

J697 Magazine Writing–Campus Media Fall 2006

Carol Holstead
207B Stauffer-Flint
864.7628 (w) 832.2721(h) 218.3929 (cell)
Office hours: Thursday 3 – 5, or by appointment
holstead@ku.edu

Course goals

You will work on *Jayplay*, a real, weekly magazine. In the process, you will learn about how magazines and magazine writing differ from newspaper writing. You will learn how to write departments and articles, and how to work with an editor.

The classroom portion of this course has these purposes:

- To teach you about different kinds of magazine articles and how to write them.
- To develop your research and interviewing skills.
- To develop and strengthen your writing and editing skills.
- To critique and learn from each issue of *Jayplay*.

Jayplay offers you the opportunity to build a portfolio of departments and articles. You have each been given a department to write, and you will write one substantive magazine article and one first-person story. These will require initiative in generating ideas, and excellent reporting and writing.

How the course works

The course will follow a workshop format. You will learn how to write for magazines by reading published magazine articles and each other's articles. You will spend a lot more time reading and discussing writing than listening to lectures. Each of you will meet with me to discuss your work and its progress.

Course requirements

	Percent
Writing assignments	
1. Departments	40%
2. Article	25%
3. First-person story	10%
Journal and developmental assignments	10%
Preparation and participation	05%
(Thoughtful contribution to class discussion; thorough <i>Jayplay</i> critiques)	
Professionalism (Ability to meet deadlines and work with <i>Jayplay</i> editor)	10%

Required texts

Writing for Magazines, Cheryl Sloan Wray
The Associated Press Stylebook
Readings as assigned

Inclement weather and disabilities

In the event of inclement weather, the decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials. To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call 864-7669 (864-SNOW). The staff of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), 135 Strong, coordinates accommodations and services for KU courses. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodations in KU classes and have not contacted SSD, please do so as soon as possible.

Grading

All of you come to this class with varying levels of knowledge and experience. Some of you already have worked for magazines; others have just had the intermediate reporting class. You don't have to know how to do everything at the start of the semester, but you do have to show early and consistent progress. When you make mistakes, learn from them. When you get edited heavily, learn from that. Consistent improvement over time is the key to a good grade.

Departments

I will not grade each department, but will look at the overall quality of your writing and reporting and your improvement. Each of you needs to keep a portfolio of all your departments, which you will turn in twice during the semester. I will provide instructions for assembling the portfolio before each is due. Make a photocopy of everything you write in this class (you can fit *Jayplay* pages on 8 1/2 by 11 paper by copying them at 80 percent.)

You also are required to provide a list of sources for each department, including live and written sources cited and consulted. Keep track of those as you go along, including the titles and phone numbers of live sources.

First-person story

You will write an essay about a personal experience. You will turn in a manuscript (your original) for grading. You will provide me with a draft of your essay during our conference, and we will workshop these essays in class.

Article

Your article due dates will be staggered throughout the semester consistent with your *Jayplay* deadlines. You will need to provide me with a **manuscript** (your original) of your major article. **You also need to provide a list of sources, live and written, cited and consulted, with your major article. You must turn in your major article on Wednesday the week it runs. If you don't, you will lose 2 points for each day late.**

One-on-one meetings

Each of you will have three conferences with me through the course of the semester: one for the first-person article, one for a department and one for your major article. These are required, but you are welcome to make additional appointments with me to discuss your work.

Attendance

You must attend class each week. You will be allowed one unexcused absence from class. More than one unexcused absence will result in a C (75) in the Participation part of your grade. You may not miss any one-on-one meetings without notifying me first, unless you have a documented emergency. If you miss a meeting without notifying me, you will receive no higher than a C (75) for Participation. If you miss more than one meeting without excuse, you will fail (50 points) the Participation part of your grade. If you need to miss class or an appointment, please call or e-mail me.

Additional journalism school policies

No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester.

Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without the student's consent.

The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting.

The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state aid. Students who receive any form of Financial Aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours and grades to qualify for and retain that aid.

Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the teacher of this course.

The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.

Plagiarism

Knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.

Fabrication and Falsification

Unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

How Articles are Graded

Reporting:

It doesn't matter how well you can put words together, if you don't do a lot of reporting you won't sell magazine articles. This comes as a surprise to some people, who think that writing for magazines means they get to escape the dreadful task of research and, gasp, interviewing people.

