Feature Writing  
Fall 2017  
JMC-362W-N, Three Credits  
6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday  
209 Cowles Library, Whitworth University

Adriana Janovich  
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Office Hours: 5:45 to 6:15 p.m. Tuesday,  
5:45 to 6:15 p.m. Thursday and by appointment

“Make me laugh. Make me cry. Tell me my place in the world. Lift me out of my skin and place me in another. Show me places I have never visited and carry me to the ends of time and space. Give my demons names and help me to confront them. Demonstrate for me possibilities I've never thought of and present me with heroes who will give me courage and hope. Ease my sorrows and increase my joy. Teach me compassion. Entertain and enchant and enlighten me. Tell me a story.”

— Dennis O’Neil

“We don’t see things as they are; we see them as we are.”

— Anais Nin

Description — Non-fiction feature writing can be as varied, entertaining and exciting as fiction — with limitless options in terms of topics as well as approaches to those topics. This course serves as a hands-on entry into non-fiction feature writing. It will stretch you as a writer, emphasize the fact that writing is rewriting, and help you develop your voice and style. You will gain more versatility and confidence in your writing abilities through this course. It includes an introduction to writing pitches for potential publication — and extra credit for work that gets published in an off-campus publication. This is not a lecture course. This is a workshop-style class, with students reading and commenting on each other’s work and, if only for a semester, building the kind of community that’s essential in supporting a writer through the solitary art and craft of writing.

Goals and Objectives — This course will further your scholarship in several areas defined in the Communication Studies Department’s goals, including these two in particular:

● Demonstrate writing skills required to excel in an entry-level communications-related job and/or graduate school. Students will be able to gather information and present it clearly, concisely, accurately, coherently and creatively to specific target audiences. Students will present information both to more formal academic and to mass audiences. Students will demonstrate careful, honest and imaginative work at each stage of the writing process: in generating ideas, gathering and organizing information, and revising their work.

● Demonstrate critical thinking skills required to excel in the intellectual, professional and personal dimensions of life. Students will be able to apply higher level thinking skills to human communication situations. Higher level thinking skills include: application of communication principles in the classroom and beyond; analysis of the parts, organization, arrangement, relationships and principles of communication; synthesis of parts of communication to produce unique communication messages; and evaluation of communication by making appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative judgments of communication.

This course meets the University’s General Education requirement for Written Communication; the skills just listed speak directly to meeting this requirement. Courses in Written Communication equip
students to create, organize, and share and receive clear written messages. Upon completion, students
should be able to:
● gather and analyze written information,
● have the ability to communicate that information in a clear and concise form,
● adapt their writing styles effectively to situational needs,
● conduct research and report that information in appropriate form, and
● write using correct grammatical forms.

By the end of the semester, students should have learned how to:
● identify, develop and research feature story ideas and sources
● structure feature stories, including organizing material, keeping it lively and avoiding clichés
● craft compelling feature leads and endings
● properly attribute and effectively choose quotes
● develop an eye for detail and incorporate scenes and sensory details into their writing
● pitch work to an editor at an off-campus publication.
● provide and receive constructive criticism

Required Texts
● Associated Press Stylebook
● “Writing for Story” by Jon Franklin
● “The Art and Craft of Feature Writing” by William Blundell
Note: Additional materials might be required.

Attendance — Class attendance is mandatory. More than three unexcused absences from class will
prevent a student from passing the course.

Officially approved university functions that require students to be away from class, such as athletic trips
and debate tournaments, are excused absences. If students will miss class due to an approved university
function, they must discuss the absence with the professor in advance in order to make arrangements for
any missed work. Students must also provide documentation, such as an email from the coach, proving
they missed class due to an approved university function.

Participation — Participation and preparedness are crucial — not only to your grade but to your success
as a writer. We will critique student work in class. Students are expected to share useful observations
about colleagues’ writing. The more lively the in-class discussion, the more interesting the class will be
and the more you will get out of it. Discussion is key — so speak up and ask plenty of questions. Failure
to contribute and come prepared could result in a drop of as much as 10 percent of a student’s final grade.

