



Faculty of Arts
& Social Sciences

School of the Arts and Media

**MDIA5006
Feature Writing**

Session 2, 2014

UNSW Course Outline

MDIA5006 Feature Writing
Session 2 2014
CRICOS Provider Code: 00098G

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Location and Time of Seminars in the Course

Tuesday 9-11am, Quadrangle G026 Tuesday 12-2pm, Quadrangle G025 Tuesday 3-5pm, Quadrangle G025 Tuesday 6-8pm, Quadrangle G046
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* A map of the UNSW campus can be found here:

http://www.facilities.unsw.edu.au/sites/all/files/page_file_attachment/KensingtonCampus.pdf

Staff Contact Details

	Name	Email	Consultation times and location	Phone
Course Convener and lecturer	Berwyn Lewis	berwyn.lewis@unsw.edu.au	TBC	TBC

* All responses to student emails will take place Monday-Friday 9am-6pm. Please write MDIA5006 in subject line.

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School of the Arts and Media Contact Information

* Please contact the SAM Office with any general administrative inquiries.

SAM Office

Room 312, level 3 Robert Webster Building

Phone: 9385 4856

Email: sam@unsw.edu.au

Attendance Requirements

To pass this course you are required to attend at least 80% of lectures and tutorials. If you do not meet the minimum attendance requirement for any reason you may fail the course. If you experience a prolonged illness or misadventure that prevents you from meeting the 80% attendance requirement you should contact the Course Convenor immediately. You may be advised to withdraw from the course.

Essential Information for SAM Students

A webpage that provides essential information about university policy and guidelines for all SAM students can be accessed at: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>.

In this document, you will find important information on the following:

- Essay Writing Support Services
- Policies Regarding Late Work
- Procedure for Applying for Extensions
- Procedure for Applying for Special Consideration
- Procedures for Submitting Assessments
- Policy on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Course details

Credit Points:

Six units of credit

Summary of the Course

<p>This course builds on students' existing journalistic skills, expands and refines them within the context of feature writing. Techniques will be honed in researching, interviewing, structuring, analysing and writing features for all media – print, broadcast and online. The focus will be on how to identify audiences; know the differences between feature and news writing; and understand the history and traditions of feature writing. Emphasis will be on feature writing elements, functions, genres, what makes a feature work, the social significance of features, the roles they play and the principles and conventions to which they conform. Students will analyse and study ideas, creativity and the work of important feature writers. They will also undertake research, reading and writing exercises and assignments at a postgraduate level.</p>

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Aims of the Course

1. This course will enable students to explore and gain further practical understanding of all main areas of feature writing – how and where to find ideas for feature stories; planning, sourcing, organising interview questions; how to use sources, facts and plant details; how to find an angle, hook; how to engage and hold audience interest and attention; how to anticipate audience needs, extend writing, make transitions, develop balance, establish different points of view, explore and maintain argument(s), debate(s), statement(s); learn advanced, more complex forms of research, establish background, scenes, use voice, make shifts, extend argument and counter argument, use right of reply and Ws and HS.
2. Students will learn how to operate in professional contexts and roles, pitch a query, submit it and follow it up.

Student learning outcomes

At the conclusion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Research and write features for all media;
2. Understand the principles and conventions of feature writing, its disciplines and interdisciplinary contexts;
3. Work independently and collaboratively using a diversity of tools and approaches;
4. Apply knowledge, skills and ethical practices through effective communication that recognises and respects diversity and social justice and responsibility;
5. Rely on strong interviewing and research skills;
6. Critically analyse and edit their work and others'.

Graduate Attributes

The students will be encouraged to develop the following Graduate Attributes by undertaking the selected activities and knowledge content. These attributes will be assessed within the prescribed assessment tasks.

At the conclusion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Know how to apply research to writing a variety of features for different genres;
2. Understand advanced techniques for sourcing features;
3. Recognise how features are created, planned and structured with cultural, social and newsworthy significance for defined audiences.

Rationale for the inclusion of content and teaching approach

This course reflects the importance of advanced cognitive, research and analytical skills in the practice of feature writing. It incorporates advanced theoretical and practical understanding within the field of journalism. It will help students develop critical knowledge that will enhance their practice as media professionals.

Teaching strategies

This course combines ONE two-hour seminar/week WITH small and large group discussions, evaluation, exercises based on course readings, handouts and seminar content, and three assessed tasks with deadlines.

Summary of Assessment Details, Tasks

In order to pass this course, you must make a serious attempt at ALL assessment tasks.

