

## **Syllabus**

Magazine & Feature Writing: Reviewing and Opinion Writing

Fall 2017

Comm-323

5:30 to 8:15 p.m.

Room 014A Strickler Hall

### **Instructor:**

Jenni Laidman

Full-time magazine writer and reviewer, part time instructor

### **Reach me:**

Anytime: [jenni.laidman@louisville.edu](mailto:jenni.laidman@louisville.edu) or [jenlaidman@gmail.com](mailto:jenlaidman@gmail.com) (both go to same mailbox)

Emergencies or near emergencies, and NEVER AFTER 9 P.M.: 502-298-0867

DO NOT TEXT ME UNLESS IT IS AN EMERGENCY

Texting emergencies would include: "I cannot be in class, because I was hospitalized and am being wheeled into surgery to have my head amputated." Please include your name in your text.

Do not text me with questions about homework, assignments, your grade, or most anything else you can think of.

### **OFFICE HOURS:**

Tuesdays from 11:30-4:30 p.m. You'll find me at QUILLS on Cardinal Boulevard, unless you've arranged to meet me elsewhere. I can meet you earlier if you need an earlier meeting. If you can't make any of these times, contact me and let's figure out what works.

I love to talk to students at my office hours. Come in. We'll chat about your work. I'll buy the coffee if you hit me at Quills. Having trouble with something? Come meet me. Really struggling? I'm here to help. Just want to talk about the work? I'd love to hear your thoughts.

**Goal of course:**

Successful completion of Comm 323 will provide students with a solid foundation in evaluating opposing ideas, making an argument and communicating opinion in a clear and engaging fashion. Ideally, students will be on their way to developing a voice by the end of the course.

**Students will gain an understanding in the following areas:**

- Critical thinking
- Strategies for appraising art of all kinds
- Writing engaging and concise prose
- Expressing well-supported opinion
- Evaluating opposing viewpoints
- Describing one's environment and experiences
- Challenging one's own preconceptions

**Students will become familiar with the application of several concepts including:** fairness, balance, writing for an audience, lede writing, fact-checking.

**Required Text:**

The online version of the AP Stylebook and Webster's New World Online Dictionary individual subscription.

A single year subscription is \$35.

Order at:

<https://www.apstylebook.com/apbookstore/invoice.php?pid=APW-917360-1>

Make sure you download the accompanying app for your smart phone.

**Other expenses:** Because you will be reviewing restaurants, new movies, recent books, new music, you will have to pay for your meals, admissions, music and books.

**Class format:**

Class will include in-class writing exercises to try out new approaches, new subject matter, as well as lecture. Expect to do a great deal of reading and writing.

**Because this is a writing class, you will be expected to maintain the highest standards of written communication.** To that end, we will cover basic grammar, punctuation, syntax and style issues. Expect regular quizzes on these topics.

**Assignments:**

- All assignments will be turned in no later than 5:29 p.m. every Tuesday. Assignments turned in after class or during class will be returned to you ungraded and treated as an F.
- Assignments must be turned in on Blackboard as WORD documents unless otherwise indicated. Printouts and hand-written documents will not be accepted.
- Document titles must read as follows: DATE-LASTNAME-ASSIGNMENTNAME. So if your last name is Edison, and you were turning in your short movie review due Aug. 28, you would save your document as: 28-Edison-shortmovie.
- Students should expect a writing assignment every week and frequent reading assignments. For a rough idea of what's coming, see the following. (Please note that this schedule may change. This is what I hope we'll accomplish. Consult Blackboard's ASSIGNMENT section weekly to find out what's due.)

**HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS – subject to change. Consult blackboard each week.****Week 1 Aug. 22:**

- Assignment: Write 250-word review of locally owned restaurant, due Aug. 29. (15 pts.)
- On discussion board, by Friday, report which locally owned restaurant you'll review next week for the long (700-word review) and which one you're reviewing this week for the short (250-word) review. (5 pts. for fulfilling this requirement) Feel free to let other students know about your experiences at the restaurants they may be reviewing. The second review, due Sept. 5, is 700 words and worth 40 points.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Aug. 29. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 2 Aug 29:**

- DUE: 250-word restaurant review & readings.
- Assignment: 700-word restaurant review, due Sept. 5. (40 pts.)
- On Discussion Board, by Friday, report what album you'll review next week for the 250-word review. (5 pts. for fulfilling this requirement.) Chime

in on the albums others have selected with any of your own observations. The short album review, due Sept. 12, can be any album in your collection or something new.

- On Discussion Board, by Friday, (10 pts.) talk about what books you're considering reading for the two book reviews and why you've chosen those books. Comment on the books others have selected.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Sept 5. (5-15 pts.)

