Course Description

This course focuses on both key terms in the phrase “writing for publication.” In addition to writing multiple pieces in publishable magazine genres, students will also explore the cultural work that publication does—who writes and publishes? What kind of writing gets published? What purposes do magazines serve? What is the relationship between print and digital publication? To help you learn about publishing by actually publishing, you’ll create a blog and post there regularly, as you study not just how to produce effective magazine-style writing but also how to engage with readers.

Course Outcomes

• Students will practice writing processes appropriate to magazine publication such as generating and pitching ideas, conducting ethical research, drafting to word count, meeting deadlines, and revising and editing in response to editorial suggestions.
• Students will practice composing major magazine genres such as reviews, features, and commentary.
• Students will develop a publishable prose style.
• Students will gain familiarity with the process of publishing in both print and digital magazines.

Required Reading

Course readings will be drawn primarily from award-winning magazine pieces available online as well as from online resources for writers and will be provided as links on the syllabus. You’ll need regular access to the internet and a strategy for reading carefully online. Feel free to print out and annotate pieces in the margins or to write about them on your blog. [Students will also be responsible for recommending and leading discussions on exemplary readings.]

Some Online Resources for Magazine Writing

Please recommend additional resources as you become aware of them.

Longform  http://longform.org/
Narrative Nonfiction, Writers and Editors  http://www.writersandeditors.com/narrative_nonfiction_57378.htm
Narratively  http://narrative.ly/
Policies and Procedures

Attendance and Participation

This is a senior-level course, and the requirements reflect the fact that I expect you to be an engaged and committed writer capable of coming up with article ideas, eager to do primary and secondary research, open to revising, and disciplined enough to get your writing done on time.

Since this class is primarily a discussion and workshop class, everyone's learning depends on your regular attendance and participation. I will expect you to be prepared for class discussion, to have full drafts ready on workshop days, and to respond to your peers' drafts with care. All of this work will count toward your final grade.

I'll adhere to the English Department's policy that three weeks of absences (nine absences in a MWF class) constitutes grounds for failure of the course. But since everything you do in class contributes to what you learn in and contribute to the class, any more than a few absences will affect your grade. Only official university absences—absences REQUIRED by an official body of TCU—will be excused, e.g. will not count against you. Official university absences must be documented in writing BEFORE they occur, and work due during the intended absence must be submitted in advance.

Conferences

Learning to have productive conversations with others about your writing is key to your growth as a writer. Toward that end, I'll ask each of you to meet me for a conference early in the semester to discuss your goals as a writer and your progress thus far (see the approximate dates in the calendar below). In addition, you are welcome to drop in during office hours or schedule an appointment to talk about your writing as often as you like any time during the semester. I also encourage you to seek out other forms of feedback: exchanges with other writing students in this or other classes, formal or informal writing groups, meetings with Center for Writing staff (see below).

Workshop Participation

There are two formats for workshops in this class. See the schedule below.

For short pieces, you'll be expected to complete a draft or revision and post it to the course website by class time on the appointed workshop day. You'll then respond—orally or in writing—to drafts in class.

For longer pieces, you are responsible for posting a complete draft to the course website the class period before a scheduled workshop to allow time for responders to provide a substantive written response. Workshop days will be spent discussing your written responses and developing a revision plan. All drafts should include a process memo that explains what you were trying to accomplish in the draft, what you think is going well, and what you need help with. Though we may sometimes respond to drafts as a whole class, for most workshops, you'll be assigned to small groups. Failing to post a draft or responses on time or missing class on workshop day (even if you post a draft and/or responses) will result in a reduction of your grade on that project.
Course Requirements

**Blog (20%)** Early in the semester, you’ll create a blog that will serve as a place for you to write regularly (about once a week) for real readers. Blog posts (about 500 words each, due by class time on the dates below) may address pieces we’re discussing in class as well as issues in magazine writing and publishing and will also provide a space for you to comment on and post final versions of your writing from the class. You may update and revise your blog throughout the semester. I will provide occasional feedback, and you’re encouraged to comment on each other’s blogs whenever you wish. Mostly, I want you to treat your blog as your own space to publish your writing and practice blog style. You'll receive a final grade for your blog at the end of the semester.