Assessed task	Word Length	Grading	Learning outcomes assessed	Graduate attributes assessed	Due date
1. Author, genre, Publication Appraisal	1000 words	25%	2,3,6	1, 2,3	August 26
2. Opinion, lifestyle or service feature article	800 words	25%	1, 2, 4, 5	1, 2, 3	September 23
3. Feature Package 1) Query/Pitch 2) Feature Story 3) Research Report	1) 300-500 word query/pitch 2) 1200-1500 word feature 800-1000 word Research Report	50%	1,2,3,4,5,6	1, 2, 3	Query due September 2 Feature + Research Report due October 28

Assessment Policy

In order to pass this course, you must make a serious attempt at ALL assessment tasks.

* UNSW makes use of the plagiarism detection tool **Turnitin**. For this course you are required to submit an electronic version of your written assignments, so they may be reviewed using this procedure.

Electronic submission: Please be aware that when you submit a UNSW course assignment online, through a facility such as Turnitin etc., you are automatically acknowledging that you have understood and abided by the University requirements in respect of student academic misconduct outlined in the Student Code Policy and Student Misconduct Procedures, both of which are available at: (<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/academiclife/assessment/StudentMisconduct.html>).

You are also declaring that the assessment item is your own work, except where acknowledged, and has not been submitted for academic credit previously in whole or in part. In addition, you are declaring that the assessor of this item may, for assessment purposes:

- provide a copy to another staff member of the University

- communicate a copy of this assessment item to a plagiarism checking service (such as Turnitin) which may then retain a copy of the assessment item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking.

Late Submission

If your assignment is submitted after the due date, a penalty of 3% per day (including Saturday, Sunday and public holidays) will be imposed for up to TWO weeks. For example, if you are given a grade of 72 out of 100 for an essay, and if your essay were handed in two days late, it would attract a penalty of 6% and the mark would be reduced to 66%. If the same essay were handed in seven days late (i.e. a penalty of 21%) it would receive a grade of 51%. If your assignment is not submitted within two weeks of its due date, it will receive a grade of 0. For more information on submission of late work, consult the FASS assessment protocols at <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

In this course, there will be NO EXTENSIONS – NO EXCEPTIONS – TO CONFORM WITH INDUSTRY STANDARDS.

Special Consideration

In the case of more serious or ongoing illness or misadventure, you will need to apply for Special Consideration. For information: <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/SpecialConsideration.html>
Students who are prevented from attending a substantial amount of the course may be advised to apply to withdraw without penalty. This will only be approved in the most extreme and properly documented cases.

ASSIGNMENT ONE: Author Genre Publication Appraisal

Length: 1000 words

Grading: 25%

Due Date: August 26

Submit online to Turnitin via Moodle

To successfully complete this assignment you will need to work through the following five steps:

- Submit a 1000 word appraisal of a feature writer, publication or genre. Include a close reading of at least two feature articles by the same or different author.
- **Use** criteria covered in Lectures to this date;
- **Focus** on techniques used by author(s) to achieve and maintain intention, audience interest, voice, tell a story;
- **Show how author uses various elements of feature writing** – research, interviews, questions, sources, facts, direct and indirect quotes, anecdotes, editorialising, intro pars, hook, angle, scene setting, atmospherics, colour, how this feature conforms to audience interest(s); explain and evaluate effectiveness of elements;
- **Analyse structure;** evaluate opening paragraphs (pars), identify type of opening par being used, isolate the use of follow ups, shifts, transitions, juxtaposition(s), contrast, style, tone, pace, voice, show how your articles are aimed at specific audience and media outlet, and why and how they fail or succeed in intention.
- **Evaluate and identify argument, debate, opinion(s)** - argument, debate, opinion and counter opinion/point of view, balance, intentions of author, themes, opinion(s) and counter opinion(s);
- **Identify and show how author develops character(s) and main players** in feature and show how they undergo change in feature.
- Compare and contrast two or three articles. Write an engaging introduction, describe the points you will be discussing, support them with evidence, write a conclusion; demonstrate critical, objective thinking and support this with evidence.

You will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Ability to critically analyse and reflect on content of chosen articles (as outlined above)
- Your observation of detail and argument
- Structure and style of your writing
- Ability to evaluate research used by author of selected articles.
- Ability to present a concise, clearly written argument supported by evidence
- Ability to write with clarity, and argue and make strong points.

