

**ENGLISH 394: Long-form narrative journalism  
Fall 2013**

Peter Richmond  
Telephone 860 573 5649  
Email [Peter12546@gmail.com](mailto:Peter12546@gmail.com)

T, R 2:35-3:45  
PPHAC Room 116  
8/27-12/4/2103

**Overview:**

**This course will focus on the skills necessary to create non-fiction narrative journalism, with an emphasis on long-form stories. The course will explain the essential tools needed for accurate and engaging narrative storytelling, from reporting to researching to interviewing to sourcing to writing. The objective? Two-fold: To learn**

**How to surround a real-life story, and write one that will be publishable at the term's end.**

**Required texts:**

- 1) Next Wave: America's New Generation of Great Literary Journalists (Sager)
- 2) The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism (Kerrane and Sager)

**Assignments**

Assignments are due as indicated below. Please note that unless a mutually agreeable revised due date is negotiated with the instructor, any late assignment will lose percentage points for each calendar day it is late, and any assignment not submitted within two weeks of the due date will receive a "0." It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment or for a course.

**Grading guidelines:**

**10% class participation**

**10% quizzes on readings**

**20% written assignments**

**20% take-home final**

**40% Your Story**

**Attendance...**

Is crucial. If you must miss a session, please e-mail me at [peter12546@gmail.com](mailto:peter12546@gmail.com) to explain. When an absence is unavoidable, a written response to the assigned readings must be submitted on or before the next regularly scheduled session. A missing or incomplete written response to readings following an absence will reduce the final grade. More than two class absences or a pattern of late arrivals to class may, at the discretion of the instructor, result in a failing grade for the seminar.

### **Academic honesty...**

**...Is Essential. In other words,** all work that you submit must be your own. Be certain to cite the sources that you used, and take care to avoid plagiarism, which the *Moravian College Student Handbook* defines as “the use, deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgement. Academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the assignment and notification of the Academic Dean, in accordance with Moravian College policy.

On top of which: You don't need to use other peoples' stuff!

### **Course Schedule**

While every effort will be made to follow the schedule indicated below, the syllabus is subject to change as the instructor deems necessary to help students meet the objectives of the course.

**8/27**

#### **Opening nuts and bolts.**

##### **Finding the story**

Where to look. Matching the story with the writer's sensibility (music? religion? Art? sports? outdoors? Elements to look for. Expanding the writer's radar. Choosing subjects/topics that resonate on a larger scale and speak to a larger issue.

##### **Reading**

*Wicked Wind*, Julia Keller, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/watchdog/chi-utica-specialpackage,0,5588260.special>

**8/29:**

#### **Discuss Reading: What makes it work? Not work?**

##### **Early Background Reporting**

How to surround the facts and thus surround your topic. Everything ever written. Any DVDs or YouTube Phone, print, web, courthouse, anywhere and everywhere. The groundwork, before the real reporting begins.

##### **Reading**

*A Brevard Woman Disappeared*, Michael Kruse  
<http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/a-brevard-woman-disappeared-but-never-left-home/1181888>

**9/3**

#### **Discuss Reading**

## **Sources**

How to find them, how to cultivate them; how to use them. Who's important? What documents count? Who to trust? How do you approach the key sources? How can you gain the trust of your source? Which obscure source will turn out to unlock the power of your tale?

## **Reading**

*Preface of The Art of Fact; "Making Facts Dance" from The Art of Fact*

Tommy Lasorda Jr: <http://thestacks.deadspin.com/the-brief-life-and-complicated-death-of-tommy-lasordas-485999366>

**Thu 9/5**

## **Discuss Reading**

## **Beginning Reporting**

What to do once you're finally in the world of your subject/topic: strategies, resources, following your instincts and your reporter's radar. Painting the picture, finding the context, exploring and mining the setting. Interviewing the principals.

**Assignment: Interview a friend (1000 words). The objective? By the end of the story we should know that person.**

**Tue 9/10**

## **Discuss Reading**

## **Storytelling**

How to tell a story – plot flow, detail. What makes a story riveting? How can you make a detail bring a character to life? What elements of the tale make it jump off the page? What are the three acts of the drama? And most importantly: how do you write it? In what style?

## **Reading:**

**From The Art of Fact: Lillian Ross; Tracy Kidder; Tom Wolfe**

**Thu 9/12**

## **Discuss Reading**

## **Observing!**

We assemble the facts of the day; we learn how to see.

## **Reading:**

**Squirrel power:** <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/opinion/sunday/squirrel-power.html>

**Bill Murray**

<http://deadspin.com/5986709/the-sports-fan-what-i-learned-from-three-days-of-watching-baseball-with-bill-murray>

**Tues 9/17**

**Discuss Reading**

**Organizing your material**

Methodology; always carry a notebook; electronic files; backing up, footnoting: the obvious

**\*\*\*STATUS OF YOUR PIECE: topic must be decided by 9/24\*\*\***

**\*\*\*OUTLINE DUE 10/1**

**Reading** *Tight-Ass River:*

[http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/11/15/041115fa\\_fact\\_mcphee](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/11/15/041115fa_fact_mcphee)

**Tues 9/19**

**Discuss Reading**

**Second wave of reporting**

Finding the reportorial mortar to assemble the bricks.