**Short Feature/Profile (15%)** To help you practice magazine-style writing skills, you'll complete a short feature or profile of about 1000 words. The short feature will be submitted as partial drafts including a depiction of setting, a depiction of action, and a depiction of character.

**Longform Feature/Profile (20%)** To familiarize you with the process of writing a long, well-researched magazine piece, you’ll complete either a feature story or a profile of about 2500 words. This piece will require both primary (interviews observation, participation) and secondary research and will give you the opportunity to work with a complex narrative structure. This project will be submitted in stages including story pitch, research notes, outline, draft (workshopped), and revision.

**Review (15%)** Reviews are a common feature of online magazines and blogs, allowing you to evaluate for readers a current cultural or entertainment event and thus contribute to the cultural work of shaping public taste. You may review any subject (restaurant, music release, video game, book, television series, performance, etc.) as long as you experience the subject with the intention of writing the review. (i.e. you may not review something you’ve experienced in the past.) Because your review will be posted on your blog, you’re encouraged to include images and links to relevant content. About 750 words.

**Commentary (15%)** Much blog writing takes the form of commentary, in which writers respond to a subject of current interest with the intention of both informing readers and expressing a position and thus shaping public opinion on the subject. Your commentary should be researched and include links to relevant sources. About 750 words.

**Why’s This So Good (5%)** In small groups, students will select a piece of magazine writing they think is especially good, write a collective reflection on what makes the writing good, and lead class discussion on their selection. Each group should post a link to their selected reading one week prior to your discussion day. Your “Why’s This so Good” response should be posted at the beginning of the class period when you’re leading discussion. As a group, plan how best to facilitate discussion of your selected reading. Feel free to come up with reading and/or writing exercises in addition to planning an introduction to the piece and prompts that elicit class discussion.

**Report on Magazine Writing (10%)** Near the end of the course, students will research and compose a blog post about some aspect of the current state of magazine writing or publishing, offering specific strategies and resources for writers (include as links) interested in publishing in print and/or digital magazines. About 500 words. The info shared in the post will be presented orally to the class during your final exam period.

**Evaluation**

Portfolios will be given a letter grade based on stated criteria then translated into a number grade and multiplied by the appropriate weight. For purposes of determining a final grade, letter grades will be translated into numbers based on the following scale:

- A  96
- A-92  C+ 78
- B+ 88  C  75
- B- 83  C- 72
Final grades will be determined based on the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-939</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-869</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>870-899</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>770-799</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>740-769</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>700-739</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>640-669</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>670-699</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>600-639</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>599 and below</td>
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**Academic Misconduct**

The English Department has a zero tolerance policy regarding academic dishonesty. The Department now requires that all suspected cases of academic dishonesty be submitted to the English Department Chair for evaluation. The minimum penalty for cases in which academic dishonesty is discovered is a grade of “0” for the assignment, but penalties may also include an academic misconduct “F” in the course.

For a definition of academic misconduct, please see the Student Handbook. Most commonly, academic dishonesty in writing course involves the use of others’ words or ideas without attribution. This includes the unattributed use of writing produced by other students or print sources or Internet sources in part or in whole. It is also academically dishonest to submit writing you have done for previous courses. That work has already received academic credit and cannot be given credit twice. The best guard against academic dishonesty is to take seriously the writing assignments given, to allow enough time to complete them properly, to submit drafts when required, and to seek advice from your instructor, the writing center, or reference books regarding the use of outside sources in your writing.

**Additional Resources**

**The Williams L. Adams Center for Writing** is an academic support service available to all TCU students, faculty, and staff. Writing specialists and peer tutors are available for individual tutorials from 8-5 Monday through Friday on the fourth floor of Reed Hall and in the library computer lab on Sunday through Thursday evenings. Online tutorials are also available at [www.wrt.tcu.edu](http://www.wrt.tcu.edu).

