

## **COMM 425: Specialty Writing**

Online – Fall 2014 – 3 credits

Instructor: Dennis Owen Frohlich, Ph.D.

Office Hours: With an online class, it is hard to set aside a time for office hours that works for everybody. If you need to talk, please email me three times that work for you. We can meet over Skype or on the phone.

Phone: 701-541-3608. Please try to call between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. Mondays-Fridays. If I don't answer, please leave a message and your phone number and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Email: dennis.o.frohlich@ndsou.edu

### **Required Texts**

Associated Press. (2014). *Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law*. Philadelphia, PA: Basic Books.

Fink, C. C. (2004). *Writing opinion for impact*. Ames, IA: Blackwell Publishing.

Friedlander, E. J., & Lee, J. (2010). *Feature writing: The pursuit of excellence*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

You may already have an AP stylebook from a previous course or from your work as a journalist. If you have an older edition, much of the content is the same, but it is updated every year. You will be held to the standards of the 2014 edition. From time to time online readings will also be required. These readings will be added to the syllabus throughout the semester. You will be notified of any changes through email.

### **Bulletin Description**

Methods and practice of writing features and opinion for print publications.

### **Course Objectives and Description**

In this course you will advance your skills in writing for the media. Specifically, we will focus on writing feature stories and opinion pieces. These are two specialized forms of writing that require a different approach than other types of media writing you've done in the past.

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Write pitch letters for feature stories
- Develop and refine story and article ideas
- Write a variety of feature stories
- Write several types of opinion articles

**Prerequisites**

COMM 310: Advanced Media Writing. In this course, we will move beyond the basics that you've learned in your previous writing courses. We won't spend much time, if at all, discussing AP style or interviewing techniques: you should already know this. We will focus on the craft of writing.

**Class Meetings**

Because this class is online, there are no set meeting times. There are, however, assignments, readings, and lectures every week. To be successful in this course, get into a habit of logging into Blackboard at least a couple times a week. Also check your email frequently in case any changes are made.

**Assignments**

Your grade will be based on the following assignments. More descriptive assignment sheets for each assignment will be located on Blackboard.

Discussion Posts:	250 points
Pitch Letters (3):	150 points
Feature Story 1:	100 points
Feature Story 2:	100 points
Feature Story 3:	200 points
Opinion Article 1:	100 points
<u>Opinion Article 2:</u>	<u>100 points</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

**Grading**

Grading will be based on the standard NDSU grading scale:

A	900-1,000 points
B	800-899 points
C	700-799 points
D	600-699 points
F	0-599 points

The grading scale is non-negotiable. A final grade of 899, for instance, is a B. All grades are final unless questions about grades are addressed in writing within **2 weeks** after the grade is posted. If you have concerns about your grades please check with me *sooner* in the semester rather than *later*.

**Late Work**

Assignments turned in late will be accepted for half-credit. Due dates are clearly listed in the course calendar. Late work will **only** be accepted for **24 hours** after the due date. Work turned in later than 24 hours will not be accepted.

Under an extreme circumstance, if you have an excused absence AND the instructor was notified in advance, an exception may be made.

### **Article Rewrites**

In this class, you will have five major writing assignments: 3 feature stories and 2 opinion articles. Each writing assignment will be graded rigorously; however, you are allowed to rewrite each major writing assignment up to two times (except for the final writing assignment: there won't be time at the end of the semester for rewrites). Rewrites are due within **1 week** after I hand the graded assignment back to you. With each rewrite, you can earn **up to 20%** of your grade back. However, just turning in a rewrite does not guarantee you 20%. Rewrites should be substantive based on my feedback. They are more than just spelling, grammar, and punctuation edits. Rewrites may require you to go back to your sources to ask them additional questions.

### **Academic Honesty**

All work completed for this course must respect the intellectual property of others. When using somebody else's copyrighted material, whether words, images, media, or ideas, proper credit must be given. If direct quotations are used, they must be enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited. If copyrighted material is used indirectly, it must still be properly cited!

If in doubt, include a citation. If you have any questions at all, ask your instructor *before* the assignment is submitted. *Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an excuse!*

The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. NDSU Policy 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct applies to cases in which cheating, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct have occurred in an instructional context. Students found guilty of academic misconduct are subject to penalties, up to and possibly including suspension and/or expulsion. Student academic misconduct records are maintained by the Office of Registration and Records. Informational resources about academic honesty for students and instructional staff members can be found at [www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty](http://www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty)

### **Special Needs**

Any students with disabilities or other special needs, who need special accommodations in this course are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and contact the Disability Services office ([www.ndsu.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.ndsu.edu/disabilityservices)) as soon as possible.

If you become sick during the course of the semester, or have some major personal crisis going on, please let me know as soon as possible so I can help you work around it. When I was an undergraduate, I was very sick one semester and missed a lot of classes, but my professors were very willing to work with me. I'm sensitive to these issues and am willing to work with you, but if you don't tell me there's a problem I can't help you.

