Materials

Books
*In Cold Blood*, Truman Capote  
*Journalism Today*, Donald L. Ferguson, ed.  
*Joe Gould’s Secret*, Joseph Mitchell  
*Literary Journalism*, Norman Sims & Mark Kramer, eds.

Films
*All the President’s Men*, Alan J. Pakula  
*Shattered Glass*, Billy Ray  
*The Insider*, Michael Mann  
*Gates of Heaven*, Errol Morris  
*Super Size Me*, Morgan Spurlock

Website
*The Tantasquan*, [www.tantasquayearbook.com](http://www.tantasquayearbook.com)

Course Outline

What is journalism? Most people understand that journalism has something to do with news, investigation, and opinion as presented through the mediums of newspapers, magazines, and television. But the modern conception of journalism has begun to shift, especially as websites, weblogs and podcasts have become more common. In this course, you will learn about the practice of journalism and how it’s shifted over the years. You will also practice journalism, writing articles in a variety of styles and publishing them online.

Classes will include discussions, workshops, group and individual meetings, writing, revising, and online publishing. Periodically you will read and discuss recently published articles that have appeared in print or online, and you will also read and evaluate Joseph Mitchell’s *Joe Gould’s Secret* and Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* as examples of creative journalism.

Meanwhile, the practice of journalism should keep you pretty busy. You may find yourself with several days to accomplish any number of things before deadline: conducting an interview outside of class, editing a draft of an article you’ve written, submitting a draft for online publication, researching your next story, and so forth. *Students are expected to make use of the class time for journalism projects only.* If you find yourself “done,” you should move on to a new project, or help with the online newspaper, or conference with me, or otherwise find ways to occupy your time.
meaningfully—there’s always plenty to do, and I’ll assign tasks to student who appear to be idle.

If you wish, you can find a particular niche within the wide field of journalism and spend time directing your energy toward your area of interest. For example, you may be more interested in photojournalism than in feature writing, or editorials than sports writing. You may wish to become a section editors for the Tantasquan, the website that publishes the final, polished copies of student work and promotes the high school’s yearbook—which is itself an example of journalism. Student editors generate ideas, assign articles to student journalists, and prepare articles for publication online. Copy editors proofread articles and have the ability to fix mistakes that have been overlooked. If you happen to love a particular aspect of media publication—interviewing people, say, or writing reviews of student performances—you can apply your talent in that direction.

Finally: journalism is, among other things, an exploration of the world outside oneself. As you generate writing topics, avoid focusing on things about which you have already formed an opinion. Generate assignments that will force you to learn about things you don’t already know, or see things in a new way, from a new perspective.

Assignments

It is your responsibility to meet deadlines and due dates. I can extend the project deadlines only if I have enough notice, and you have a good reason for needing an extension.

• writing responses and exercises
• new articles, editorials, reviews, features, profiles, sports articles, columns
• interviewing
• extended digressive narrative nonfiction (literary journalism assignment)
• reading & critical response to text and film
• cumulative portfolio of student work
• peer review
• student self-assessment

Materials

Students should bring a writing utensil and paper to class, as well as any book we may be reading. Some students find it helpful to purchase an electronic recording device for interviews, but this is not required. Any work that “was done at home” should be available in class for peer and teacher review.

Grading

Your grade is based on the successful completion of your portfolio, which will be assessed at four points during the semester. At each assessment, your portfolio should be
up to date with copies of articles you have written. Your portfolio should also include any miscellaneous classwork or homework that was assigned—responses to *In Cold Blood, Joe Gould’s Secret, Literary Journalism*, and the films we view, for example. These are the deadlines for portfolio assessment.

| Assessment #1: | Friday, September 26 | (3 articles) |
| Assessment #2: | Friday, October 31  | (5 articles) |
| Assessment #3: | Friday, December 5  | (4 articles) |
| Assessment #4: | Friday, January 16  | (2 articles & project) |

On each of the dates listed above, your portfolio must contain the number of articles specified in the Course Schedule section of the syllabus.

Students taking the course at an Honors level will be held to a higher standard of work. Students taking the course at a College Prep level or a Standard level will be graded accordingly. All students, regardless of level, are expected to complete the assignments to the best of their ability.