**New Media Writing Studio**

The New Media Writing Studio (NMWS) is available to assist students with audio, video, multimedia, and web design projects. Located in Scharbauer 2003, the Studio serves as an open lab for use by students during posted hours. The Studio has both pc and Mac computers outfitted with Adobe Creative Suite (Acrobat, Dreamweaver, Photoshop, Flash, and InDesign). Equipment such as video cameras and mp3 audio records are available for approved projects. For more information and a schedule of open hours, see [www.newmedia.tcu.edu](http://www.newmedia.tcu.edu).

**Students with Disabilities**

Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 016. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-6567.
Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator. Guidelines for documentation may be found at http://www.acs.tcu.edu/disability_documentation.asp.

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

**Tentative Calendar**

The following calendar offers a broad overview of the course. The early weeks are presented in the most detail. I reserve the right to make changes in the calendar if necessary in order to accomplish course goals. Any change will be announced in advance and distributed in writing.

**Week 1**

- **M Aug 25**
  - Watch Bill Jersey, Why stories beat arguments [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTZdDJ-Cx0Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WTZdDJ-Cx0Q).

- **W Aug 27**

- **F Aug 29**
  - Short feature pitch due (orally, in class).
  - Discuss “Heavenly Father” (Joplin). Identify at least on effective depiction of a scene, one of action, and one of a character that includes dialogue. What makes these examples of effective story writing? [http://www.esquire.com/features/joplin-tornado-stories-1011?click=main_sr](http://www.esquire.com/features/joplin-tornado-stories-1011?click=main_sr)

**Week 2**

- **M Sept 1**
  - Labor Day. No Class.

- **W Sept 3**

- **F Sept 5**

**Week 3**
M Sept 8  Character/dialogue due (based on interview).
Laurie Hertzel, “Six Tips for Crafting Scenes”
http://www.niemanstoryboard.org/2005/03/24/six-tips-for-crafting-scenes/

Assign Blog. (A review of some popular blog tools
http://thenextweb.com/apps/2013/08/16/best-blogging-services/)

Jane Friedman, “Get Started Guide: Blogging for Writers”
http://janefriedman.com/2011/08/24/blogging-for-writers/
Dan Blank, “2 Strategic and Compelling Reasons to Keep Blogging”
http://janefriedman.com/2013/04/22/reasons-to-keep-blogging/
L.L. Barkat, “It’s Time for (Many) Experienced Writers to Stop Blogging”
http://janefriedman.com/2013/03/15/its-time-for-many-experienced-writers-to-stop-blogging/
Blog Post 1 due Mon., Sept 15.

W Sept 10  Draft of short feature due, with process memo. In-class workshop

F Sept 12  Conferences [Return drafts in conference]

W Sept 17  Revision/editing: magazine style. Why’s This So Good? Identify 3 things about Ariel Levy’s “Thanksgiving in Mongolia” that make it a good story and are not mentioned in “Why’s This So Good.” One of those things should be about the writer’s style.
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/11/18/thanksgiving-in-mongolia
Why’s This So Good. http://www.niemanstoryboard.org/2014/05/06/whys-this-so-good-no-91-ariel-levy-on-thanksgiving-in-mongolia/

F Sept 19  Short Feature due. Assign Long Feature. Invention. Interview with Colloff
http://mrtullis.podomatic.com/entry/2013-01-28T09_28_49-08_00

Week 5
http://www.texasmonthly.com/story/innocent-man-part-one

W Sept 24  Blog Post 2 due: What Writers Learn from Reading--Respond to “Innocent Man.” “Innocent Man” cont. Discuss what you learned from Colloff’s annotation of “Innocent Man.” What is the role of research in longform features?

F Sept 26  The ethics of magazine writing. Reitman, “Jahar’s World”
Read about the controversy surrounding the story:
Be prepared to discuss the ethics of giving so much time and attention to a terrorist.

Week 6
M Sept 29 Blog Post 3 due: Why Tell Other People’s Stories? (Respond to a feature, your choice). “Dewayne Dedmon’s Leap of Faith”

W Oct 1 Feature research due. McPhee “Structure.”
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/01/14/structure

F Oct 3 Feature outline due. In class workshop.