Flexibility — From time to time, visitors — such as editors or professional writers — might visit class. If
this happens, students might have to deviate from the syllabus. We might also change reading
assignments in order to accommodate a guest. The distinguished visitor’s schedule will take precedence
— just as it would in real life. Students must be flexible; inflexibility could negatively impact a student’s
participation grade.

Computers — Students will be asked to use computers for in-class research and writing assignments.
When not using computers for specific, assigned, in-class activities, students must turn computer screens
around so the backsides of the screens face the students. Students are to refrain from any other unrelated
computer use, such as — but not limited to — checking Facebook or email or doing work for another class.
Any student found using a computer in inappropriate ways during class will be asked to leave the lab.
immediately. On the second violation, the student will be asked to leave and will not be allowed to return
to class until the student has met with the department chair.

Cell phones — Students are required to set cell phones to silent and keep them out of sight during class.
That means no texting during class, no using cell phones to check Facebook or email, and no making or
receiving calls. If a student’s phone rings or a student is caught otherwise using a phone during class, the
professor will take and keep the student’s phone until the end of class.

Food and drink — No food nor drink is allowed in the computer lab, with the exception of bottled
water.

Student safety — Whitworth University cares about your welfare in the event of an emergency. During
the first week of this course, please familiarize yourself with safety information posted in this classroom.

Accommodations (ADA/504) — Whitworth University is committed to providing its students access to
education. If you have a documented physical or mental/psychological impairment that impacts your
ability to learn and perform to your potential in the classroom, contact the Office of Educational Support
Services (ESS) in Student Life to identify accommodations that can help mitigate barriers to your success.
Students must contact ESS each term in order for faculty/staff to be notified of your accommodations.
Services are not retroactive.

Contact Information
Katie McCray, Coordinator for Educational Support Services
Phone: 509-777-3380
Email: kmccray@whitworth.edu

Title IX — Whitworth University faculty members are committed to the well-being of each student. It is
common for students to discuss non-course related issues with faculty and, when possible, faculty will
keep such conversations strictly confidential. However, because federal law views faculty members as
mandated reporters of any incidents of sexual misconduct, if a student informs a faculty member of an
issue of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or discrimination, the faculty member is required by federal
law to bring it to the attention of the Title IX Coordinator, Rhosetta Rhodes. The Title IX Coordinator
will make the student aware of all options and resources available to them under Whitworth University
policies and under the law.

There are Whitworth University employees whom federal law does not view as mandatory reporters, to
whom a student could speak without the conversation being reported to the Title IX Coordinator. These
include counselors in Counseling Services, health center staff, and any of the university chaplains on the
staff of Campus Ministries.

Contact Information
Rhosetta Rhodes, Title IX Coordinator, Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students
Phone: 509-777-4536
Email: titleixcoordinator@whitworth.edu
Counseling Center: 509-777-3259; Schumacher Hall.
Campus Ministries: 509-777-4345; Seeley G. Mudd Chapel

Non-discrimination — Whitworth University is committed to delivering a mission-driven educational
program that cultivates in students the capacity to engage effectively across myriad dimensions of
diversity. Whitworth University is committed to the fair and equal treatment of all students in its
educational programs and activities. The University does not discriminate against students based on race,
color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability and complies with all applicable federal or state non-discrimination laws in its instructional programs.

**Fair and equal treatment** — Whitworth University professors strive to treat all students fairly and equally, applying the same rigorous standards and expectations to each of our students and working to invite students from all backgrounds into the challenges and rewards of our academic disciplines. Students who have concerns about classroom fairness should contact Associate Provost Brooke Kiener, McEachran Hall 220, at (509) 777-4657 or bkiener@whitworth.edu.