Essentially, your grade reflects a combination of the work you’ve done (number and quality of articles written), the way you’ve used your class time (multitasking in a workshop environment instead of wasting time), and the peripheral assignments throughout the semester (reading and responding to *In Cold Blood, Joe Gould’s Secret, and the films*).

**Course Schedule**

Here are the approximate deadlines for all articles. Deadlines can be adjusted depending on progress with interviews, appointments, fact-gathering, photos, and other factors that go into producing an article.

**Week Of** | **Topics and Assignments**
---|---
8/25/08 | Introduction to course. Peer interviews and introductions. Website orientation, and the yearbook as journalism. Planning for the semester.
**Article #1 is due on 9/12/08**
9/15/08 | Feature writing, and how it’s different from news writing. Purposes and types of feature articles, with examples. Practice exercises in feature writing. The importance of avoid language that stereotypes. How to get good photos for feature stories. 
**Article #2 is due on 9/19/08**
9/22/08 Editorials and opinions. Purpose of the op/ed page, and the different types and objectives of editorials. Difference between editorials, columns, and rants. The importance of tone and voice. Irony and satire. Political cartoons.

**Article #3 is due on 9/26/08**

**Progress Reports: Three articles need to be in your portfolio.**


**Article #4 is due on 10/3/08**

10/6/08 Culture: music reviews, film reviews, local student productions and exhibits. The role of the critic in journalism. Proper structure and voice in critical journalism. The importance of genre and the artist’s oeuvre.

**Article #5 is due on 10/10/08**

10/13/08 Review of the elements of journalism and the function of a traditional newspaper. Consideration of online newspapers and news “blogs.” Introduction to podcasting, with an emphasis on “This American Life.”

**Article #6 is due on 10/17/08**

10/20/08 Practice with podcasting, photography, advertising, and other elements of journalism, depending on student interest. Emphasis on combining words, music, and images to create effective journalism “pieces” or “presentations.” Also: introduction to Joseph Mitchell’s *Joe Gould’s Secret* and first reading assignments.

**Article #7 is due on 10/24/08**

10/27/08 Continuation of *Joe Gould’s Secret*; final reading assignment to be completed by end of week. The role of the reporter and his/her responsibility to the subject. Confidentiality, ethics, credibility, and the law. In-class essay.

**Article #8 is due on 10/31/08**

**Report Cards: Five new articles need to be in the portfolio. Total articles: eight.**


**Article #9 is due on 11/7/08.**

11/10/08 Presentation of either *All the President’s Men* or *The Insider*. Introduction to Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood* and first reading assignments. Further
discussion of journalistic integrity and responsibility. The feature story as novel, and Capote’s “reliability.”

Article #10 is due on 11/14/08.

11/17/08  Continuation of In Cold Blood. Portfolio work in preparation for Thanksgiving break.

Article #11 is due on 11/21/08

12/1/08  Conclusion of In Cold Blood. Final discussion of the book, with emphasis on its “literary” and “journalistic” merit. In-class essay. Literary journalism project: topic selection. Portfolio work as needed.

Article #12 is due on 12/5/08

Progress Reports: Four new articles need to be in the portfolio. Total articles: twelve.

12/12/08  Presentation of Super-Size Me and scenes from Gates of Heaven. The documentarian as journalist, and the documentarian as hero. Discussion of the difference between each approach: which gets closer to “truth”? Which definition of “truth”? In-class movie review. Literary journalism project: schedule interviews, research, notes.

Article #13 is due on 12/12/08

12/19/08  Reading selections from Literary Journalism. Peer work and conferences for literary journalism project. Introduction revisited. Individual conferences with teacher.

Article #14 is due on 12/19/08

Your portfolio must be completely up-to-date by this point: no deadline extensions! Total articles: fourteen.

1/5/09  Literary Journalism projects: write, review, revise. Reading selections from Literary Journalism.

At least six pages of Literary Journalism Project is due on 1/10/09

1/12/09  Literary Journalism projects: write, review, revise. Review for final exam.

Revised Final Draft of Literary Journalism Project is due on 1/16/09

Report Cards: Your completed portfolio must include:

- a table of contents
- 14 articles
- 3 in-class writing assignments
- literary journalism project
- self-evaluation