Week 7

W Oct 8 Complete feature draft due. Practice response.

F Oct 10 Workshop

Week 8
M Oct 13 Fall Break. No Class [Return drafts electronically]


F Oct 17 Guest Speaker Jackie Hoermann on Freelance Magazine Writing.

Week 9
M Oct 20 Blog Post 6 due: What’s the Role of a Critic? Nussbaum,
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/02/25/shark-week [House of Cards]
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/07/29/difficult-women?currentPage=all [Sex and the City]
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/10/07/private-practice [Masters of Sex]

W Oct 22 Final draft of feature due. Assign review. Sample reviews. Note: This is a change.

F Oct 24 Group I: Why’s This So Good.

Week 10
M Oct 27 Sample review TBA. Review style.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W Oct 29</td>
<td>Group 2 Why’s This So Good. Blog Post 7 due: Open topic about writing.</td>
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<td>F Oct 31</td>
<td>Draft of Review due for in-class workshop.</td>
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<td><strong>Week 11</strong></td>
<td>Revision/Editing</td>
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<td>M Nov 3</td>
<td>Revision/Editing</td>
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<td>W Nov 5</td>
<td>Group 3: “Why’s This So Good”</td>
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<td>F Nov 7</td>
<td>Final draft of review due. Blog Post 8: Post final draft of review. Assign commentary. Invention.</td>
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<td><strong>Week 12</strong></td>
<td>Discuss commentaries based on experience. Wolff, “A Life Worth Ending”</td>
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<tr>
<td>M Nov 10</td>
<td>Discuss commentaries based on experience. Wolff, “A Life Worth Ending”</td>
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<td>W Nov 12</td>
<td>Blog Post 9 due: Open topic about writing. Discuss commentaries based on public events. Swartz, “Mothers,Sisters, Daughters, Wives”</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.texasmonthly.com/story/mothers-sisters-daughters-wives">http://www.texasmonthly.com/story/mothers-sisters-daughters-wives</a></td>
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<td>Tobin, Commentary Magazine, Late-Term Abortion Still the Issue in Texas</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.commentarymagazine.com/topic/texas-abortion-law">http://www.commentarymagazine.com/topic/texas-abortion-law</a></td>
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<td>Terrell, “What the Texas Abortion Bill Means to Black Women”</td>
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<td>F Nov 14</td>
<td>Group 4: “Why’s This So Good”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 13</strong></td>
<td>Draft of Commentary due for in-class response</td>
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<tr>
<td>M Nov 17</td>
<td>Draft of Commentary due for in-class response</td>
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<tr>
<td>W Nov 19</td>
<td>Group 5: “Why’s This So Good”</td>
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<td>F Nov 21</td>
<td>Revision/editing activity. Assign Report on Magazine Writing</td>
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<td><strong>Week 14</strong></td>
<td>Final draft of commentary due. Blog Post 10 due: Post Commentary. The Future of Publishing</td>
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<td><a href="http://whattheythink.com/articles/68251-future-publishing-sxsw/">http://whattheythink.com/articles/68251-future-publishing-sxsw/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>W Nov 26</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break, No class</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 15</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>M Dec 1</td>
<td>McPhee, “Draft 4”</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/04/29/draft-no-4">http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/04/29/draft-no-4</a></td>
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<td>W Dec 3</td>
<td>Interview with New Yorker editor, David Remnick</td>
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<td>Reports on Publishing (Post reports on blog on assigned presentation days)</td>
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<td>F Dec 5</td>
<td>Visiting speaker, Audrey Swanson discussing magazine internships. Reports on publishing.</td>
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<td><strong>Week 16</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>M Dec 8</td>
<td>How Writers Build the Brand.</td>
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W Dec 10 Last Day of Class. Magazine Writing on the Web

Final Exam
W Dec. 17, 9:00-10:30 Edited blog due. Final Blog Post: Look back at your initial reflection on why you write and revisit your claims. What new or revised insights do you have about why you write? What have you learned this semester about writing that you will take with you to future writing experiences? What more do you want to learn about or do with writing?