

The Long Piece: Writing Workshop

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Weds. 9-12

Office hours: Wednesday 2:30 to 5:30, B-1

The focus of the course will be on making the transition from writing for newspapers to magazines. What's the difference between a subject and a story? When is the first-person appropriate? What is the role of the editor and publication in shaping your story? The arc of the course will trace the process of writing a single long piece: finding and pitching story ideas; reporting in depth and at length; outlining and structuring your story; choosing a narrative voice and strategy, crafting leads and "overtures," and making transitions between your story and its larger contexts. As a group, we'll also work as editors on one another's ideas and pieces. And since reading good prose is the best way to learn to write it, we'll be closely reading a substantial piece of non-fiction every week. This workshop is designed especially for second years embarking on a written master's project; students will be expected to complete a first draft by the end of the term.

Class One

September 1, 2004

Introduction. Aims of the class; expectations and procedures.

In-class writing assignment. Pair up.

Class Two

September 8, 2004

The Reader Over Your Shoulder

Readings: "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell

The Elements of Style by Strunk and White

Case: "How Pot Has Grown" by Michael Pollan, *New York Times*

Magazine

Newspaper vs. magazine writing: lede, voice, structure, conceit. Template. Magazine sign-up.

Class Three

September 15, 2004

Finding the Story

Reading: *Follow the Story* by James Stewart (Intro, chapter 1-3)

Sample pitches; draft pitches; micro and macro
Reading the newspaper as a writer

Class Four

September 22, 2004

The Art of the Pitch

Writing proposals: submit queries.

Class Five

September 29

Reporting the Long Story

Reading: Stewart (Chapter 4)
Janet Malcolm: *The Journalist and the Murderer*
A Pollan research file

Gathering information (global and local); sources & resources; interviewing and reading; ethics

Guest editor: Alex Star, Deputy Editor *New York Times Magazine*, responds to pitches

Class Six

October 6, 2004

The Outline: Structuring the Story

Parts and wholes; moments and scenes
Guest writer: Peggy Orenstein (tent.)
Due: story files

Class Seven

October 13, 2004

Beginnings: Leads and Overtures

When and where to begin...
Janet Malcolm on Eric Fischl (New Yorker profile anthology)
“An Animal’s Place”
Due: Outline

October 20, 2004: NO CLASS

Class Eight

October 27, 2004

Point of View and Voice

First and third person; varieties of the literary “I”
Due: Part One
Read: Susan Orlean, “The American Man at Age 10”

Class Nine

November 3, 2004

Narrative Tools: Scene, Dialog, Character, Anecdote

Reading: Stewart, Chs. 8-11

Workshop overtures

Class Ten

November 10, 2004

The Art of the Ending

Finish Stewart

Class Eleven

November 17, 2004

Strategies of Revision

Student work; read Jack Hitt piece tba

What the editor does: Robert Gottlieb interview

Class Twelve

Freelance Writing Workshop

November 18-19: Note Date. Workshop with Jack Hitt Thursday afternoon in Library; office hours Friday 11-19

No class November 24

NB Drafts Due before Thanksgiving

Class Thirteen

December 1, 2003

Publishing

Fitting the story to the magazine; working with editors; magazine formulae and voice(s)

Class Fourteen

September 8, 2004

Freeform TBD