What you will learn:

- An understanding of the techniques used by feature writers
- Gain insights into how features writers achieve intention through use of various elements
- Learn how to appraise feature writing as a genre of non-fiction writing

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Assignment Two: Opinion, Service or Lifestyle Feature Article

Length: 800 words

Weighting: 25% of final grade

Deadline: September 23

You are expected to submit an **800 word opinion, service or lifestyle feature article**. Your article (plus relevant back-up research) must be submitted to Turnitin via **Moodle by September 23**.

You will submit the following to Turnitin via Moodle:

- 800 word article (please identify an appropriate publication for your article).
- Transcripts of interviews. Each transcript should include the interviewee's 1) full name, 2) title/position and role; 3) interviewee's contact details (phone and email). PLEASE HIGHLIGHT quotes from your transcript that are used in your article.
- An annotated copy of your article for fact-checking. In this document you need to identify the source(s) of all the facts, quotes and anecdotes you have used. This should be straight-forward and easy for a sub-editor or fact-checker to use to verify the information. This will also help you check your story for accuracy and attribution.

Assessment will be based on:

- The quality of the reporting and attention to detail;
- Your approach to the story of your feature, its structure, content, use of feature writing elements and style;
- **Opinion articles** will be assessed on how well they develop an argument and/or debate and the techniques used to persuade readers with credible information and sources;
- **Lifestyle or service articles** will be assessed on how well they develop a theme, use sources and/or experts and develop a "take away" message;
- The feature's suitability for the chosen publication or readership;
- The feature's effectiveness and success as a piece of non-fiction writing

What you will learn:

- An understanding of the techniques used in a specific form of feature writing;
- A demonstration of how to conceive, plan, research, report and write an opinion or lifestyle/service feature-length article.

Assignment Three: Feature Package Assignment (Query + Feature + Research Report)
Weighting: 50% of final grade
Query Deadline: September 2
Feature and Research Report deadline: October 28

THERE ARE TWO PARTS TO THIS ASSIGNMENT

Part One Assignment Three: Query (or Pitch)

Deadline: September 2

1) You are expected to submit a 300-500 word query/pitch that outlines the 1200 to 1500-word feature you intend to report and write. Lecture two will cover the art of writing a query/pitch and you will have the opportunity to workshop your ideas and pitches in week five. Take advantage of in-class time to refine your query/pitch and feature story idea. The query must be submitted **via Moodle by September 2** but will be assessed in conjunction with your 1200-1500-word feature.

Your query/pitch must contain the following information:

- Identify your story and news value angle/hook (i.e. What's the story about? Why relevant? Why now?);
- Identify the intended publication (Where will your story be published/appear?);
- Explain why this will engage the publication's audience (Why would the editor be interested in this feature story?);
- Outline how you will report the story. Be sure to give some background and context to the story idea, identify some possible sources and show that you have devised a rough research plan. Why are you the writer to do it?

Assessment of this part of the assignments will be based on:

- The structure, content and style of the pitch as a piece of persuasive writing
- The quality of the writing style of the query/pitch and the proposed story idea and reporting plan
- Its suitability for the chosen publication or readership

What you will learn:

- An understanding of the collaborative nature of crafting feature stories and experience in the art of persuasive writing;
- An understanding of the advantages of planning and preliminary research;
- How to identify the bones of a story: What is the most relevant information and how are these details best conveyed? Where are the leads, sources, main players of your story? What has the most potential?
- You will receive constructive feedback on your intended story idea in class. This will help you hone the idea for your final 1200 to 1500-word feature and should shape your research plan. Be sure to pay attention to suggested leads and critiques from your peers and lecturer.

Part Two Assignment Three

1) Feature Article – 1200-1500 words

2) Research Report – 800-1000 words

Deadline: October 28

You are expected to submit a 1200-1500 **word feature article** based on the query (or pitch) letter you submitted in week seven. You should submit your feature article and research report to Turnitin **via Moodle** by **October 28**.

You will be encouraged to exchange and review drafts with your peers during classes in final two weeks. Take advantage of the opportunity to get feedback before submitting your article for final assessment.

Submit the following to Turnitin via Moodle:

- 1200 to 1500-word feature article
- Transcripts of interviews. Each transcript should include the interviewee's full name, title, role/position and/or occupation, and contact details (phone and email). Please HIGHLIGHT quotes in your transcript which are used in your feature article.

You should interview a minimum of three to four relevant, credible and fully attributed sources.

