

ENGL 201: Professional Writing

Social Justice, Environmental, and Business Journalism in the Digital Age
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:40-10:55 a.m., Chambers 1015

Professor L. Lamar Wilson, B01 Carnegie Guest House, 9-9:30 a.m., 3:30-4:30 p.m. TTh or by appointment
*Contact: 704-894-3065 (during office hours); llwilson@davidson.edu * Please allow 24 hours for response to email. For email sent after 9 p.m., the 24-hour window begins the following morning, when the email likely will get read.**

Course Description

In this course, we will explore research, reporting, and writing strategies common to the practice of journalism in the digital age, partnering with the *Davidsonian*, *The Charlotte Observer*, and other publications in the greater Charlotte area to craft and publish at least three pieces of journalism. We also will develop a professional digital portfolio and refine our professional Web presence to feature our journalistic work as well as share our résumés. In this way, this course emphasizes writing as a means of civic engagement and encourages you, as campus community members, to connect your lives and learning with the broader professional world. Our ultimate aim is to connect what often seems to be separate aspects of our lives—the scholarly and the personal, the academy and the community—as we reflect on our motives for, rewards from, and struggles in communicating with others.

Learning Objectives

Throughout the semester, you will learn:

1. How the fields of business, environmental, community, and social justice journalism came to be (their lineage and evolution over the past two centuries).
2. How stories in these fields are written, including specific rhetorical modes, narrative organization, and tone writers use.
3. How to cultivate areas of expertise or “beats” by gathering quantitative and qualitative data from interviewing sources who have insight on various aspects of issues in these fields that compel you.
4. How to write briefs, blogs/vlogs, and long-form feature news reports found in these fields.
5. How to construct and manifest ethos, your character as a writer, through careful document design, research strategies, and professional representation of yourself in print and digital environments.
6. How to develop a professional Web presence and craft a résumé that reflects the sophistication of a nascent but knowledgeable professional in these fields.
7. How to collaborate with others in subdividing and sequencing tasks with considerable research and writing components.

Learning Outcomes

By the semester’s end, you will be empowered to:

1. Demonstrate a deeper knowledge of the most influential writers, past and present, in the fields of business, environmental, community, and social justice journalism.
2. Craft a research narrative that details sources who’ve contributed to your journalistic reports.
3. Write at least three pieces of business, environmental, community/political, or social justice journalism, one covering a “hard news” event in a brief or other short narrative form, one crafting a full-length profile on a person of public interest, and one involving a profile of a company, nonprofit, or social group whose work is enmeshed in the issues of interest to you and an audience.
4. Define a clear sense of your audience(s) and how to adapt your ethos in writing so that your words resonate with as much impact as possible.
5. Create a résumé reflecting the skills and experienced you’ve gained throughout this course that you will share with those within and outside the audiences you have cultivated.
6. Create a professional Web presence at which you’ll display your three pieces, your résumé, and a clear, impactful sense of your ethos.
7. Create a virtual Rolodex of sources and colleagues with whom you can develop more stories and expand your journalistic brand.

Required Texts

Canavor, Natalie. *Business Writing in the Digital Age*. Sage Press, 2012.
Ostertag, Bob. *People's Movements, People's Press: The Journalism of Justice Movements*. Beacon Press, 2006.
Scanlan, Chip and Richard Craig. *News Writing and Reporting*. Oxford University Press, 2014. (Excerpts on Moodle)
Wyss, Bob. *Covering the Environment: How Journalists Work the Green Beat*, Routledge, 2007.

Recommended Texts

Scanlan, Chip and Richard Craig. *News Writing and Reporting*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
Strunk, William and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. Grammar, Inc. 2015.
Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well: 30th Anniversary Edition*. Harper Perennial, 2006.

Readings

You must attend the readings of professional writers who visit Davidson and write a response about your experience listening to and observing at least two of them. (For more details on this while impact your grade, see the requirements section below.)

