

MM 3313 Magazine and Feature Writing

Instructor: Ellada Gamreklidze, Ph.D.

Office: LIB 306H

Class meeting times and location: T/R 12:30 – 1:45 p.m. in LIB326

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and/or by appointment. If you want to schedule an appointment beyond office hours, please, email me at least a day in advance.

E-mail: ellada.gamreklidze@angelo.edu

Required text: AP Stylebook 2020-2022 (55th edition).

You can order it online

at https://www.apstylebook.com/?ref=google&gclid=EAiaIQobChMIyc2Q_J3N1QIVhGh-Ch3ExA5MEAAAYASAAEgIQgvD_BwE

You can purchase either print or digital version. Which one you choose makes no difference for the purposes of this course. The important thing is that you get the latest (currently, it is the 55th) edition and that you always have access to it when you are in class or working on the course assignments.

Additional reading materials will be provided by the instructor.

“I have to always remember, writing is really hard. I hope that I really respect that.”

David Remnick, Editor, The New Yorker, April 4, 2010

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/05/business/media/05remnick.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

Writing... “I love to do it... I find that the stimulation and the getting it wrong, and the getting it wrong, and, finally, figuring out what it is you think, or the process of making a story out of reality that actually is true [is] enormously, endlessly exciting. And, so, I love doing it.”

David Remnick, Editor, The New Yorker, June 2, 2011

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDP_ooAIw4

“I think story choice is a little like dating. You meet somebody and you don’t necessarily immediately project into the future 20 years, but you need some spark. You need some click. And the fact is, often you can’t even articulate what that is.

With stories, I feel that very much. There’s not a focus group that goes on in my head, thinking this will be a good story because people will want to read it. None of that. It’s some purely visceral reaction that I have where I think, “Oh, that’s interesting.” And then the next click in my head needs to be: I could see where that could be a story.

I’m perfectly happy knowing nothing about the subject. In fact, that’s usually much more appealing to me. What really matters is that I want to learn more.”

Susan Orlean, Writer, April 24, 2015

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2015/04/24/the-new-yorkers-susan-orlean-on-the-magic-and-mystery-of-writing/>

“I absolutely treat myself like a factory. A word factory. That’s been really helpful for me because writing is very mysterious, and the creative process is very mysterious. It’s comforting to have a few mechanical tools at hand to help balance that sense of mystery.

First of all, if you don’t have a deadline, give yourself one and take it seriously. Secondly, I am thoroughly dependent on having a daily word count as a goal that I have to hit. If I get it done in an hour, I have the afternoon off. If it takes me until midnight, it takes me until midnight. The value of that is it makes concrete a process that otherwise seems ephemeral...

I also think if you’ve got writer’s block, you don’t have writer’s block. You have reporter’s block. You only are having trouble writing because you don’t actually yet know what you’re trying to say, and that usually means you don’t have enough information. That’s the signal to walk away from the keyboard, think about what it is that you don’t really know yet, and go do that reporting.”

Susan Orlean, Writer, April 24, 2015

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2015/04/24/the-new-yorkers-susan-orlean-on-the-magic-and-mystery-of-writing/>

“As I have tried to show, modern writing at its worst does not consist in picking out words for the sake of their meaning and inventing images in order to make the meaning clearer. It consists in gumming together long strips of words which have already been set in order by someone else, and making the results presentable by sheer humbug. The attraction of this way of writing is that it is easy. It is easier — even quicker, once you have the habit — to say In my opinion it is not an unjustifiable assumption that than to say I think. If you use ready-made phrases, you not only don't have to hunt about for the words; you also don't have to bother with the rhythms of your sentences since these phrases are generally so arranged as to be more or less euphonious...

...Probably it is better to put off using words as long as possible and get one's meaning as clear as one can through pictures and sensations. Afterward one can choose — not simply accept — the phrases that will best cover the meaning, and then switch round and decide what impressions one's words are likely to make on another person. This last effort of the mind cuts out all stale or mixed images, all prefabricated phrases, needless repetitions, and humbug and vagueness generally. But one can often be in doubt about the effect of a word or a phrase, and one needs rules that one can rely on when instinct fails. I think the following rules will cover most cases:

Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.

