

SPECIALISED JOURNALISM PROJECT

MINDFUL FEATURE WRITING

Level of Course: Bachelor Level Final Year Special Project/Elective of an undergraduate degree in Journalism or Mass Communication.

Course Description: The general news reporting techniques of who said what to whom and where and how could create news reports that lacks context and worse sensationalized for entertainment rather than information. Writing features is an art that go beyond mere reporting the above to deeper analysis and context. Thus it needs development of good research and analytical skills, including deep listening and the ability to think in order to analyze. In this course we introduce the added dimensions of mindfulness principles to news reporting and feature writing. This course incorporates elements of the Development Reporting and Human-Centric Reporting modules, but, with a more practical oriented approach to teaching/training. Students will be able to do features for print as well as for online media.

Mode: A series of 2-3 hour seminar style workshops followed by field-work and feature production.

Number of weeks: Semester long 12-14 weeks module

Required and Recommended Texts:

- Dixit, Kunda (1997). Reporting as if the Earth Matters, IPS, Manila
- Gunaratne, Shelton, Pearson, Mark and Senarath, Sugath (eds) (2015), Mindful Journalism and News Ethics in the Digital Era, Routhledge, New York.
- Johnson, Carla (2005), 21st century Feature Writing, Pearsons, USA
- Quebral, Nora.C (2012), Development Communication Primer, Southbound, Malaysia – retrieve from <http://www.southbound.com.my/downloads/QuebralCruzPrimer2012.pdf>
- Seneviratne, Kalinga (ed) (2006). Media's Challenge: Asian Tsunami and Beyond, AMIC, Singapore
- Sharma, Dinesh. C (2007), Development Journalism: An Introduction, Ateneo de Manila University, Philipines
- Wheeler, Sharon (2009), Feature Writing for Journalists, Routledge, USA

Course Description and Outline: This module is a combination of workshop style sessions of 2-3 hours each and field work.

Week 1: Introduction to Feature Writing

Discuss basic news production and techniques of feature writing. Emphasize the importance of research, interviews and writing leads and using links. Explore different genres of feature stories.

Week 2: Mindful Feature Production: Principles/Concepts and its Application to Feature Writing

Introduce the principles and concepts of mindfulness in news production and how it applies to researching and compiling a feature story.

Week 3: Developing An Idea and Digging for News Angles

What makes a good feature? Topicality, timeless features, human interest, intrigue, picking news angles and interview 'talent', knowing your audience and developing the story for them, investigating for news, going into the field to dig for the news and methods of obtaining the material for a good feature.

Week 4: Constructing a Feature Story

Explore the process of constructing a feature story – the structure, leads, continuing and linking the story, where to stop and how. Publication style and your style. Different interviewing techniques and methods of obtaining interviews will be discussed along with ethical aspects of the exercise. In the last hour of the class, students will write a lead (leading paragraph with a heading) for a feature story. This will be submitted for grading at the end of the class (Class Quiz grading).

Week 5: Pitching A Feature Story

During this class each student will pitch a feature story idea to the lecturer and obtain his approval to proceed with the story. The story idea needs to be submitted in writing at the beginning of the class to the lecturer for grading.

Week 6: Field Work - Gathering Material, Interviews

There is no class this week. Students will work on the field to gather the story including doing interviews for it. Feature story has to be written out of class time for presentation in next class.

Week 7: Presentation

During class this week students will present the story to class and get feedback. This story needs to be submitted to the lecturer for grading before the class. The deadline, and the method of submitting the story will be set by the lecturer, at the beginning of the semester.

Week 8: Writing for Newspapers, Magazines and Internet

Different markets for feature writing in your own country and the immediate region will be explored during the class, which includes newspapers, magazines (print and online) and online media including social media sites.

Week 9 : Public Relations Features and Writing Reviews

This class will explore the role of feature writing in the public relations field including corporate, public service and NGO sectors. Also methods of writing reviews of arts activities such as films, concerts and TV shows will be examined and difference between independent and public relations reviews will be discussed. Between the end of this class and the next, students will have to pitch the second feature

story idea to the lecturer online and approval obtained to proceed with the assignment. This story pitch will not be graded.

Week 10 and 11: Gathering and Compiling Feature Project

Gather and compile the feature story. This feature story would need to be accompanied with at least 2 related pictures taken during the field work.

Week 12: Presentations

Present the feature story to class. The completed story laid out with pictures need to be submitted to the lecturer before the beginning of the class. Details of submission and deadlines will be communicated by the lecturer at the beginning of the semester.

Assessments: The assessments and grading for this module would include,

- Class Participation – 10%
- Class Quiz - 10%
- Story Pitch - 15%
- Written Feature 1 - 25%
- Written Feature 2 - 40%

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