

**Feature and Opinion Writing**  
**COMM 262-20W**  
**Wednesdays**  
**7-9:30 p.m.**  
**School of Communications Room 003**

**Description:** Students will find and share their voice by learning the differences in writing opinion pieces (letters to the editor, editorials, columns, reviews, blogs). Students also will work on honing their reporting/writing skills with various feature pieces (profiles, trend stories, news features).

**Instructor contact information:**

Dodie Hofstetter  
312-222-4987 (work, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. weekdays)  
773-868-1256 (home, before 10 p.m.)  
312-222-2598 (fax)  
E-mail: dhofstetter@tribune.com

**Office hours:** By appointment

**Class objectives:**

Each week students:

- \*Will be given a reading assignment.
- \*Will be given a writing assignment.
- \*May be given a quiz.
- \*Will prepare questions when guest speakers attend class.
- \*Will participate in class discussions.
- \*Will be given assignments in writing by instructor.
- \*Will edit assignments for spelling, style and grammatical errors.
- \*Will conduct themselves in a professional, ethical manner.

**Course learning outcomes:**

This course examines methods of researching and writing editorials, commentaries and features for print media. Students will broaden their research and writing skills.

**Required texts and materials:**

“Writing Opinion For Impact” by Conrad C. Fink  
AP Stylebook  
Dictionary (online is OK)  
Local daily and Sunday newspapers

**Grades:** Grades will be based on a 4.0 scale

A=4.0, A-=3.67, B+ = 3.33, B=3.0, B-=3.67, C+=2.33, C=2.0, C-=1.67, D+=1.33, D=1.0, below is failing).

Students must earn a minimum of a 1.67 in order to have a course count toward their major. If they must repeat the course, they do not earn credit hours but may improve upon their former grade.

### **Evaluation/Grading:**

- A. Each week, instructor will return graded quizzes and writing assignments.
- B. A mid-term evaluation will be presented to student by instructor one-on-one.
- C. Written assignments may be redone and re-evaluated once if they are handed in within two weeks after receiving grade.
- D. Students will be graded on class participation, written assignments, quizzes, attitude and attendance.
- E. Late work/missed assignments will be accepted and will be graded down by one full grade. All assignments must be completed, but no credit will be given later than two weeks after original due date. **If assignments are not completed, student will not pass the course.**
- F. In the case of an absence, it is a student's responsibility to contact instructor to report absence and to receive homework assignments **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**. Do **NOT** wait until the next week or you will be behind. All assignments build on the last one. Assignments that were due on day of absence will be accepted one week late with a possible grade penalty. An envelope with graded assignments and new assignments will be in the Journalism Department for the absent student. Also new assignments can be sent to student by instructor via e-mail.
- G. Spelling, grammar and style mistakes will be subtracted from an assignment's grade.
- H. Students will **NOT** be graded based on instructor's agreement or disagreement with the point of view/position taken by student in an opinion piece.
- I. All assignments from students must be typed and must be double-spaced.
- J. If a student sends an e-mail to instructor, mark in the subject line: **MESSAGE FROM LOYOLA STUDENT**.
- K. Grades will not be "averaged" over the semester; students will be graded on progress. Improvement counts!

Grades will break down this way:

Class participation and quizzes	5 percent
Weekly beat system	10 percent
Weekly writing assignments	45 percent
Midterm	20 percent
Final project	20 percent

### **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;

- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://luc.edu/english/writing.shtml#source> .

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

A complete description of the School of Communication Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <http://www.luc.edu/soc/Policy.shtml>

**Students with Disabilities:** Students who need special accommodations for exams or class meetings because of a learning disability will provide instructor with a letter documenting the type of accommodations needed. If they claim to have a physical or psychological condition that hinders their ability to perform in class, medical documentation must be provided to the Office for Students with Disabilities and that office will assess whether or not your collaboration is required. These matters are confidential.

