gallup.com) ... all manner of surveys and polls

MediaQuant (mediaquant.net) ... numbers behind the news (media analytics)

Digiday (digiday.com) ... media and marketing trends

World Values Survey (worldvaluessurvey.org) ... studies the impact of changing values on social and political life

## MISCELLANY

**Words Matter:** Examples of weak words and inaccurate + confusing phrases to be avoided ...  
*in formation:*

Unique, things, amazing, first of all, first off, just the other day, just because, first annual, at approximately [preceding an exact time], amounts preceded by “over,” “more than” [preceding an exact amount], it is “toward” not “towards,” “it’s” and “its” are different words, so, too, are “their,” “there” and “they’re” – please know the difference ...

### **Language Pitfalls:**

The English language is rife with pitfalls, roadblocks, and hair-pulling rules. I don’t expect you to know or remember everything. But do try. For example:

- “Lead” is a heavy metal. “Led” is the past tense of “lead” as in, “I will lead the class.”  
“He led the class.”
  
- For numbers use “more than” and “fewer than” instead of “over” and “less than.”  
When counting use “fewer than” as in: “12 or fewer ...”  
When to use “less” ... “There’s less air in the room.”  
When to use “over” ... “She placed the book over the paper.”

**Remember:** The best writers have the best editors.

It’s an excellent idea for a fresh set of eyes to review what you have written, especially if you’ve been looking at it for a while.

Avoid glossing over mistakes ... after several top-to-bottom edits read your document from bottom to top.

**Pacing:** The pace of the course is brisk, reflective of working at any media outlet.

**Journalism majors ... Be proactive about your future.**

**Advising:** Meet with the College of Arts and Sciences Advising Office once each year.  
Call 248-370-4567 to schedule an appointment.

### **Career Services:**

Gain the competitive edge by meeting with Career Services early and often, at least by the start of your 300 level courses. Do not wait until the last semester of your senior year to plan for your future. Explore career options, develop a resume, learn interview strategies, secure an internship and launch your career. Call 248-370-3250 to schedule an appointment and visit the Career Services website to learn of upcoming events: [www.oakland.edu/careerservices](http://www.oakland.edu/careerservices).

### **Graduate Study:**

If you’re considering graduate study, either at OU or another institution, please make an appointment with one of our faculty to explore your options.

## COURSE POLICIES

This class is a judgment-free zone.

While not a traditional journalism class where the focus is on writing for daily news outlets and attendant discussions of current news topics, in JRN 313 we will discuss timely news, some of which you will agree with, some of which you will not. Please do not censor your opinions. I am more concerned that you have opinions, and share them, than I am with the content of those opinions. I will not judge you for having a particular opinion. After all, the best classes are those in which robust, respectful debates are part of the curriculum. Further, do not apologize for your opinions or preface your opinions i.e., “In my opinion, and this is only my opinion ...”

This is a collaborative course. We share ideas. We share world news, local news ... personal news. We share opinions. Together, then, we co-create a stronger learning environment.

Never apologize for asking questions in class, via Email or in my office.

If you are ill ... if you are in the least bit a contagion ... please do not come to class. You will not be penalized; I only ask that you send me an Email. Also, if you are exhausted – and it happens – please do not come to class. Attending class only to zone out or put your head on the desk is unproductive for you, your classmates and me. Again, there is no penalty if you cannot attend class but I do ask that you let me know in advance.

That said, please do not take advantage of these policies as excessive absences can influence your final grade. And please be punctual.

Three final points ...

### **Student**

**Integrity:** Students who cheat, fabricate or plagiarize may fail this course. Falsification, fabrication or plagiarism will result in a 0.0 for the offending assignment as a minimum consequence. Any suspicious conduct or homework will be reported to the Dean of Students office.

**Plagiarism** is presenting another person’s work or ideas as one’s own. According to OU policy:

“Plagiarism is using someone else’s work or ideas without giving the other person credit; by doing this, a student is, in effect, claiming credit for someone else’s thinking. Whether the student has read or heard the information she or he uses, the student must document the source of information. When dealing with written sources, a clear distinction would be made between quotations — which reproduce information from the source word-for-word within quotation marks — and paraphrases — which digest the source information and produce it in the student’s own words. Both direct quotations and paraphrases must be documented. Just because a student rephrases, condenses or selects from another person’s work, the ideas are still the other person’s, and failure to give credit constitutes misrepresentation of the student’s actual work and plagiarism of another’s ideas. Naturally, buying a paper and handing it in as one’s own work is plagiarism.”

### **Disability**

**Accommodations:** Please advise me during the first week of class if you have a disability that affects your learning style or needs. I would like to make whatever adaptations would be of benefit. You should also contact campus Disability Support Services.