Never use a long word where a short one will do.

If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.

Never use the passive where you can use the active.

Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday

English equivalent.

Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.”

George Orwell, Politics and the English Language, 1968

[file:///C:/Users/A02236517/Downloads/HonorsOrwellPoliticsEnglishLanguage%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/A02236517/Downloads/HonorsOrwellPoliticsEnglishLanguage%20(1).pdf)

About the course:

The quotes above pretty much sum up what this course is about. That’s right, it’s about writing. Good writing. Captivating writing. Exciting writing. Vivid writing. Can’t-put-it-away writing. Bigger-than-just-the news writing; in short, feature writing. The kind of writing that tells a story; that uses words to bring images, people, places, events and experiences to life; that informs, educates, explains, provides context and entertains; that leaves you with the sense of having accomplished something substantial... The kind of writing you will learn in this class.

With this in mind, the course objectives are:

To develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course;

To develop skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing;

To gain a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories).

Now, how are we going to accomplish this?

Course Structure

This is a writing-intensive course, duh... It will also involve some reading, class discussions, a lot of in-class practice and take-home assignments.

Your active participation in class discussions is highly encouraged. While there will be a lot of guidance and teaching from me, the skills and knowledge we are seeking to develop should not only come from lectures and practice. They should also come from exchange of opinions and constructive discussion.

Responsibilities

We all have responsibilities and have to be active contributors and proactive inquisitors. All this is especially important under the current circumstances. This is a learning curve for all of us, but we will succeed.

My responsibility is to supply you with all the necessary knowledge, information and pedagogical support. Yours, on the other hand, is to attend the class regularly, listen carefully, participate actively, study diligently and complete your work according to instructions and on time. I will not make content accommodations for this course, so you need to be open-minded and respectful to diverse viewpoints and your peers.

Some more expectations

Because you are preparing to be professionals, you are also expected to demonstrate professional conduct. For example, professionals must timely, clearly and cordially

communicate with others (the instructor, the classmates and other relevant individuals), complete assignments by the deadline, meet their obligations and effectively manage their time.

Your work does not end in class. I expect you to have read the assigned (if any) material prior to the respective class session and complete your take-home assignments and practice. As a rule, for each hour you are in class, you should plan to spend at least two hours on preparing for the next class and completing assignments.

I expect and encourage you to ask questions and let me know right away if you are having problems, do not understand something, are overwhelmed or just want to talk. I am always there to talk/listen/help. My goal is your success. See me after class, during the office hours or make an appointment. We will discuss your issue and think of a solution. I check and answer my emails from the time I wake up until the time I go to bed (with the exception of the times when I eat, drive, am in a meeting or in a store).

Email me. If I know the answer, I will email back right away. If I don't know the answer, I will email as soon as I do know it. Do not wait until it is too late to do something about anything (examples include but are not limited to waiting a day or several days to email me after you missed an assignment deadline or had technical issues either uploading or having access to an assignment; not getting back to me after I email you that we need to meet to discuss your current situation and find a solution; waiting until all the deadlines pass to meet with me; and other similar situations).

Keeping up with ALL the deadlines (including the ones for assignment makeup opportunities) is YOUR responsibility. The syllabus informs you about everything and provides instructions on when and how; your job will be to follow, accordingly. I will NOT be reminding you about the deadlines and the opportunities. This is why it is ESSENTIAL that you read the syllabus and all other instructions closely and carefully and check Blackboard regularly (several times a day). Having said that, I am ALWAYS open and available to answer any questions about both the opportunities and the instructions and find solutions (if possible) to your situation.

Attendance:

As established by the university, this is a face-to-face class. It is in your best interest to attend each session. Attending the class, if you are not paying attention, engaging in discussions and completing assignments, however, is not going to earn you much knowledge.