**Behavior** — Students are expected to be fair, kind, respectful and observe the Golden Rule: Treat others — the professor as well as fellow students and guest speakers — the way you want others to treat you. Do not work on homework or readings for other classes during this class. Through your words and actions and behavior, help create a safe space where everyone feels comfortable to ask questions, contribute and give and take constructive criticism. Comments from the professor as well as fellow classmates are a reflection of your work, not you. Do not take them personally. Use them to improve your art and craft.

**Deadlines** — Journalism is a deadline-driven business. Missing a deadline is a serious offense. In the newsroom, it leads to low marks on performance evaluations. For freelancers, it means you might not get to write for a particular publication again. Late copy delays editors and production schedules, and holds up printing and publication. Every assignment — like any story at any publication — will carry a clearly stated deadline as well as required format for completion (hard copy, email — sometimes both). Assignments submitted in a different format or past deadline won’t be accepted — unless approved in advance. Extensions will only be given in rare and extenuating circumstances and may involve as much as a 20 percent point reduction.

**Note:** While late work won’t be accepted, students are always welcome to turn in work early.

**Statement on academic dishonesty, and possible penalty for violations** — Please note that I take extremely seriously the university’s policy on the need for academic honesty in all your work. I refer you to the Whitworth Catalog, and the current Student Handbook, where guidelines on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are spelled out. Any form of dishonesty in an assignment will lead to a zero on the assignment, and I reserve the right to give a grade of F for the course as well.

Plagiarism is theft. It is stealing and lying. It is using someone else’s words, phrases, sentences or ideas without giving proper credit, or attribution, and passing them off as your own. Professional journalists who plagiarize lose not only their jobs but their entire journalism careers. Plagiarism is utterly unacceptable both journalistically and academically. So is fabricating sources, quotes and other details. Do not make up things and pretend it is journalism. Similarly, the use of anonymous sources isn’t allowed. This is for your academic and legal protection. It is also a matter of credibility as a journalist. All sources must be named and otherwise properly identified.

**Note:** If something feels wrong, it probably is. If you aren’t sure, ask the professor. Or, follow this journalism maxim: when in doubt, leave it out.

**Quantity of time for class preparation:** The time spent in class preparation may be just as important as the time in class itself, and each course is a valuable part of your education. Therefore, expect to average between 6 and 9 hours each week in class preparation time for each three-credit course. The syllabus outlines due dates for assignments. Please schedule your preparation time anticipating that items for this class may come due at the same time as items for other classes, both in and out of your major. The quantity of time spent preparing for each class generally correlates to the final grade earned.
Note: Students should not let limited office hours deter them from meeting with the professor. Send an email to set up a meeting at another time and day. If you are struggling, ask me for help!

**Grading:** An “A” story is exceptional. It is well written and requires only minor editing. In other words, it’s publishable. A “B” story needs more than minor editing and may have spelling or style errors or organizational problems. A “C” story needs considerable editing and may have other writing or style problems; writing is poorly organized and might require more details and reporting to be compelling. A “D” story is substandard, might include factual errors and requires substantial reworking. An “F” story has even more problems and major factual errors.

**Grading Scale**
100-94 — A
90-93 — A-
87-89 — B+
84-86 — B
80-83 — B-
77-79 — C+
74-76 — C
70-73 — C-
67-69 — D+
64-66 — D
60-63 — D-
59 and below — F

- **Memoir,** first draft, 1,000 to 1,500 words — 100 points
- **Memoir,** final draft, 1,000 to 1,500 words — 100 points
- **Person feature,** first draft, 1,500 words — 100 points
- **Person feature,** final draft, 1,500 words — 100 points
- **Place feature,** first draft, 2,000 words — 100 points
- **Place feature,** final draft, 2,000 words — 100 points
- **Thing feature,** first draft, 2,000 words — 100 points
- **Thing feature,** final draft, 2,000 words — 100 points
- **Query letter,** one page — 100 points
- **In-class write,** TBA — 100 points

Stories for this class must:
- Be clear, lively, interesting, accurate and adhere to AP Style
- Be double-spaced and in 12-point Times New Roman font
- Include a header that looks like this:
  Adriana Janovich
  Featuring Writing
  (date) Sept. 12, 2017
  (story type and slug) (example: Profile — Sherman Alexie)
  Word count: (give exact word count of the story here, such 2,553)