**Food Allergies:** Please let me know if you have any food allergies or restrictions.

## COURSE OUTLINE

In this course students are magazine editors and journalists. Each student will conceptualize a magazine and all assignments will complement that publication's theme. The course instructor will not assign specific story topics.

Through 3 graded assignments (each with multiple deliverables) students learn to identify and write feature-length magazine articles as well as shorter pieces including personality profiles and product/service/idea "roundup" sections specific to their magazines' audiences.

In-class assignments emphasize writing for deadlines and space considerations, thinking outside one's comfort zone, eliminating clichéd phrases, finding a "voice," and vanquishing weak words in favor of clever turns-of-phrase, among other techniques. While these assignments are not graded, mindfully completing them will help strengthen your writing.

Class time also includes discussion of outside readings, "newsroom" where we discuss the status of student assignments, and guest speakers (freelance writers, editors, copyright attorneys) ... dates TBD. I've also built in time for you to work on the graded assignments and to consult with me about your progress.

Finally, understand the class schedule is fluid, what with breaking news – especially in this election season – and speaker availability upending even the most ironclad plans. The assigning dates and due dates for the 3 graded assignments *may* need adjustment as well.

**JRN 313 > MAGAZINE WRITING/FREELANCING  
CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Class 1/September 6**

In class: Introductions/in-class writing exercise (market yourself)  
Scope of class  
Review syllabus  
Identify JRN 313 social media manager  
The life of a freelancer ... perks and pitfalls  
Long-form journalism + magazine style (my samples)  
Introduce Assignment 1

Homework: Monthly magazine concept  
- publication name  
- type: local, national, lifestyle, topic-specific, trade  
- audience: men, women, age group, other demographics  
- what publication is your magazine like + how is yours different from it and similar titles  
- what's the relevance of your publication ... what can you bring to the marketplace  
- section names (editor's letter, cover story, profile, roundup)

Magazine concept + Assignment 1 story pitches

**Due Tuesday, September 13**

Assignment 1

**Issue due Tuesday, October 4**

**Class 2/September 13**

In class: News recap, present magazine concept, present + submit Assignment 1 story pitches,  
Assignment 1 Newsroom, being mindful writers, language + scene setters, in-class writing exercise

Homework: Continue Assignment 1

**Class 3/September 20**

In class: News recap, Assignment 1 Newsroom, news currency, finding sources, in-class writing exercise

Homework: Continue Assignment 1

**Class 4/September 27**

In class: News recap, Assignment 1 Newsroom, finding freelance work, in-class writing exercise

Homework: Continue Assignment 1

**Class 5/October 4**

In class: News recap, **Assignment 1 due + present + recap**, in-class writing exercise  
Introduce Assignment 2

Homework: Assignment 2  
Story pitches due Tuesday, October 11  
**Issue due Tuesday, November 1**

**Class 6/October 11**

In class: News recap, present + submit Assignment 2 story pitches, in-class writing exercise

Homework: Continue Assignment 2

**Class 7/October 18**

In class: News recap, Assignment 2 Newsroom, marketing yourself (presentation from your peers), in-class writing exercise

Homework: Continue Assignment 2

**Class 8/ October 25**

In class: News recap, Assignment 2 Newsroom, in-class writing exercise

Homework: Continue Assignment 2

**Class 9/November 1**

In class: News recap, **Assignment 2 due + present + recap**, in-class writing exercise  
Introduce Assignment 3

Homework: Assignment 3  
Story pitches due Tuesday, November 8  
**Issue due Tuesday, November 29**

**Class 10/November 8**

In class: News recap, present + submit Assignment 3 story pitches, in-class writing exercise

Homework: Continue Assignment 3

**Class 11/November 15**

In class: News, Assignment 3 Newsroom, in-class writing exercise

Homework: Continue Assignment 3

**Class 12/November 22**

In class: News recap, Assignment 3 Newsroom, in-class writing exercise

Homework: Continue Assignment 3

**Class 13/November 29**

In class: **Assignment 3 due + present + recap**

## WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

You're writing the content for three issues of your magazine. Do consider, when conceptualizing your magazine, having a narrow focus. For example:

- If yours is a cooking/food publication, go one step further: Call it "Table For One" and focus on food trends and cooking for singles.
- For technology, you might want to consider games and apps rather than PCs and Macs. By the way, avoid magazine titles and section names like Bits + Bytes. Clever is great ... Cute not so much. We can discuss the difference.
- Entertainment is too broad. So, too, is music. Consider indie bands/the indie scene.
- Home décor and style magazines are ever popular. But what's missing in the marketplace? I don't see anything written, especially locally, about decorating for loft spaces and their sometimes-odd layouts. Another suggestion: maybe you're fascinated with the small house trend.
- Other potential themes: satire, fashion (with a narrow focus, of course), college student entrepreneurship ... innumerable possibilities.

Please adhere to these requirements when submitting the three written assignments.