- Dr. Vladimir Alexandrov (nonfiction), Monday, Sept. 7, 8 p.m., Lilly Family Gallery
- Jagoda Marinić (fiction), Wednesday, Sept. 30, 8 p.m., Hance Auditorium
- Amy Bagwell, Jeff Jackson, Alan Michael Parker, L. Lamar Wilson (fiction, drama, poetry), Monday, Oct. 19, 7 p.m., Hance Auditorium
- Lee Smith (fiction), Wednesday, Oct. 28, 7 p.m., Lilly Family Gallery
- Ta Nehisi Coates (nonfiction), Monday, Nov. 16, 7 p.m., Duke Auditorium

Assignments: Description and Grade Weight

Class Participation

50 points

Our classes will only work if we all commit to creating and maintaining strong discussions. I will evaluate student participation in daily discussion and will indicate around midterms if you need to participate more or more effectively. In addition to participating in class discussions, students will participate in another important activity—draft critique. For all writing assignments, students will share drafts and provide detailed critique, using rubrics for assessment that the class designs. Completed rubrics will be submitted along with final copies for each assignment so that I can assess the effort devoted to and quality of critique. This aspect of your grade will encompass 30 points, 10 points for each assignment we workshop; the other 20 will come from your two narratives about the professional writers who visit Davidson.

“Hard News” Story/Brief (Oct. 1)

50 points

Each student will publish a short piece from his/her beat in a traditional (narrative news brief, blog, etc.) or alternative story form.

Individual Profile (Nov. 5)

100 points

Each student will publish a full-length profile on a person of public interest on your beat.

Company/Nonprofit/Social Group Profile (Dec. 3)

100 points

Each student will publish a full-length profile (at least 1,000 words) on a company, nonprofit, or social group whose work is enmeshed in the issues of interest to you and an audience on your beat.

Résumé (Dec. 8)

50 points

Each student will draft and revise a résumé for final submission to his/her digital portfolio.

Web Presence/Digital Portfolio (WordPress, Pinterest, Davidson Domains, etc., Dec. 15) 50 points

Writing is an ongoing process through which we refine our thoughts and express them. Students will use their writing to develop and enhance a professional social media presence on a WordPress or other social media site. Students will be responsible for posting a minimum of four times on issues raised in class discussion or our conversations with professional writers, including sharing their “hard” news story/brief, individual profile, and company/nonprofit/social group profile, their revised résumés and other relevant work samples.

Grading Scale

Final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

370-400 = A	360-369 = A -	359-346 = B+
330-345 = B	318-329 = B-	306-317 = C+
290-305 = C	278-289 = C-	266-277 = D+
250-265 = D	238-249 = D-	

Additional Policies

Due Dates: All assignments (both drafts and final copies) are due as indicated on the syllabus. Late work will be docked a letter grade per day late. If you have extreme extenuating circumstances (e.g. illness, family emergency), you may ask for an extension on one of the individual assignments.

Attendance: This is a TH class: Students should not miss more than two classes, which equals one week of class. Students are responsible for assignments given or due on days missed. Each unexcused absence after two reduces your participation grade by 5 to 10 points; after four unexcused absences, you will fail the course.

Accommodations for Students With Disabilities: Full accommodations are the legal right of students with either physical or learning challenges. As one who has learned to navigate physical barriers to learning, I'm happy to make necessary accommodations for students who face challenges. Students with disabilities are responsible, however, for self-identification. For a copy of the complete policies regarding students with disabilities, or if you are a student with a disability and would like to request accommodations, please contact Nance Longworth, Access and Disability Resources Coordinator, at the Academic Access and Disability Resources Center for Teaching and Learning, 704-894-2129, or Kathy Bray, Associate Dean of Students, Dean of Students, 704-894-2225. Please discuss this with me within the first week of class, so that I can learn from you as early as possible how to best work with your learning needs and style. All discussions will be confidential unless you otherwise stipulate.

Class Schedule

All readings and assignments are due as listed. I list readings by name and chapter; readings listed by other names will be in that week's Moodle folder or hyperlinked below. Hover over titles to find the link.