**Query letter:** Students must be prepared to submit their articles to editors at local or regional publications as a result of their course work. Query letters should be one page, engaging and professional. They should succinctly summarize the stories they are pitching and highlight some of the stories’ most interesting or surprising elements. They should make the reader want to read more. They should make the reader want to read the story that is being pitched.
Extra credit: Put your query letter to good use, and get published! If one of your stories for this class appears in an off-campus publication for which you don’t already work, you’ve met the requirement. Students must provide a hard copy of the published work.

About the professor — Adriana Janovich has a master’s degree in specialized journalism from the University of Southern California, where she was an Annenberg Fellow. Her work has appeared in Edible Seattle, the in-flight magazines of Alaska Airlines and Horizon Air, and Fodor’s 2013, 2015 and 2017 Pacific Northwest travel guides as well as newspapers throughout the Pacific Northwest. She is the food editor at The Spokesman-Review.

Course Calendar

Note: Any part of this syllabus could be amended at any time by the professor.

Sept. 12 — What is a feature story? How is it different from a straight news story?
- Introduction to the class, feature writing and types of feature stories
- For next class: Find a feature story. Bring a hard copy and URL to class. Be prepared to discuss the story as well as identify the type of feature it is.
- Read for next class: Chapter One of “Writing for Story” and Chapters One and Two of “The Art and Craft of Feature Writing”

Sept. 19 — Curiosity and focusing: Where do feature story ideas come from? How can you narrow your story idea into a piece that makes sense and is compelling?
- Discuss feature student examples
- Brainstorm story ideas
- Introduction to feature story structure and review the Five Ws and H
- Read for next class: memoir examples TBA

Sept. 26 — Introduction to the memoir
- In-class writing prompt
- Read for next class: Chapters Two and Three of “Writing for Story” and Chapter Three of “The Art and Craft of Feature Writing”

Oct. 3 — Interviewing and note-taking, quotes and attribution
- Due today: first draft memoir
- Read and critique memoir first drafts
- Discuss “Mrs. Kelly’s Monster” and “The Ballad of Old Man Peters”
- Read for next class: Chapters Four, Five and Six of “Writing for Story”

Oct. 10 — More interviewing and note-taking: developing your eye for detail, or the stuff that makes your writing sing
- In-class write TBA
- Read for next class: Chapter Four of “The Art and Craft of Feature Writing” and profile examples TBA

Oct. 17 — Introduction to the profile
- Due today: in-class write from last week and final draft memoir
- Read for next class: Chapters Five and Six of “The Art and Craft of Feature Writing”

Oct. 24 — Leads, endings and outlines
- Due today: first draft profile
- Read and discuss profile first drafts
Distinguished guest speaker: columnist and novelist Shawn Vestal
Sign-ups for individual conferences

Oct. 31 — Individual conferences. No class meeting.
• Read for next class: Chapters Seven and Eight of “Writing for Story” and place features TBA

Nov. 7 — Features that capture a sense of place
• Due today: final draft profile
• Read for next class: Chapter Nine of “Writing for Story”
• Read for next class: Chapter Seven of “The Art and Craft of Feature Writing”

Nov. 14 — Features that capture a thing or idea
• Due today: first draft place feature
• Read and critique place first drafts
• Read for next class: Chapter Ten of “Writing for Story”

Nov. 21 — Query letters and story pitches
• Due today: first draft thing or idea feature
• Read and critique thing or idea first drafts
• Read for next class: Chapters Eight and Nine of “The Art and Craft of Feature Writing”

Nov. 28 — Troubleshooting and editing
• Due today: query letter and final draft place feature

Dec. 5 — Wrap up: Troubleshooting and editing
• Bring in next-to-final draft of thing or idea feature for additional comments and editing

Dec. 12 — Final exam date. No class meeting.
• Due today via email: final draft thing or idea feature