- An annotated copy of your article for fact-checking. In this document you need to identify the sources all the facts, quotes and anecdotes you have used. This should be straight-forward and easy for a sub-editor or fact-checker to use to verify the information.

Assessment will be based on:

- The quality of the reporting and attention to detail. You must use three-four sources for your feature story if not more;
- Your approach to the story including its structure, content and style;
- Choice of subjects and experts, use of quotes and development of character;
- The feature's suitability for the chosen publication or audience;
- The feature's success and effectiveness as a piece of non-fiction writing and your ability to follow journalistic style.

Please note: it is expected that your story might change direction during its development. Students are expected to commit to a story topic but WILL NOT BE ASSESSED if the final feature story develops into an unexpected but related direction.

What you will learn:

- How to conceive, plan, research, report, make use of feature writing elements and write a feature article;
- An understanding of how the editorial process works and how writers and audience benefit from this process;
- An understanding of the benefits of a research plan and the value of rewrites and revisions;
- How to identify characters and narrative elements that add depth and extend into a feature-length relevant story.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. It can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without acknowledgement.

UNSW groups plagiarism into the following categories:

- **Copying:** using the same or very similar words to the original text or idea without acknowledging the source or using quotation marks. This also applies to images, art and design projects, as well as presentations where someone presents another's ideas or words without credit.
- **Inappropriate paraphrasing:** changing a few words and phrases while mostly retaining the original structure and information without acknowledgement. This also applies in presentations where someone paraphrases another's ideas or words without credit. It also applies to piecing together quotes and paraphrases into a new whole, without referencing and a student's own analysis to bring the material together.
- **Collusion:** working with others but passing off the work as a person's individual work. Collusion also includes providing your work to another student before the due date, or for the purpose of them plagiarising at any time, paying another person to perform an academic task, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's work or seeking payment for completing academic work.
- **Duplication:** submitting your own work, in whole or in part, where it has previously been prepared or submitted for another assessment or course at UNSW or another university.

Further details about what plagiarism is can be found on the Learning Centre's Website (<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism>) and in the myUNSW student A-Z: Guide: <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/Plagiarism.html>.

The UNSW plagiarism policy and procedure are outlined in these documents:

- <http://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/plagiarismpolicy.pdf>
- <http://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/plagiarismprocedure.pdf>

The UNSW Student Misconduct policy and procedures can be found here:

- <https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/academiclife/assessment/StudentMisconduct.html>.

The Learning Centre also provides substantial education written materials, workshops, and tutorials to aid students, for example:

- Correct referencing practices;

- Paraphrasing, summarising, essay writing and time management
- Appropriate use of and attribution for a range of materials including text, images, formulae and concepts.

Individual assistance is available on request from The Learning Centre. Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study and one of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting and proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

The Learning Centre

The Learning Centre also provides substantial educational written materials, workshops, and tutorials to aid students, for example, in:

- correct referencing practices;
- paraphrasing, summarising, essay writing, and time management;
- appropriate use of, and attribution for, a range of materials including text, images, formulae and concepts.

Individual assistance is available on request from The Learning Centre.

Please note: due to high demand for their services the Learning Centre recommends making an appointment one week in advance for Individual Booking Consultations.

Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study and one of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting, and the proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

Writing and English Language tutors are available. Dates and times TBC.

Textbooks

Prescribed text

John Hersey's *Hiroshima* is available at the University bookstore for purchase. Lecture materials and weekly readings will be available via Moodle.

Readings

Course Readings and other work:

Each week, students will be required to undertake prescribed readings for class, as well as some recommended readings. **Each Monday, students should check Moodle** for any additional readings, viewings or writing or researching exercises.

Please come to class with a copy of the required reading(s) and your notes, questions, ideas, analysis and comments. Be ready to participate in discussions of these materials and demonstrate your understanding of them.

Read widely, study a wide range of news and features, and take part in sharing and discussing articles in the Moodle module. Be aware of all sections of print, broadcast and electronic media.

Course evaluation and development

<p>The student learning experience is important to the Faculty and the staff in this course. Throughout the duration of the course, students are encouraged to provide either formal and/or informal feedback. At the conclusion of the semester, a formal student evaluation is provided to enable feedback on the course content and teaching staff.</p>
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Course schedule

One x two-hour seminar/week

Please check Moodle

WEEK ONE (28 Jul – 1 Aug)

Introduction to Feature Writing differences and similarities to reporting and news writing.

WEEK TWO (4 Aug – 8 Aug)

Asking questions, finding stories and crafting queries.