DATE	CLASS ACTIVITY	READING/HOMEWORK
Aug. 25	Review syllabus & discuss motivations.	<i>Canavor</i> , Chapter 1 (Moodle); <i>Doutta</i> , "Managing Yourself: What's Your Personal Social Media Strategy?"; <i>Small Business Encyclopedia</i> , "Branding"
27	Conduct a social media self-analysis Define branding Discuss developing a personal brand Discuss social media and professionalism	<i>Canavor</i> , Chapters 2 & 3 (Moodle); <i>Ostertag</i> , "Introduction"; <i>Wys</i> , "Part 1: Introducing the beat"; <i>Arnold-Smeets</i> : "10 Social Media Tips to Get You Hired"
Sept. 1	Defining your values Defining your audience Setting goals for your writing career	<i>Scanlan & Craig</i> , Chapters 1 & 2 (Moodle) <i>Wys</i> , Chapters 8 & 9 <i>HW</i> : What isn't being covered in your area of interest? What gaps might your writing and reporting fill? Where can you start?
3	Defining newsworthiness Defining the six steps of reporting and writing "hard news"	<i>Ostertag</i> , "The Environmental Movement" <i>Scanlan & Craig</i> , Chapters 5 (excerpt), 10, 11, & 18 (Moodle) <i>HW</i> : Find five "hard news" stories happening that you might cover in the next two months. Map out a reporting plan for the most viable.

8	Defining your beat: Jonathan McFadden on business writing & making the most of a “hard news” story (short-short journalism & long-form profiling)	<i>Scanlan & Craig</i> , Chapter 6 & 7 (Moodle) <i>HW</i> : Identify five potential businesses, nonprofits, or groups addressing social justices in the Davidson and greater Charlotte areas that interest you. Map out who are their leaders, potential profile subjects.
10	Covering a hard-news event” Cleve R. Wootson Jr. Reviewing the 5 Ws Writing a lead Direct quote vs. paraphrase	<i>Wjss</i> , Chapters 4 & 5 <i>Ostertag</i> , “The Nineteenth Century” <i>HW</i> : Revisit your reporting plans for your hard news and long-form profiles. Draft emails & potential questions for the stakeholders in them. Bring them to class.
15	Covering social justice, health care, education issues: Ann Doss Helms	<i>Wjss</i> , Chapters 10 & 11 <i>HW</i> : Chapter 11 Story Guide No. 2 & 3.
17	From ideation to creation: Where to start? What’s Plan A? Plan B? Plan C? Honing questions What can abolitionists & suffragists teach us about the impact of making “news”?	Revisit <i>Scanlan & Craig</i> chapters as you refine your reporting plan/map. <i>Canavor</i> , Chapters 6 & 7 <i>HW</i> : Contact the stakeholders in your stories.
22	Writing outside the lines & the box: Helen Schwab	<i>Wjss</i> , Chapter 14 <i>Scanlon & Craig</i> , Chapter 17 excerpts <i>HW</i> : Attend your hard news event to report for your brief and connect with potential profile subject.
24	<i>Davidsonian</i> Visit? Drafting your brief: Cutting out the fat in hard news What do readers need to know?	<i>Ostertag</i> , “The Gay and Lesbian Press” <i>HW</i> : Re-examine the 5Ws as they are represented in your brief.
29	Revisiting your brief: Honing your lead & nut graf, choosing quotes v. paraphrase, ending it well.	Revisit <i>Scanlon & Craig</i> Chapters 10 & 11. <i>HW</i> : Ponder potential places to publish your brief & ways to present it visually in an online space.
Oct. 1	BRIEF DUE Learning about Davidson Domains, other social media platforms	<i>Ostertag</i> , “The Underground GI Press and the Vietnam War” <i>Canavor</i> , Chapters 9 (208-211), 10 & 11 Read long-form individual profile on Moodle; note how story is told in writing & visually. <i>HW</i> : Secure interview with profile subject & review <i>Scanlan & Craig</i> Chapters 6, 7, & 10 as you revise your reporting plan, conduct research on your subject & the big-picture issue for whom s/he will be a prism, & refine your questions.
6	What is ethnography, & what can it teach us about long-form journalism? How did Vietnam War reporters change & deepen the way journalistic profiles are written & read?	<i>HW</i> : Secure interview with profile subject & review <i>Scanlan & Craig</i> Chapters 6 & 7 as you revise your reporting plan, conduct research on your subject & the issues for which s/he will be a prism, & refine your questions.