Your attendance is graded. By default, at the beginning of the summer session, each of you has four extra credit points for attendance on top of your overall grade. Every time you are absent without excuse, you will lose one of these extra credit points. After you run out of extra points (four unexcused absences), every unexcused absence will result in a five-point deduction from your grade for this course.

If you are more than 10 minutes late to class or leave without warning before it is over, it will count as an unexcused absence. If you think you will be late for more than 10 minutes or have to leave early, you need to talk to me in advance. Depending on the reason, I will or will not excuse you.

If you are sick (see the relevant policy), or there is another excused reason listed in the University policy <https://www.angelo.edu/student-handbook/community-policies/class-absences.php>, you will not lose any points, but you are responsible for TIMELY informing me of your absence (based on the above policy), completing the assignments (if any are due at that time), catching up on the missed material, making up practice, and bringing yourself up to date with the class progress.

Having said that, I am here to help and guide you in this process. Catching up or keeping up can be overwhelming. You don't need to go through this alone. Let me know, ask for help, email me if you are in a tough spot. I am here for you. Please, also check the following webpage for the circumstance-specific university policies: <https://www.angelo.edu/covid-19/>

Please remember, I do not allow any makeup work unless you had an excused absence. For the deadline extensions connected with the excused absences, please, see/email me either prior to the date when (and if) you know you will be absent or immediately after you are back. There will be no extensions granted if you haven't requested one within seven days from the first day you are back.

The above policy is in place to help us all stay on track and successfully complete this course. We, however, are all facing challenging times, and the unfortunate reality is that individual circumstances can change in a day. I am here to see that your specific situation is accommodated as best as possible and you do not fall behind. If at any point during the semester you are unable to attend the class or will find yourself in a position where you cannot be "present" or complete other course requirements for some time, please, do let me know ASAP. I will do everything possible to help you and find a solution to your situation that will allow you to come out of it with best possible result.

Course Requirements

Assigned Readings

It's impossible for you to participate in class discussions, complete the assignments and practice unless you have read the assigned material. The readings also provide context essential to what you will be learning. We will be discussing most of what we read in class. This is crucial for your understanding and mastering of feature writing skills. I will be asking specific questions, so read carefully and pay attention to details. You must complete the assigned reading before the day it is listed on the course schedule; therefore, ALWAYS check Blackboard.

Assignments

Eight assignments 125 points each for a total of 1,000 points.

The end product of this course for each of you is a complete, ready-for-publication feature story. Ideally, you will be able to publish this story in a magazine or newspaper of your choice. All the assignments are designed to successfully get you to this end product. You will have eight assignments that comprise building blocks of an in-depth quality feature, including a query letter addressed to the publication where you want to see this feature published. Having it published is NOT required to successfully complete this course.

The assignments are:

Story Ideas

Query Letter

Idea and Research Plan for Story

Story Lead

Story Progress

Story Conclusion

Story First Draft

Story Final Draft

Why are we doing this?

To develop specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course;

To develop skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing;

To gain a basic understanding of the subject (e.g., factual knowledge, methods, principles, generalizations, theories).

I will distribute the instructions for each assignment on Blackboard. Unless something changes, in which case I will inform you either in class or over the email, the days when the assignments are posted on Blackboard as well as the deadlines for each assignment are included in the syllabus.

Also, unless I notify you otherwise, ALL completed assignments need to be uploaded on Blackboard. I will NOT accept assignments over the email. If you experienced technical difficulties and thus failed to upload your assignment, you need to let me know right when it happened. You also need to call the eLearning Center as soon as you can after the problem occurred and ask for the proof of your upload attempt. Send it to me, and I will accept your assignment for full credit.

My general advice is to try to upload a file (even if your assignment is not yet complete) before the eLearning closes on the day when your assignment is due. You will have unlimited upload attempts until the deadline, so your new file will just override the one already uploaded. If you have problems during your trial upload, you will be able to call eLearning and get help before the deadline hits and it is too late to do anything about it.