Your departments and articles need to have multiple, sources, experts and participants. Because your audience is diverse, your sources also need to be diverse—in racial and ethnic background, age, gender, political and religious beliefs, majors, geography. You will need to consult many more sources than you actually will cite in your stories. Do not use friends or relatives as sources. Look for experts, not just sources, on campus and well as off campus.

You will have to interview live sources for your stories. You cannot use e-mail interviews unless someone of unavailable otherwise. You cannot quote people from the Web if you have not interviewed them.

Writing:

In magazine writing, you want to tell stories, not push information. Don't just string together quotes from various sources. There has to be both logic and grace to the organization; as a rule, it is a good idea to place similar information together. Your ledes need to compel your reader. Your stories should have a sense of character, complication and resolution (an effective ending). You also should have good transitions throughout.

I appreciate interesting and original style, but never at the expense of clarity. Good writing makes efficient use of words. Use every word that is needed, not one more. Good grammar is essential.

Editing:

Magazines hire editors as well as writers. Every magazine job you interview for will require an editing test. If you don't do well, you won't get a job. You need to polish your editing skills in every class you take. The quality of your copyediting will affect your grade. All articles must follow AP and Kansan Style.

Professionalism:

All articles must be submitted on time, with all required components. If you get in trouble with a story (for example, a source backs out or you discover there is no story), talk to me as soon as possible.

Grading criteria:

An **A (excellent)** story or department is professional quality. It requires little or not editing, not even for AP or Kansan style. It is clearly focused and well organized. It is written for the student audience. It uses multiple, appropriate sources (at least 8 cited sources for major article; 4 cited sources for departments). Is easily readable with a strong storytelling and relevant, interesting quotes

A **B (good)** story or department will have some problems, maybe subtle ones, in focus or storytelling. It may not have enough sources or the right sources. It would need some editing because it isn't tight enough. A **B** story is a fine story but not a killer one.

A **C (adequate)** story needs revisions. Its focus is unclear or wrong for the audience. It might have a weak lede or weak quotes or a poor organization. It would likely need more reporting—more sources or better sources. **C** stories typically are much better stories after revision.

A **D (below average)** story or department is unacceptable for submission as a student in a professional program. Shows little effort and lack of pride in your work.

A **F (unacceptable)** story or department reflects a total lack of effort or time management. Any story in this course with only one source is a failing story.

Workshops

This class follows a workshop format, one that demands as much class participation from you as it does from me. It's vital that at this stage of your college career, on the verge of becoming professional writers and editors, that you learn how to talk about your work and the work of others openly. So we will talk in this class to help you develop skills in analytical thinking and discussion.

In this class, critical discussion falls into two categories: discussing published magazine articles and discussing the articles written by your classmates. Next to the practice of writing itself, reading articles is the best way to learn to become a magazine writer.

The published articles discussed in this class will be provided to you throughout the semester. Read each article at least twice. The first time, treat it uncritically; read it as you would for information or entertainment, and respond to it the same way, from the gut. How did the article make you feel? Did you like the article, hate it, feel ambivalent about it? Were you left with the sense that something's missing, or that you don't know exactly what the article's about? Then read the article again, this time critically. Imagine that you have to teach yourself to write for magazines only by reading magazine articles. What would you want to explore? Consider the following questions:

1. What is the article about? What point is it trying to make? Is there a nut graph or topic statement? If not, is it clearly implied early in the article?
2. Does the article flow smoothly from point to point? Are there problems with organization? A good organizational test is to see if you can map out the article in outline format.
3. Does the lede get your attention? Does it fit the story? What kind of lede does the story use?
4. Does the article end satisfactorily or does it just come to a dead stop?
5. Are there adequate examples, anecdotes and description to make the story interesting?
6. Are the quotes clever, authoritative? How many quotes does the story have?
7. Are there enough apparent sources in the article to give it credibility? Who are the sources? Why did the writer choose them?

As you read through articles critically, make notes on them to highlight specific trouble spots. Also—and this is equally important—make notes about what you like: effective turns of phrase, for example, or good imagery.

For each set of published articles assigned for discussion, you will turn in a one-page summary of your observations at the end of the workshop class. These summaries will be recorded as part of the preparation and participation part of your grade.

The Writer's Journal

If you want to learn to play the piano, you have to practice. The same is true of writing. The more you do it, the better you'll get at it. So you are going to practice for 10 minutes five days a week. Ten minutes goes lickety-split, so you must be selective and focus your attention and thinking. Quantity and range are not the point. Clarity is the point.