- Submit a **hard copy** of each assignment at the end of the class in which it's due unless otherwise instructed.
- Copy is written in Times or Times New Roman, 10-point font, **double spaced**, unless otherwise specified in the assignment rubrics.
- Your name, course section and due date are located in the upper left corner of the first page of each story within each issue; your first initial and last name are located in the upper right corner of any subsequent pages of that story; please staple pages in the upper left corner.
- Each story within each issue includes your magazine title, magazine section name, headline, subhead (as appropriate), reporter byline, and the word count at the end.
- Each issue (not story) contains one Tweet summarizing the content of that issue.
- **Story topics and sources are not limited to local subjects.** It's a big world ... search it for stories and the sound bites to enhance your work. However, if your magazine has a local tone do try to utilize local sources.
- See additional specs included in each assignment's rubric.



**Each assignment/issue will include:**

Editor's Letter	150 – 200 words
Cover Story	1100 – 1300 words, 2 – 4 sources, 2 – 3 photos and photo captions
Personality Profile	500 – 600 words, 1 photo and photo caption (Q + A or traditional copy format)
Roundup	50 – 100 word description (excluding where to buy/contact information) for <u>3 – 4</u> new products and/or ideas and/or services specific to your magazine's content, <u>1 photo or graphic for each product/service/idea</u>

**Assignment One**

This is your January 2017 issue.

Assigned: Tuesday, September 6  
Due: Story pitches Tuesday, September 13  
Issue Tuesday, October 4

**Assignment Two**

This is your February 2017 issue.

Assigned: Tuesday, October 4  
Due: Story pitches Tuesday, October 11  
Issue Tuesday, November 1

**Assignment Three**

This is your March 2017 issue.

Assigned: Tuesday, November 1  
Due: Story pitches Tuesday, November 8  
Issue Tuesday, November 29



**COURSE GRADING ... continued**

**GRADING SHEET**

**COURSE: JRN 313 – MAGAZINE WRITING/FREELANCE WRITING**

**STUDENT: sample**

**ASSIGNMENT: sample**

**DUE DATE: sample**

**PART ONE: COGNITION – THE THINKING BEHIND THE WORK**

STUDENT UNDERSTANDS THE ASSIGNMENT AND DEMONSTRATES EXCELLENT NEWS JUDGEMENT AND REPORTING. SOTRY TOPICS ARE RELEVANT. ALL QUESTIONS A READER MAY HAVE ARE ANSWERED. STUDENT/REPORTER APPEARS CREDIBLE.

Excellent            Good            Fair            Poor

**PART TWO: CRAFTSMANSHIP**

THE ASSIGNMENT IS FREE OF SPELLING, GRAMMATICAL AND FACTUAL ERRORS. THE WORK IS PROPERLY FORMATTED. CONTENT IS ORGANIZED LOGICALLY. QUOTES AND SOURCES ARE PROPERLY ATTRIBUTED.

Excellent            Good            Fair            Poor

**PART THREE: CREATIVITY – COPY EXECUTION**

ALL DELIVERABLES INCORPORATE STRONG VERBIAGE AND ARE FREE OF WEAK LANGUAGE. BODY PARAGRAPHS COMPEL THE READER TO CONTINUE. STUDENT/REPORTER VOICE IS EVIDENT.

Excellent            Good            Fair            Poor

**PART FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DOCUMENTATION**

THE COMPLETED ASSIGNMENT IS PRESENTED EFFECTIVELY. STUDENT MET THE DEADLINE AND DELIVERED MORE THAN WAS REQUIRED. CONTENT AS PRESENTED COULD BE PUBLISHED.

Excellent            Good            Fair            Poor

**GRADE/PERCENTAGES**

**4.0: 100 – 98**

**3.9: 97.99 – 96, 3.8: 95.99 – 94, 3.7: 93.99 – 92, 3.6: 91.99 – 90, 3.5: 89.99 – 89, 3.4: 88.99 – 88, 3.3: 87.99 – 86, 3.2: 85.99 – 84, 3.1: 83.99 – 82, 3.0: 81.99 – 80**

**2.9: 79.99 – 79, 2.8: 78.99 – 78, 2.7: 77.99 – 77, 2.6: 76.99 – 76, 2.5: 75.99 – 75, 2.4: 74.99 – 74, 2.3: 73.99 – 73, 2.2: 72.99 – 72, 2.1: 71.99 – 71, 2.0: 70.99 – 70**

**1.9: 69.99 – 69, 1.8: 68.99 – 68, 1.7: 67.99 – 67, 1.6: 66.99 – 66, 1.5: 65.99 – 65, 1.4: 64.99 – 64, 1.3: 63.99 – 63, 1.2: 62.99 – 62, 1.1: 61.99 – 61, 1.0: 60.99 – 60**

**0.0: 59.99 – 0**

**COMMENTS ...** general comments made here and on the assignment.

*Updated September 2016*