AP Style:

When writing, you must follow AP style. I will distribute an AP style study sheet that will guide you through the most common problem areas. It is your job to make sure you do not make AP style errors. You should make a habit of referring to the AP Stylebook even beyond the areas included in the study sheet. *Every AP style error in your assignments (after the AP style part of the course is over) will result in a two-point deduction.*

There may be other knowledge-based deductions in your assignments as we go and learn. I will introduce those in the assignment rubrics.

Opportunities:

Throughout the semester, you will have an opportunity to “revise and resubmit” one assignment of your choice. You will have a week from the day you let me know you want to revise an assignment. The letting me know should take place via email and receive a clear “go ahead” from me in response. I will stop accepting requests for “revise and resubmit” at noon on May 1, 2022.

You will have some extra credit opportunities as well. There may be a few or one that will come as we go. One is discussed in one of the following sections.

There is no midterm and no final.

Some Important Policies (you do want to read them!):

Factual and spelling errors

You are expected to get your facts straight and spell the names correctly. Each factual error in your assignments will lower your grade for any given assignment by 20%. You will have one excused misspelling of a proper name (by excused, I mean it will only take your grade for a given assignment down 20%). After that, you will receive a zero if you spell any proper name incorrectly.

Cell phone and laptop use policy

Cell phones and laptops are not allowed at any time for any reason during class (with the exception of work during the in-class practice and if I say you need to use them). If necessary for an emergency, please slip out of the classroom to make or take a call. If you consistently violate this policy (I will be documenting), there will be no warnings, just a five-point reduction from your overall grade for this course at the end of the semester.

Tweeting, videotaping, audio recording, and more

Not allowed during class are the following: tweeting, blogging, vlogging, Snapchatting, Facebooking, Instagramming, video or audio recording, and/or anything remotely similar or dissimilar. Exceptions apply when any of the above is part of the coursework, and you receive instructions from me to do it. Violators, please, see the policy and the penalty above.

Class content

No recording (audio or video) of class content and distribution of those recordings or class notes is allowed without my permission. This is intellectual property.

Questions and/or concerns about a grade

I will be happy to answer questions about how you are doing in this course. That said, if you have any questions or concerns about a specific grade, contact me in person no earlier than 24 hours and no later than one week after receiving a grade and feedback. You must bring the assignment, due date, date it was turned in and the specific issue that warrants consideration.

Extra credit!

If more than 85% of students complete the student evaluation for this course, I will reward the entire class with a 1-point increase in the individual total grade. For example: if your overall grade averages out to an 89 (a B) and 85% of the whole class fills out the evaluation I award 1 point to your average, giving you a 90 and an A!

ASU Policies:

Student Disability Services

ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAAA), and subsequent legislation.

The Office of Student Affairs is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability, and it is the student's responsibility to initiate such a request by contacting:

Dr. Dallas A. Swafford

Director of Student Disability Services 325-942-2047

dallas.swafford@angelo.edu

Houston Harte University Center

Title IX at Angelo State University

Angelo State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. The University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other types of Sexual Misconduct.

Sexual Misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination including: sexual assault, sex-based discrimination, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, public indecency, interpersonal violence (domestic violence and/or dating violence), and stalking. As a faculty member, I am a Responsible Employee meaning that I am obligated by law and ASU policy to report any allegations I am notified of to the Office of Title IX Compliance. This is done in order to connect students with resources and options in addressing the allegations reported. As a student, you are encouraged to report any incidents of sexual misconduct directly to ASU's Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator. You may do so by contacting:

Michelle Boone, J.D.

Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator

Mayer Administration Building, Room 210

325-942-2022

michelle.boone@angelo.edu

You may also file a report online 24/7 at www.angelo.edu/incident-form.

If you are wishing to speak to someone about an incident in confidence you may contact the *University Health Clinic and Counseling Center at 325-942-2173* or the *ASU Crisis Helpline at 325-486-6345*.

The Office of Title IX Compliance also provides accommodations related to pregnancy (such as communicating with your professors regarding medically necessary absences, modifications required because of pregnancy, etc.). If you are pregnant and need assistance or accommodations, please contact the Office of Title IX Compliance utilizing the information above.

