



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
School of Continuing Studies
Journalism

MPJO-650-01: CULTURE REPORTING

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-JOURNALISM

Wednesdays 5:15 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. | Summer 2016

May: 25

June: 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

July: 6, 13, 20, 27

August: 3, 10, 17

Instructor: Dr. Natalie Hopkinson

E-mail: NHopkinson@gmail.com

Georgetown Downtown campus, C231

- Office hours are by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Today's writers and editors are expected to curate and engage with communities around a variety of cultural topics: music, books, theatre, film, visual art, food, fashion, ethnic traditions, religion, social trends and more. This course will allow students to explore, expand and complicate their notion of what culture is, and learn techniques to write about it. We will read some great works of cultural reporting and critique new ones.

Students will develop an eye for spotting newsworthy cultural phenomena. They will develop research and analytic skills needed to put them in context that readers and editors can understand. Finally, they will learn to write with clarity and authority. This will be a writing and research-intensive course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

During the semester, students will:

- * Differentiate newsworthy cultural phenomena
- * Develop research and analytical skills needed in cultural reporting today
- * Produce writing with clarity and authority
- * Apply techniques to engage with various audiences on cultural topics

REQUIRED READING

Title: "When The Spirit Catches You, You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures"

Author: Anne Fadiman

ISBN-10: 0910300453

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 1 edition



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Date: September 30, 1998
Price: \$12 (Amazon)

Sunday New York Times dead-tree paper edition: 5/24-8/ 14

Students can get a 50 percent discount by visiting www.nytimes.com/collegeds.

Students will also be required to follow relevant cultural figures and outlets on Twitter, particularly those on the beat that each student chooses to follow for the semester.

ATTENDANCE

As outlined by the university, missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). Absences for classes beyond the initial two will result in further reduction of the final grade. If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

If there is an emergency, please call and email the instructor immediately.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

I hail from a culture of face-to-face talkers. Extended conversations via email waste time with crossed signals and misunderstandings. I prefer to answer questions in order of descending preference: 1) during class 2) after class 3) before class 4) by in-person appointment 5) by phone and finally, 6) by email. *Never text.*

Classroom attendance is essential. Late assignments will not be accepted. If there are extenuating circumstances such as serious illness or emergency, I will consider giving partial credit on a case-by-case basis.

If you need to speak to me, both call and/or leave a message and email me to make sure I get the message.

ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments should be printed and handed to me in class. (If you miss class, please ask a classmate to deliver.) For peer review of drafts days, please bring enough copies for the group.

Written assignments:

1. **Cultural Event:** Choose a public cultural happening, for example, a festival, lecture, concert, parade, art crawl, historic neighborhood tour, protest, symposium, panel



discussion, that speaks beyond the event and points to larger changes in society. Think carefully about this topic because this will be the theme you will follow and develop all semester.

Deadlines:

Pitch: 6/1

Draft: 6/8

Final: 6/15

Event PITCH CRITERIA (5 possible points)

Identify an event happening between 9/16 and 9/25 and research enough contextual information to pitch **THREE** possible topics orally to the class and one paragraph for each idea in writing. We will select the winning ideas as a group, and the winning idea will be evaluated according to the following criteria for a possible 5 points:

Relevance (“Why should I care”)

Advance contextual research

Publication potential

Event FIRST DRAFT CRITERIA (5 possible points)

-Must include at least 1 photo or video clip (smartphone OK)

Writing/ organization/ flow

Character development, details, scene

Analysis/Use of context

Nutgraf/Why Should I Care?

Event FINAL DRAFT CRITERIA (5 possible points)

Reporting, organization/writing flow, publication readiness.

-Must include at least 1 photo or video clip (smartphone OK)

- Cultural Trend Essay:** This assignment will be to identify a cultural phenomenon that is either on the rise or on the wane, modeled on the *New York Times* Sunday/Thursday Styles sections.