8	REPORTING DAY ; use class time to meet with your profile subject in his/her environment.	<i>HW</i> : Conduct initial interview & review Chapters 10 & 11 as you ponder how to distill your interview into a strong lead.
13	FALL BREAK	Enjoy your break.
15	Bring notes from interview & a draft of your lead paragraphs & story map.	<i>Canavor</i> , Chapters 4 & 5 <i>HW</i> : Discern whether you'll need to do additional research & reporting. Contact subject to observe him/her in action outside his/her office if you haven't.
20	Incorporating quotes & building a narrative	<i>HW</i> : Write a full draft of your profile.
22	Workshop drafts	<i>HW</i> : Revisit draft based on workshop feedback.
27	Bring second draft to class; find more research to deepen context of narrative.	Revisit <i>Canavor</i> , Chapters 9 (208-211), 10 & 11 <i>Scanlon & Craig</i> , Chapter 13 <i>HW</i> : Revisit draft based on feedback.
29	Telling stories visually; how can you create & use white space, graphics, etc., to tell your story	<i>HW</i> : Revisit draft based on visual strategy you've devised.
Nov. 3	Bring third draft to class; workshop	<i>HW</i> : Finalize draft based on feedback.
5	INDIVIDUAL PROFILE DUE How can you know a group? Dealing with biases & getting at <i>a</i> truth	<i>HW</i> : Read Ta Nehesi Coates's "The Gangsters of Ferguson" <i>HW</i> : Secure interview with profile subjects & review <i>Scanlan & Craig</i> Chapters 6, 7, & 10 as you revise your reporting plan, conduct research on your subject & the big-picture issue for whom s/he will be a prism, & refine your questions.
10	Discuss Coates: How does he tell this group's story? What biases does he exploit? How can you expand your individual profile or develop another story on your beat to tell the story of a group/nonprofit/community?	<i>HW</i> : Read Ta Nehesi Coates's "Barack Obama, Ferguson, and the Evidence of Things Unsaid" <i>HW</i> : Conduct initial interview(s) & review Chapters 10 & 11 as you ponder how to distill your interview(s) into a strong lead.
12	Discuss Coates: How does he tell this group's story? What biases does he exploit?	<i>HW</i> : Ta Nehesi Coates's "The Case for Reparations" series, particularly "How to Steal Things, Exploit People, and Avoid All Responsibility" <i>HW</i> : Discern whether you'll need to do additional research & reporting. Contact subject(s) to observe him/her/them in action outside his/her/their office if you haven't.
17	Discuss Coates's visit & bring your notes to discuss making a tapestry of various sources into a cohesive narrative.	<i>HW</i> : Write a full draft of your profile.
19	Workshop drafts	<i>HW</i> : Revisit draft based on feedback.
24	Bring second draft to class; find more research to deepen context of narrative.	Revisit <i>Canavor</i> , Chapters 9 (208-211), 10 & 11 <i>Scanlon & Craig</i> , Chapter 13 <i>HW</i> : Revisit draft based on feedback.

26	THANKSGIVING BREAK	Enjoy your break.
Dec. 1	Telling stories visually; how can you create & use white space, graphics, etc., to tell your story. Bring third draft to class; workshop	<i>Canavor</i> , Chapter 12 <i>HW</i> : Finalize draft based on feedback.
3	NONPROFIT/SOCIAL GROUP PROFILE DUE Rewriting your résumé, building your digital portfolio, & e-publishing your work	<i>HW</i> : Finalize a revision of your résumé. Work with Katie & others to build your Web presence.
8	Share/beta-test sites with peers.	<i>HW</i> : Tweak Web presence based upon feedback.
10	READING DAY	
15	DIGITAL PORTFOLIO DUE	