The journal is not a diary; it is literary nonfiction written in your voice. Everything you write has to be true.

As you go about your daily business, pay attention to what's going on around you. Jot down a few brief notes to capture what you see and your reaction to it. Note how people dress, walk, speak and treat their friends. Note how your street or room or house looks at different times of day. Watch for the stories that happen in your everyday life—at school, during trips to the grocery store, in relationships with your family and friends. Use your memories of experiences.

Put one experience or just a slice of one experience down each day. Or you can describe something.

Remember the mantra: Show Don't Tell.

What counts and other rules

- You must write five days a week.
- Never go beyond 10 minutes. Set a timer if necessary. When your time is up, finish the sentence you are writing and stop.
- Format
 - Type and double-space.
 - Head each page with: Name, start time, the day and date.
 - Bottom of each page: note the time completed.
- Five weekly journal entries are due on Monday. Put your entries in a folder with a pocket. Put only that week's entries in the folder.
- Put an * on the two entries you think are your best of the week.

This assignment will be generously graded if you will just do the work and follow the rules. You will turn in the journal for five weeks, until Oct. 2. The journal will be graded as follows:

- A = 23 to 25 entries appropriately submitted
- B = 20 to 22 entries appropriately submitted
- C = 17 to 19 entries appropriately submitted
- D = 14 to 16 entries appropriately submitted
- F = fewer than 16 appropriately submitted entries

**J697 Magazine Production–Campus Media
Course Schedule Fall 2006**

Week 1 | Aug. 21

How the course will work
Finding and focusing ideas
for stories
Brainstorm major articles
For next class: Wray, chapters 1–3
For next week: Read first-person stories

Week 2 | Aug. 28

Discussion: first-person stories
Brainstorm first-person ideas:
BRING ONE (Aug. 28)
Guest speaker (Aug. 20) Becky Nappi,
columnist and writer for The Spokesman-
Review

Week 3 | Sept. 6 (No class Sept. 4)

Jayplay Critique
For next week: Wray, chapter 8

Week 4 | Sept. 11

Research and interviewing
For next week: Wray, chapters 9–11;
Read informational articles

Week 5 | Sept. 18

Discussion: informational articles,
leads, organization, endings
For next week: Read short articles
First-person conferences (group 1)

Week 6 | Sept. 26

Discussion: short articles
First-person conferences (group 2)
First-person articles DUE Sept. 28
(Group 1)

Week 7 | Oct. 2

Workshop: first-person articles
Last journal entries DUE
First-person articles DUE Oct. 4
(group 1)

Week 8 | Oct. 9

Workshop: first-person articles
For next week: Read cheerleader story
Portfolio DUE Oct. 11

Week 9 | Oct. 16

Guest speaker: Eric Adler
For next week: Read profiles

Week 10 | Oct. 23

Discussion: profiles
Revision: The Soul of Good Writing
For next week: Wray, chapters 4–7

Week 11 | Oct. 30

How to sell your ideas to magazines

Week 12 | Nov. 6

How to Get a Job Part 1:
Resumes and Cover Letter
Cover letter DUE Nov. 13

Week 13 | Nov. 13

Cover letter workshop

Week 14 | Nov. 20 (No class Nov. 22)

Jayplay critique
Last day to turn in long-form

Week 15 | Nov. 27

How to Get a Job Part 2: interviewing

Week 16 | Dec. 4

Course wrap-up and evaluations
Portfolio DUE

DEADLINES

J 697

Magazine Writing

Fall 2006

September	18	First-person conferences for Group 1
	26	First-person conferences for Group 2
	28	First-person articles DUE for Group 1
October	02	Last journal entries DUE
	04	First-person article DUE for Group 2
	09	Midterm portfolio DUE
November	13	Cover letter DUE
	20	Last day to turn in long-form article
December	04	Final portfolio DUE

RULES TO REMEMBER OR ELSE

- You must provide of sources for each department and your long-form article. The list should include live and written sources and sources you cited and consulted. For written sources, include the title of the article and its source (ie. url). For live sources, include a phone number.
- You must turn in your long-form the Wednesday of the week the story runs. Turn in your manuscript, not the published version. If you do not turn in your article by the deadline, you will lose a 2 points a day until you turn it in.