**Reading**

*The Tragedy of Britney Spears*

<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-tragedy-of-britney-spears-rolling-stones-2008-cover-story-20110329>

*and*

*The Falling Man*

[http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0903-SEP\\_FALLINGMAN](http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0903-SEP_FALLINGMAN)

**9/24**

**Discuss Reading**

**Voice**

*Esquire* attitude vs. *The New Yorker's* omniscience. Junod vs. McPhee.

The role of the writer's point of view. First person vs. third person. Quotes vs. narration. How does the writer's stance enhance the story? How much of the writer's perspective should inform the narrative? How to establish a point of view without interfering with the telling of the tale.

**Reading**

Dickens: The Great Tasmania's Cargo

**\*\*\*AGAIN: OUTLINE OF YOUR PIECE DUE 10/1\*\*\***

**9/26**

**Discuss Reading**

**The edit**

Knowing how to rein in the story. What elements are speed-bumps in your tale? Where have you inserted irrelevant scene/detail? How can you pare your story down so that every word counts, and propels your story?

**Writing Assignment: 500-1000 words on something that happened to you last week**

**Reading**

*Tom Wolfe The Girl of the Year*

**10/1**

**Discuss reading**

**Discuss stories**

**\*\*\*OUTLINES DUE\*\*\***

**The Arc**

How to connect the dots from a to z without having to worship at the shrine of chronology; where to stick in info that makes your topic more universal without interrupting the narrative

**Reading**

*Justin Heckert: Lost in the Waves*

**10/3**

**Discussion of Reading**

**Assignment: 500-1000 words on something you've never noticed on campus.  
(including background reporting)**

**Reading**

*Martha Gelhorn The Third Winter*

**10/8**

**Discuss Reading**

**Discussion of your writing assignment papers**

**\*\*\*FIRST DRAFT OF YOUR PIECE IS DUE THU 11/21\*\*\***

**Reading**

*Hunter S. Thompson The Slum Also Rises*

**10/10**

**Discuss Reading**

**You**

What role do you play in your piece? What've we learned about voice.

**Reading**

*McPhee Pine Barrens*

**10/17**

**Discuss Reading**

**Prose vs. Pomposity**

How to make your writing lucid without hitting us over the head with it.

**Reading**

*Joan Didion The Los Angeles Notebook*

**10/22**

**Discuss reading**

**The Profile**

Celebrity: why should we care

Otherwise: what matters when profiling an extraordinary person

**Reading**

**Britney Spears**<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-tragedy-of-britney-spears-rolling-stones-2008-cover-story-20110329>

**10/24**

**Discuss Reading**

**On site reporting**

How to be the fly on the wall.

**Reading**

Stephen Rodrick <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/13/magazine/here-is-what-happens-when-you-cast-lindsay-lohan-in-your-movie.html?pagewanted=all>

**10/29 Discuss Reading**

**\*\*\*Discuss status of YOUR PIECES\*\*\***

**Reading**

Michael Herr from *Dispatches*

**10/31**

**Discuss reading, Eat Candy**

**Detail of crimes**

Where to draw the line. Discussion of Chivers' Terrazas lede on an IED. How far is too far?

**Reading:**

Chris Dittrich: *Tonight on Dateline This Man Will Die*  
<http://www.esquire.com/features/predator0907>

**Assignment: Interview a stranger.**

**11/5**

**Discuss reading**

**Humor**

How truly hard it is, and how it must be used with extreme discretion.

**Reading**

<http://deadspin.com/5986709/the-sports-fan-what-i-learned-from-three-days-of-watching-baseball-with-bill-murray>

**11/7**

**Discuss Reading**

**Reading:**

Max Potter: *The Vineyard assassin*  
<http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2011/05/vineyard-poisoning-201105>

**11/12**

**Discuss Reading**

**Long-form's future**

In-class discussion

**Reading: In Cold Blood**

**11/14**

**Discuss Reading**

**How to Sell Yourself**

The fine art of getting your stuff out there

**Reading: In Cold Blood**

**11/19**

**Discuss Reading**

**\*\*\*DISCUSSION OF YOUR PIECES\*\*\***

**Reading: In Cold Blood**

**11/21**

**Discuss Reading**

**FIRST DRAFTS DUE**

**Art vs. Craft**

Where to find the safe middle ground where the reader is drawn to your voice, not your art, but its your artistry at the craft that makes your tale jump off the page.

**Reading: In Cold Blood: Finish**

**12/3**

**Discuss the book**

**Ethics**



Hippocrates: "First Do No Harm"  
Where to draw the line.

**No reading: instead work on....**

**\*\*\*YOUR PIECE DUE DEC. 15\*\*\***

**12/5**

**Persistence**

The art of pushing to get to a source; of knowing when to let go; of never giving up on laying the last brick...but knowing when you've surrounded the story. When to let it go.

**12/11**

**Take home final....due**