### **Week 3 Sept. 5:**

- DUE: 700-word restaurant review and readings.
- Assignment: 250-word music review. You may review any album. Due Sept. 12. (15 pts.)
- On discussion board (5 pts.), by Friday, report which album or concert you'll review next week (750 words), due Sept 19. (5 pts. for fulfilling this requirement.) Feel free to chime in on the albums others have selected with any of your own observations. The long review must be of an album released in the last two months or a concert that took place in the last week.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Sept 5. (5-15 pts.)

### **Week 4 Sept. 12:**

- DUE: 250-word music review and readings.
- Assignment: 750-word music review (album released within the last two months. Or may substitute with review of a concert attended in the last week). Due Sept. 19. (40 pts.)
- On discussion board (5 pts.), by Friday, report what movie you'll review next week. Feel free to chime in on the movies others have selected with any of your own observations. That 300-word review will be due Sept. 26 and worth 15 pts. Can be something you watch at home on DVD or download.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Sept 19. (5-15 pts.)

### **Week 5 Sept. 19:**

- DUE: 750-word music review and readings.
- Assignment: 300-word movie review. Can be something from your own collection or something you downloaded and watched at home. Due Sept. 26. (15 pts.)
- On discussion board (5 pts.), by Friday, report what movie you'll review for long review next week (750 words), due Oct. 3; must be a movie screening around town now. Feel free to chime in on the movies others have

- selected with any of your own observations.
- Due Sept. 26: Three paragraphs explaining the plot, the main characters and the theme of the first 100 pages of the book you will read for the long book review. (15 pts.)
  - Complete reading and associated assignment, due Sept 26. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 6 Sept. 26:**

- DUE: 300-word movie review and readings.
- Assignment: 750-word movie review. Must review something that screened in town within the last week. Due Oct. 3. (40 pts.)
- On discussion board (5 pts.), by Friday, report what you will be reviewing for midterm, 750 words, due Oct. 17. due Feb. 28. For midterm you can choose between a locally owned restaurant; a currently screening movie, or a recent album. Feel free to chime in on what others are reviewing any of your own observations.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Oct. 3. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 7 Oct. 3:**

- DUE: 750-word movie review and readings.
- Assignment: 750-word review of a restaurant, currently screening movie, or music. Due Oct. 17. **This assignment serves as the mid-term.** (80 pts.)
- On discussion board (5 pts.), by Friday, report on what television series you will review in two weeks (350 words), due Oct. 24. Select a show you're already familiar with. Feel free to chime in on the movies others have selected with any of your own observations.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Oct. 17. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 8 Oct. 10: MIDTERM BREAK – NO CLASS**

**Week 9 Oct. 17:**

- DUE: 750-word midterm review and readings.
- Assignment: 350-word review of a television series. Please select a show you're already familiar with. Due Oct. 24. (15 pts.)
- On discussion board (5 pts.), by Friday, report on what recent television series you will review (750 words), due Oct. 31. You must be able to watch five episodes of the show, so you can talk about the show and not just a single episode.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Oct. 24. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 10 Oct. 24:**

- DUE: 350-word television series review and readings.
- Assignment: 750-word review of a recent television series, due Oct. 31. You must be able to watch at least five episodes of the show, so you can talk about the show, and not just a single episode. (40 pts.)
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Oct. 31. (5-15 pts.)
- On discussion board, by Friday, (5 pts.) report what book you hope to review Oct. 31 (due Nov. 7). This may be any work of fiction or non-fiction, an old favorite, something you already know well. However, do not review **poetry, textbooks or other academic works**. The book you review must be written for a general audience. Although it can be a book you read for another class, do NOT turn in what you wrote for that class. Due Nov. 7 (350 words).
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Oct. 31. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 11 Oct 31:**

- DUE: 750-word review of recent television series and readings.
- Assignment: 350-word review of any book written for a popular audience. Due Nov. 7. (15 pts.)
- On discussion board, by Friday (10 pts.), mention at least three topics you would like to write a 300-word opinion piece about, and why those topics appeal to you. Do you have an original point of view on the topic? Do you have particular knowledge or experience that gives you insight into the topic? Do you have insight into the topics others are proposing? Feel free to chime in with your thoughts.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Nov. 7. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 12 Nov. 7:**

- DUE: 350-word book review. (15 pts.)
- Assignment: 750-word review of book. By this point you've summarized the first 100 words, so you should be nearly done with book now. Due Nov. 14 (50 pts.)
- On discussion board, by Friday (5 pts.) announce which topic you will write about for the 400-word opinion piece and why you chose it. Comment on the topics of others. That 400-word opinion piece will be worth 15 pts.

- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Nov. 14. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 13 Nov. 14:**

- DUE: 750-word book review and reading assignments.
- Assignment: 400-word opinion piece on topic you selected last week. Due Nov. 21. (15 pts.)
- On discussion board, by Friday (5 pts.), what you will do for the 750-word final. You can review a local restaurant, recent book, current movie, recent album, ongoing television series (must watch at least 5 shows), current play, current podcast (must listen to at least 5 episodes), or you may write an opinion piece. If you chose an opinion piece, you must declare your topic and why you are choosing it. You must declare what restaurant, album, TV series, play, book, or podcast you are reviewing. Chime in with observations on the what other folks are reviewing.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Nov. 21. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 14 Nov. 21: (thanksgiving week...yes, we have class)**

- DUE: 400-word opinion piece.
- Assignment: Final 750-word paper. (80 pts.) You can review a local restaurant, recent book, current movie, recent album, ongoing television series (must watch at least 5 shows), current play, current podcast (must listen to at least 5 episodes), or you may write an opinion piece. If you chose an opinion piece, you must declare your topic and why you are choosing it. You must declare what restaurant, album, TV series, play, book, or podcast you are reviewing.
- Complete reading and associated assignment, due Nov. 28. (5-15 pts.)

**Week 15 Nov. 28:**

**Last day of class**

- No class. Just turn in your assignments.

In addition to the points available in weekly assignments, there may be 4-8 quizzes, each worth 5-15 points. I determine what the quizzes will cover and how many to include as I see what students struggle with in their writing.

Total points available for the semester will be approximately between 635 and 755.

### **How to earn an A**

- 1) Come to class. Quizzes missed in class cannot be made up .
- 2) If you are sick, you are still expected to turn in your homework on time. Make arrangements to pick up material you missed.
- 3) Communicate with me if you're having trouble with something or something I say isn't clear

### **Grading Scale**

100-98: A+  
97-94: A  
93-91: A-  
90-88: B+  
87-84: B  
83-81: B-  
80-78: C+  
77-74: C  
73-71: C-  
70-68: D+  
67-64: D  
63-60: D-  
59 and below: F

I will not entertain any last-minute pleas to turn Ds into Cs or Cs into Bs. I won't round-up your grade to give you a better grade. Similarly, I won't round-down your grade to give you a worse one. You get the grade you earned. That's it.

No sad stories accepted: If you need a C to continue to be reimbursed by your employer for your education, then earn a C. Earning a C (or a B, or an A) is your responsibility, not mine.

### **Absences, Tardiness, and other bad stuff**

- This class meets only once a week and absences cannot be tolerated. Quizzes will not be made up. Homework must be turned in on time. Late homework will be returned to you, ungraded.
- Pre-approved university-sanctioned excuses WILL be honored, and so far as it is possible, you will be allowed to make up work if you have such an



excuse.

- I will not email you and tell you what you missed in class. It is your responsibility to see me at office hours if you want to know about what you missed. I will be generous with my time to people who ask for it.
- Please arrive for class promptly. It will begin at 5:30 p.m. whether you are here or not.
- “My wireless connection was down,” “My computer was broken” are not acceptable excuses for missed or late homework. You’re in college. Figure out a plan B and execute it.
- PLAGIARISM: **ANY** instance of plagiarism will result **IN AN F FOR THE SEMESTER**. Plagiarism is when you copy writing from any source, whether another student or an article you saw online, and present it as though it was your own. If you do not attribute the material to the original source, you will be judged as having plagiarized and you will be failed for the semester.
- CELL PHONES. I don’t want to see them in class. Put them in your backpack. Put them in your purse. Put them away.

## COMMUNICATION

If you have questions about an assignment, email me.

If you’ve written yourself into a corner and need to talk about what you can do to fix it, email me.

If you’re having trouble reaching sources, or out of ideas about sources, email me.

Most of the time, I’m at my computer, and I will do everything I can to help you succeed.

What you shouldn’t do is give up, stress out, go crazy, freak, cheat, make things up, plagiarize or lose your mind.

There may be a solution, and I may be able to help you find it.

That’s what I’m here for.

Required statement regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, etc:

### Title IX/Clery Act Notification

Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sex discrimination violate University policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain **confidential**

support from the PEACC Program (852-2663), Counseling Center (852-6585), and Campus Health Services (852-6479). To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact the Dean of Students (852-5787) or University of Louisville Police (852-6111).

**Disclosure to University faculty or instructors** of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) is **not confidential** under Title IX. Faculty and instructors must forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the University's Title IX officer.

For more information, see the [Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide](#).