For more information about Title IX in general you may visit www.angelo.edu/title-ix.

Student Absence for Observance of Religious Holy Days

A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. See ASU Operating Policy 10.19 Student Absence for Observance of Religious Holy Day for more information.

Incomplete Grade Policy

It is policy that incomplete grades be reserved for student illness or personal misfortune. Please contact faculty if you have serious illness or a personal misfortune that would keep you from completing course work. Documentation may be required. See ASU Operating Policy 10.11 [Grading Procedures](#) for more information.

Student Conduct Policies

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in all work. Any student found guilty of any form of dishonesty in academic work is subject of disciplinary action and possible expulsion from ASU.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious topic covered in ASU's [Academic Integrity policy](#) in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism is the action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own. Plagiarism is literary theft.

In your discussions and/or your papers, it is unacceptable to copy word-for-word without quotation marks and the source of the quotation. It is expected that you will summarize or paraphrase ideas giving appropriate credit to the source both in the body of your paper and the reference list.

Papers are subject to be evaluated for originality via Turnitin. Resources to help you understand this policy better are available at the [ASU Writing Center](#).

Copyright Policy

Students officially enrolled in this course should make only one printed copy of the given articles and/or chapters. You are expressly prohibited from distributing or reproducing any portion of course readings in printed or electronic form without written permission from the copyright holders or publishers.

General Policies Related to This Course

All students are required to follow the policies and procedures presented in the syllabus and these documents:

Class Schedule (subject to adjustment based on circumstances)

Tuesday, Jan. 18	<i>Course introduction</i>
Thursday, Jan. 20	Feature writing and how it differs from other forms of writing; feature publications and audiences
Tuesday, Jan. 25	Principles of good writing
Thursday, Jan. 27	Types of feature stories
Tuesday, Feb. 1	Generating story ideas <i>Story Ideas assignment distributed.</i>
Thursday, Feb. 3	How to of background research (publication)
Tuesday, Feb. 8	How to of background research (story) <i>Story Ideas assignment due.</i>
Thursday, Feb. 10	Writing query and submission letters <i>Query Letter assignment distributed.</i>
Tuesday, Feb. 15	Ethics & plagiarism
Thursday, Feb. 17	Feature story structure <i>Query Letter assignment due.</i>
Tuesday, Feb. 22	Feature story structure <i>Idea and Research Plan for Story assignment distributed.</i>
Thursday, Feb. 24	Feature leads and nut graphs
Tuesday, March 1	Feature leads and nut graphs <i>Idea and Research Plan for Story assignment due.</i>
Thursday, March 3	Feature leads and nut graphs <i>Story Lead assignment distributed.</i>
Tuesday, March 8	Descriptive writing
Thursday, March 10	Descriptive writing <i>Story Lead assignment due.</i>
Tuesday, March 15	No Class. Spring Break!
Thursday, March 17	No Class. Spring Break!
Tuesday, March 22	Interviewing techniques <i>Story Progress assignment distributed.</i>
Thursday, March 24	Quotations & attribution
Tuesday, March 29	Dialogue as a storytelling tool <i>Story Progress assignment due.</i>
Thursday, March 31	Dialogue as a storytelling tool <i>Story Conclusion assignment distributed.</i>
Tuesday, April 5	Profiles
Thursday, April 7	Current issue features <i>Story Conclusion assignment due.</i>
Tuesday, April 12	How-to features
Thursday, April 14	Travel features
Tuesday, April 19	History features

	<i>Story (First Draft) due.</i>
Thursday, April 21	Popular science and health features
Tuesday, April 26	Investigative features
Thursday, April 28	Review of your stories and selection of relevant magazines
Tuesday, May 3	Finalizing your query letters for relevant magazines <i>Story (Final Draft) due.</i>
Thursday, May 5	Finalizing your submission letters for relevant magazines

Grade Distribution:

Class total: 1,000 points

Assignments (10): 125 points x 8 = 1,000 points