

Feature Writing
MEJO 356.1, Spring 2024
Carroll 143
Monday/Wednesday 2–3:15 p.m.
Final Exam: May 7, 4 p.m.
Professor Tim Crothers
Email: Tcrothers@aol.com
Phone: 919 824 4984
TA: Shelby Swanson
Email: sswanson@unc.edu
Phone: 919 432 2718

Tim Crothers (UNC class of '86) worked at Sports Illustrated from 1988–2001 as a senior writer. Prior to SI, he was a sportswriter at The Daily Tar Heel (1984–86) and the Durham Morning Herald (1986–88). He is the author of “The Queen of Katwe,” which was released as a Disney film in 2016, “The Man Watching: A Biography of Anson Dorrance, the Unlikely Architect of the Greatest College Sports Dynasty Ever,” and co-author of “Hard Work,” the autobiography of UNC basketball coach Roy Williams. He is also the author of multiple feature stories that have appeared in the New York Times, Our State and the Carolina Alumni Review.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

I want to help my students become better feature writers and reporters. We'll break down the process of writing feature stories. You should have some background in newswriting and an interest in applying that experience to the more creative medium of feature writing. You'll be exposed to a variety of exercises to hone your skills and we'll share roundtable discussions to critique your stories. Students can submit stories written in this class for subsequent publication, but should not submit any story (or story idea) for class that has previously been written or published.

COURSE MATERIALS

The professor will provide all necessary reading material as the course progresses.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You'll be asked to write four feature stories during the semester along with other written exercises. It is very important that if you are going to miss a class to let me know ahead of time so that you will not miss a critique of your work. AWOLs will affect your final grade. Please meet all deadlines for classwork because deadlines are important for class discussions as well as in maintaining a job in this career field. During the mandatory final exam period, we will do a review of your final papers.

Your grades will be determined through a composite of marks on written exercises (80%) and class participation (20%), including in-class writing exercises (15% total) three features during the semester (15% each) and a final story (20%). Grades on individual stories

will be determined by a combination of content, style and cleanliness. Most print media stories are lightly edited at most, so it's important to write clean stories.

Here's a grid for grade expectations:

A: Submitting well-written and well-reported stories on time and proofread diligently. Displaying a level of creativity that makes each of your stories stand out from the rest of the class. Participating in our weekly critiques so that your voice is among those that drives the conversation on every story.

B: Submitting well-written and well-reported stories on time and proofread diligently. Displaying an effort to achieve a level of creativity that makes each of your stories stand out from the rest of the class. Regularly participating in our weekly critiques so that your voice is among those expected to provide feedback on every story.

C. Submitting well-written and well-reported stories on time and proofread diligently. Displaying a level of creativity that shows you are making your best effort. Participating in our weekly critiques at a level that shows you are engaged in providing feedback on our stories.

D. Submitting well-written and well-reported stories on time and proofread diligently. Participating in our weekly critiques.

F = 59% or below,

D = 60-66%,

D+ = 67-69%,

C- = 70-72%,

C = 73-76%,

C+ = 77-79%,

B- = 80-82%,

B = 83-86%,

B+ = 87-89%,

A- = 90-92%,

A = 93-100%,

SUBJECT MATTER

The semester's daily schedule is not set before class begins because our interview subjects have fluid schedules, but the following are some of the subjects, techniques and journalistic magic tricks that we will discuss in class.

Different methods in constructing a lede

How to be creative

Getting better access to your subject

How to conduct a successful interview

How to research a story

Journalistic pet peeves Editing yourself

It is very important for all students to participate in class, because everyone will benefit when I speak less. Because I am making this up as I go along, I'm always open to suggestions about how to make our class more rewarding and fun. I think it's supposed to be fun. Really.

HONOR CODE

I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system

([https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C= PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IreRKEjIQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fhonor.unc.eduhttp://honor.unc.edu](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IreRKEjIQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fhonor.unc.eduhttp://honor.unc.edu)). All academic work should be done with the

high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. Using a set-up sound bite is a violation of the honor code. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Julie Dixon-Green, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

SEEKING HELP

If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

DIVERSITY

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011–2012 Undergraduate Bulletin

[https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C= PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IreRKEjIQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fww.unc.edu%2fugradbulletin%2fhttp://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IreRKEjIQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.unc.edu%2fugradbulletin%2fhttp://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/). UNC is

committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course,

please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Department of Disability Services website at https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redirect.aspx?C=PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpiI9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IireRKEjIQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fdisabilityservices.unc.edu%2fhttp://disabilityservices.unc.edu/

ACCREDITATION

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:

https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redirect.aspx?C=XciXt6cD-UGWmSsiOI50ZzqEMU9vI9AI9RIjk3k3N01dLuvhbfv_0PYGw11_4slpiXYZSgGOi3A.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww2.ku.edu%2f%7eacejmc%2fPROGRAM%2fPRINCIPLES.SHTML%23vals%26compshttp://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on the last six bullet points under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.