**Class meeting schedule:** (Disclaimer: This syllabus may be amended as the course proceeds. You will be notified of all changes. )

**CLASS 1 (Jan. 15):**

- \*Introduction to course
- \*Introduction of instructor
- \*Introduction of students
- \*Explanation of class beat system
- \*Explanation of writing assignment
- \*In-class writing assignment

**CLASS 2 (Jan. 22):**

- \*Pre-class reading: Chapters 1, 2, 3 of "Writing Opinion For Impact"; daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times
- \*Writing assignment due: "What do I think" (Many of these will be read aloud and critiqued)
- \*Beat assignment due: Oral presentation of most important topic of the week on your beat; hand out examples of opinion writing concerning that topic; hand in written paragraph about why the writing works
- \*Discussion of letters to the editor
- \*Explanation of writing assignment

**CLASS 3 (Jan. 29):**

- \*Pre-class reading: Chapters 6, 7 of "Writing Opinion For Impact"; daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times

- \*Writing assignment due: Long letter to the editor (Many of these will be read aloud and critiqued)
- \*Beat assignment due: Oral presentation of most important topic of the week on your beat; hand out examples of opinion writing concerning that topic; hand in written paragraph about why the writing works
- \*Continue discussion of Letters to the editor; in-class project
- \*Explanation of writing assignment

#### **CLASS 4 (Feb. 5):**

- \*Pre-class reading: Daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times
- \*Writing assignment due: Short letter to the editor (Many of these will be read aloud and critiqued)
- \*Beat assignment due: Oral presentation of most important topic of the week on your beat; hand out examples of opinion writing concerning that topic; hand in written paragraph about why the writing works
- \*Continue discussion of Letters to the editor
- \*Begin discussion of reviews and critiques
- \*Watch movie in class
- \*Explanation of writing assignment
- \*Introduction of next week's speaker

#### **CLASS 5 (Feb. 12):**

- \*Pre-class reading: Daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times
- \*Writing assignment due: Review of movie (Many of these will be read aloud and critiqued)
- \*Beat assignment due: Oral presentation of most important topic of the week on your beat; hand out examples of opinion writing concerning that topic; hand in written paragraph about why the writing works
- \*Guest speaker (TBA) Students will interview speaker after speaker's presentation; bring prepared questions
- \*Discussion of commentary and opinion columns
- \*Explanation of writing assignment

#### **CLASS 6 (Feb. 19):**

- \*Pre-class reading: Chapters 8, 9, 10 of "Writing Opinion For Impact"; daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times
- \*Writing assignment due: Commentary (Many of these will be read aloud and critiqued)

- \*Beat assignment due: Oral presentation of most important topic of the week on your beat; hand out examples of opinion writing concerning that topic; hand in written paragraph about why the writing works
- \*Discussion of Tribune editorial board and begin discussion of editorials
- \*Explanation of writing assignment

**CLASS 7 (Feb. 26):**

- \*Writing assignment due: Editorial
- \*Pre-class reading: Chapters 4, 5 of “Writing Opinion For Impact”; daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times
- \*Beat assignment due: Oral presentation of most important topic of the week on your beat; hand out examples of opinion writing concerning that topic; hand in written paragraph about why the writing works
- \*Prepare for endorsement session

**NO CLASS (March 4):**

- \***Spring break**

**CLASS 8 (March 11):**

- \*Writing assignment due: Selection of best editorials by classmates/endorsement session
- \*Pre-class reading: Chapter 12 of “Writing Opinion For Impact”; daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times
- \*Review for midterm
- \*No beat assignment this week

**CLASS 9 (March 18):**

- \***Mid-term (must bring textbooks)**
- \*Writing assignment due: Endorsement editorial
- \*No beat assignment this week; instead of beat assignment, we will have one-on-one midterm evaluations between teacher and student

**CLASS 10 (March 25):**

- \*Go over midterms
- \*No beat assignment this week
- \*Discussion of profiles
- \*Pre-class reading: daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times
- \*Explanation of next several week’s projects/introduction of upcoming speakers

**CLASS 11 (April 1):**

\*Assignment due: Profile

\*Watch movie to review

\*Pre-class reading: Daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times

**CLASS 12 (April 8):**

\*Writing assignment due: Review

\*Discuss trend stories/news features

\*Explanation of next week's field trip

\*Guest speaker

\*Pre-class reading: Daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times

\*No beat assignment due

**CLASS 13 (Week of April 15):**

\*Class will be held at Tribune to observe editorial board meeting

\*Writing assignment due: Feature/Part 1 of final

\*Pre-class reading: Daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times

**CLASS 14 (April 22):**

\*Pre-class reading: Daily reading of Tribune or Sun-Times

\*No beat assignment due

\*Guest speaker

**CLASS 15 (April 29):**

\*Class to be held at Tribune

\*Writing assignment due: Rest of final project

\*Guest speaker