

Creative Sportswriting  
MEJO 455, Spring 2024  
Curtis Media Center 302  
Monday/Wednesday 3:30-4:45 p.m.  
Final Exam: May 3, 4 p.m.  
Professor Tim Crothers  
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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.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

I want to help my students become better writers and reporters. We'll break down the process of writing sports news stories, game stories, features and opinion columns. You should have some background in newswriting and an interest in applying that experience to the more creative medium of sports journalism. You'll be exposed to a variety of exercises to hone your skills and we'll share roundtable discussions to critique your stories. Students should be able to use their written work as a model for publishing stories or as potential clips for job interviews.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

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

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

You'll be asked to write approximately a 10 stories during the semester. The weekly story schedule will be determined during the semester based on the availability of our interview subjects. Each student will also be asked to participate in a "field trip" outside of class hours to a UNC sporting event for research on a midterm paper. 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 work (20%), class participation (20%), a midterm story (20%) and a final story (40%). Grades on individual articles will be determined by a combination of punctuality, content, style and cleanliness. Most print media stories are lightly edited at best, so it's important to write clean stories.

Here's a grid for grade expectations:

A: Submitting well-written and well-reported papers 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 papers 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 papers 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 papers 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  
Thinking outside the boxscore  
How to prepare during a game to write on deadline  
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\\_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IireRKEjIQ.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fhonor.unc.eduhttp://honor.unc.edu](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=_PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAR6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IireRKEjIQ.&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\\_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IireRKEjIQ.&URL=ht](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=_PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAR6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IireRKEjIQ.&URL=ht)

<http://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/redir.aspx?C=\\_PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri\\_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IireRKEjIQ.&URL=http://disabilityservices.unc.edu/](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=_PwXhu5wkEKfdEIVTpil9KJAr6RORM8IBwmgW7JyZPUuO4or7Dri_9D4gXEkBO0Z0IireRKEjIQ.&URL=http://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/redir.aspx?C=XciXt6cD-UGWmSsiOI50ZzqEMU9vI9AI9Rijk3k3N01dLuvhbfv\\_0PYGw11\\_4slpiXYZSqGOi3A.&URL=http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps](https://outlook.unc.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=XciXt6cD-UGWmSsiOI50ZzqEMU9vI9AI9Rijk3k3N01dLuvhbfv_0PYGw11_4slpiXYZSqGOi3A.&URL=http://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 dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.