Required reading/viewing:

Hersey, J 1946, *Hiroshima*, "A Noiseless Flash" and "The Fire" first published in The New Yorker, August 1946

Stewart, J B 1998, *Follow the Story: How to Write Successful Nonfiction*, New York: Touchstone, pp.59-86

Hitt, J: *The Art of the Query* (a podcast of an event at the Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism) <http://journalism.berkeley.edu/events/presentation/63/>

WEEK THREE (11 Aug – 15 Aug)

The literature of fact, researching and reporting features, creating a research plan.

Required Reading/viewing:

Knox, M 2006, "Cruising: Life and Death on the High Seas", The Monthly, September, www.themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-malcolm-knox-cruising-life-and-death-high-seas-281

WEEK FOUR (18 Aug – 22 Aug)

The New Journalism and its legacy, finding sources, conducting interviews and developing character.

Required Reading:

Talese, G 1966 "Frank Sinatra Has A Cold", Esquire Magazine, April.

Recommended Reading:

Roiphe, K 2009, "The Art of Nonfiction No. 2: Gay Talese", Paris Review, Issue 189.

Tough, P and Sherrill, S 1997, "Khmer Rouge", The New Yorker, August 11 p86.

WEEK FIVE (25 Aug – 29 Aug)

Feature Styles; organising your research and planning structure.

Required Reading/viewing:

Didion, J 1990, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem", New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, pp. 84 - 128.

Recommended Viewing:

Ira Glass on Storytelling Part 3 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BI23U7U2aUY>

WEEK SIX (1 Sept – 5 Sept)
Service and Lifestyle Journalism.

Required Reading:

Wolfe, T 2008, "A City Built of Clay", New York Magazine, July 6,
<http://nymag.com/news/media/48341/>

"For and Against Foreskin: A comprehensive investigation into the pros, cons, and controversies of circumcision." 2010 New York Magazine, October 18, <http://nymag.com/health/features/60158/>

WEEK SEVEN (8 Sept – 12 Sept)
Opinion writing; Persuasion and argument.

Required Reading: Selection of current opinion writing TBA

Kunkel, T 1995, *Genius In Disguise: Harold Ross of The New Yorker*, New York: Random House, pp. 442 – 446.

WEEK EIGHT (15 Sept – 19 Sept)
Structuring features, place and setting the scene.

Required Reading:

Brooks, G 2003, "The Painted Desert", The New Yorker, July 28, pp. 60 - 67.
 Hessler, P 2006, "Hutong Karma: The many incarnations of a Beijing alleyway" *The New Yorker*, February 13, pp. 82-89.

WEEK NINE (22 Sept – 26 Sept)
Developing Characters, tone and pacing

Required Reading:

Hooper, C 2006, "The Tall Man" The Monthly, March,
<http://www.themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-chloe-hooper-tall-man-inside-palm-island039s-heart-darkness-185>

NON-TEACHING BREAK September 29 – October 3
WEEK 10 Oct 7 – Oct 10 (Reading week – NO CLASSES)

WEEK ELEVEN (13 Oct – 17 Oct)
Objectivity and advocacy in contemporary features

Required Reading

Pollan, M 2002, "Power Steer," The New York Times Magazine, March 31.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/03/31/magazine/power-steer.html>
 Schlosser, E 1998, "Fast Food Nation: The True Cost of America's Diet" Rolling Stone Magazine (USA), Issue 794, September 3rd, <http://www.mcspotlight.org/media/press/rollingstone1.html>

Recommended Reading:

Boynton, R S 2005, *The New New Journalism*, New York: Vintage, pp. 342 – 360.

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WEEK TWELVE (20 Oct – 24 Oct)**Narrative non-fiction and authorial presence****Required Reading:**

Orlean, S 2000, *The Orchid Thief*, New York: Vintage, pp. 1-21.

Rakoff, D 2008, *Don't Get Too Comfortable*, Scribe Publications, pp. 90 - 106.

Recommended Reading:

Boynton, R S 2005, *The New New Journalism*, New York: Vintage, pp.271 – 292.

WEEK THIRTEEN (27 Oct – 31 Oct)**Reporting on social and cultural trends****Required Reading**

Albo, M 2009, "Petey and the Boys", New York Magazine, February 15,

<http://nymag.com/fashion/09/spring/54321/>

Daly, S 2007, "Pirates of the Multiplex", *Vanity Fair*, March,

<http://www.vanityfair.com/ontheweb/features/2007/03/piratebay200703>