### Tentative Course Schedule

**\*The current version of the course syllabus will be uploaded to Blackboard with the revision date included in the file name\***

Week	Date	Topics	Assignments/Readings
<b>Module 1: Feature Writing</b>			
1	Aug. 25 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Introduction and Overview</li> <li>• Types of Feature Stories</li> <li>• The Structure of a Feature Story</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feature Writing</i>: Chapter 1</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion: Introduction and Course Goals by 8/29 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
2	Sept. 1 (M)	<b>LABOR DAY (9/1)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Pitch Letters</li> <li>• News Values for Feature Stories</li> <li>• Generating Story Ideas</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feature Writing</i>: Chapter 8</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitch Letter 1 due by 9/5 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
3	Sept. 8 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refining Your Story Idea</li> <li>• Background Research</li> <li>• What to Do If Your Idea Doesn't Work</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feature Writing</i>: Chapters 2 and 3</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion: Story Ideas and Analysis of Feature Stories by 9/12 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
4	Sept. 15 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducting Research</li> <li>• How to Tell a Good Source from a Bad Source</li> <li>• How to Find Supplemental Sources</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feature Writing</i>: Chapter 4</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feature Story 1 due by 9/19 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
5	Sept. 22 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Descriptive Writing</li> <li>• Writing with Voice</li> <li>• Anecdotal and Thematic Framing</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feature Writing</i>: Chapter 9</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitch Letter 2 due by 9/26 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
6	Sept. 29 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting Strong: Leads for Feature Stories</li> <li>• Ending Strong: How to Tie it All Together</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feature Writing</i>: Chapter 5</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion: Story Ideas and Analysis of Feature Stories by 10/3 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
7	Oct. 6 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Middle: Outlining the Article</li> <li>• Chunking: Breaking the Article Down into Component Parts</li> <li>• Transitions: Moving from One Idea to the Next</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feature Writing</i>: Chapter 6</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feature Story 2 due by 10/10 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
8	Oct. 13 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive Writing Techniques</li> <li>• Selecting and Writing Good Anecdotes</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Feature Writing</i>: Chapter 7</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying Good Quotations</li> </ul>	<b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pitch Letter 3 due by 10/17 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
9	Oct. 20 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simplifying Your Writing and Avoiding Clutter</li> <li>Including Yourself in the Story</li> <li>Experimenting with Tense and Voice</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Feature Writing</i>: Chapter 10</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion: Story Ideas and Analysis of Feature Stories by 10/24 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
10	Oct. 27 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feature Stories on the Web</li> <li>Supplementing a Feature Story with Multimedia</li> <li>Connecting with Your Audience</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readings to be determined</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feature Story 3 due by 10/31 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
<b>Module 2: Opinion Writing</b>			
11	Nov. 3 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Purpose and Call of Opinion Writing</li> <li>Types of Opinion Writing</li> <li>Responsibilities of Opinion Writing</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Writing Opinion</i>: Chapter 1 and 2</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion: Analysis of Opinion Articles by 11/7 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
12	Nov. 10 (M)	<b>VETERAN'S DAY (11/11)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing Reviews of Media and the Arts</li> <li>Research for Opinion Articles</li> <li>Balancing Fact with Analysis</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Writing Opinion</i>: Chapter 3 and 9</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion: Analysis of Opinion Articles by 11/14 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
13	Nov. 17 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common Logical Fallacies in Opinion Writing</li> <li>Common Logical Fallacies part 2</li> <li>Structuring Your Opinion Article</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Writing Opinion</i>: Chapter 4 and 5</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opinion Article 1 due by 11/21 at 11:59 p.m.</li> </ul>
14	Nov. 24 (M)	<b>THANKSGIVING (11/27-28)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting Strong: Grabbing the Reader's Attention</li> <li>Ending Clearly: Making Your Point One Last Time</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Writing Opinion</i>: Your Choice: Chapters 6, 7, and/or 8</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Assignment this week!</li> </ul>
15	Dec. 1 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing About Politics and Social Issues</li> <li>Engaging with the Other Sides</li> <li>The Difference Between Opinion and Advocacy</li> </ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Writing Opinion</i>: Chapter 10 and 11</li> </ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion: Analysis of Opinion Articles by 12/5 at</li> </ul>

			11:59 p.m.
16	Dec. 8 (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opinion Writing on the Web</li><li>• Developing a Personal Column</li><li>• Style and Voice in Opinion Writing</li></ul>	<b>Read:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Writing Opinion</i>: Chapter 12 and 13</li></ul> <b>Assign:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opinion Article 2 due by 12/12 at 11:59 p.m.</li></ul>
17	Dec. 15 (M)	<b>FINALS WEEK</b>	NO ASSIGNMENTS! COURSE CONCLUDES!
18	Dec. 26	Final grades are viewable online	