Deadlines:

Oral and written pitch: 6/15 (5 pts)

Draft: (5 pts) 6/22

Final: (10 pts) 6/29



Trend PITCH & DRAFT CRITERIA (5 possible points each)

Identify topic and research enough contextual information to pitch three possible topics orally to the class and one paragraph in writing handed in to instructor. The class will select one pitch, and the winning pitch will be evaluated for credit under the following criteria for a possible 5 points:

Originality of concept or angle
Relevance "why should I care?"
Publication potential

First TREND Drafts will be evaluated by peers and the instructor according to the following criteria for a possible 5 points:

Writing organization/concept execution:
Character development, details, scene:
Nutgraf/Why Should I Care?:
Publication potential
Must include at least 1 photo or video clip (smartphone OK)

TREND FINAL DRAFT CRITERIA (10 possible points)

Research/reporting, Writing flow, Publication readiness
Must include at least 1 photo or video clip (smartphone OK)

3. **Cultural Review:** In this assignment, students will identify a book, concert, film, gallery or museum show or restaurant and write a critical review of it.

Deadlines:
Pitch: 7/6
Draft: 7/13
Final: 7/20

REVIEW PITCH & DRAFT CRITERIA (5 possible points each)

Identify topic and research enough contextual information to pitch three possible topics orally to the class and one paragraph in writing. The winning pitch will be evaluated for as follows for a possible 5 points:

Originality of concept or angle:
Timeliness



Possible characters and scene

Advance contextual research (“why should I care?”)

Publication potential

If possible, please include at least 1 photo or video clip (smartphone OK)

Your REVIEW 1st draft will be evaluated on the following criteria for a possible 5 points:

Concept execution

Writing flow and organization

Use of details

Analysis, relevant context

Nutgraf/Why should I care?

FINAL REVIEW DRAFT CRITERIA (15 possible points)

Originality of analysis (5 points), use of context (5 points), organization/writing flow (5 points)

- 4. Cultural Profile:** This final assignment will combine much of what we have learned about reporting about cultures. We will identify a culturally newsworthy person with whom you have access, and write a profile of them and the larger cultural world they inhabit, and how changes in society are affecting both.

Deadlines:

Soft Pitch 7/13. (To instructor). 3 names of people you are thinking about. Can be handwritten.

Pitch: 7/20 (2 points) 3 well-developed ideas will be evaluated according to the following criteria: originality of concept or angle, possible scene and characters, advance context (“why should I care”), timeliness, newsworthiness publication potential

B-matter: 7/27 (3 points) Hand in an outline and notes based on researching context of subject and subject’s world, related articles in target publication, and preliminary info. on the subject via Web searches and a preliminary interview, and finally a list of other sources to interview

Draft: 8/3 (5 points) You will be evaluated by peers and instructor on concept/execution, writing organization, analysis and relevant context, clarity of the nutgraf, prospects for publication. Must include at least 1 photo or video clip (smartphone OK)



Final: 8/17 (20 points) You will be evaluated by the instructor under the following criteria: (Reporting/research; Writing organization/flow; Publication readiness)

Class participation assignments: (Oral)

1. Lead class critique of NYT Sunday cultural coverage: You will be expected to bring in an article from the Sunday New York Times book review, Sunday Review, Sunday Styles or Arts Review and present an oral critique of the article to the class.
Deadline: TBD. (Sign up at beginning of semester via Google doc)
2. Lead class critique of web-based general audience publication: You will be expected to bring in printouts of the article on a cultural subject and present an oral critique of the article to the class. Publications could include Slate, Salon, The Root, the AV Club, Television without Pity and Grantland or surprise me with some cool new ones I have not heard of! Bring enough printed copies of the article for the whole class.
Deadline: TBD (Sign up at beginning of semester.)

Twitter/Instagram assignment:

1. Post relevant cultural news, articles and original images and observations on Twitter under the #cultrep hashtag at least three times per week. The grading of this will be included in the participation grade, as follows.

Fadiman assignment:

There will be several in-class writing exercises related to the Fadiman text.

GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the following:

Cultural Event:	15 (5 pitch; 5 draft; 5 final)
Cultural Trend Essay:	20 (5 pitch; 5 draft; 10 final)
Cultural Review:	25 (5 pitch; 5 draft; 15 final)
Cultural Profile:	30 (2 pitch; 3 b-matter, 5 draft; 20 final)
Class Participation:	10 (NYT critique; web-only publication critique; Twitter; in-class writing assignments, peer review, attendance and participation)
Total	100 points

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. **There are no grades of C+, C- or D.**

A	100-93	B-	82.99-80
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A-	92.99-90	C	79.99-70
B+	89.99-88	F	69.99-0
B	87.99-83		

The instructor will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

- MPS Writing Resource Program
Lauinger Library, 217A | 202-687-4246
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center
Leavey Center, Suite 335 | 202-687-8354 | arc@georgetown.edu
<http://ldss.georgetown.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services
One Darnall Hall | 202-687-6985
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.

GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.



PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in journalism, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of the agenda. The instructor will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.



CLASS SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY MAY 25: *WHAT IS CULTURE?*

- Course introductions, overview.
- In-class writing assignment: Describe your cultural lens

Assignment due June 1:

- Read Fadiman Chapters 1-4
- Brainstorm three possible **cultural event** or happening between June 9-June 14 to cover. Write pitch including some historic and/or contemporary context for why it matters NOW. Think carefully about this, as you will need to stick with the same theme for the semester.
- Start tweeting links/observations and/or instagram photos, three times per week minimum #cultrep
- Begin to identify people to follow on Twitter/Instagram on your theme for the semester
- Use NH's shared GOOGLE DOCUMENT to Sign up for at least 2 dates to present critique of cultural reporting online or in print.
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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1 *"B Matter" and FINDING MEANING IN RITUAL*

- Discuss Fadiman Chapters 1-4
- Student-led critique of NYT cultural reporting on an event
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural reporting on an event
- Pitch event story to class orally, as well as hand in paragraph pitch of 3 possible topics. Event must happen between June 9-June 14.
- EXPLAIN THE 5-POINT OUTLINE

Assignment for June 8:

- Read Fadiman Chapters 5-9
- Report/write cultural event
- Tweet/Instagram

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8 *DETAILS THAT REVEAL/TRENDS*

- Student-led critique of NYT cultural reporting on an event
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural reporting on an event
- Discuss Fadiman Chapter 5-9
- Peer review cultural event draft



Assignment for June 15:

- Read Fadiman Chapters 10-14
- Final draft of cultural event
- Select and research three possible topics for **Cultural TREND ideas**
- Readings: On Trend Spotting <http://www.radosh.net/writing/trends.html>
- Tweet

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15 TRENDSPOTTING

- Submit final cultural event draft.
- Student-led critique of NYT cultural trend essay
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural trend essay
- Discuss Fadiman Chapters 10-14
- Pitch three possible **Cultural TREND** ideas

Assignment due June 22:

- Read Fadiman Chapters 15-19
- Begin researching, reporting Cultural Trend Essay
- Tweet

MONDAY, JUNE 22 USE CONTEXT WITH SURGICAL PRECISION

- Student-led critique of NYT cultural trend essays
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural trend essays
- Discuss Fadiman Chapters 15-19
- In-class writing assignment re: Fadiman. You are an editor: Assign five possible cultural news articles related to the events in the lives of the characters. Think of unique angles. Write one page.
- Cultural Trend Essay updates

Assignment for June 22:

- Write first draft of cultural trend essay
- Tweet

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22 WRITING IS EDITING

- Turn in draft 1 of cultural **trend essay**. Peer review.
- Student-led critique of NYT cultural review essay
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural review essay

Assignment for June 29:

- Revise cultural **trend essay**



- Develop pitch for three possible culture **REVIEWS**, along with WHY important now
- Tweet

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29 (NOT) EVERYONE'S A CRITIC

- Submit Cultural Trend Essay final
- Student-led critique of NYT cultural review
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural review
- Discussion of reviews.

GUEST SPEAKER: Natalie Y. Moore, author of *The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation*, just released <http://us.macmillan.com/thesouthside/natalieymoore>

Assignment for July 6.

- Begin writing Cultural Review
- Tweet
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WEDNESDAY July 6 WRITING ABOUT MUSIC

- Pitch Cultural Review ideas to class (Music, books, film, theatre, visual art)
- Class updates re: **Cultural Review**
- Student-led critique of NYT cultural review
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural review
-

Assignment due July 13:

- Complete first draft of **Cultural Review**
- Brainstorm 3 possible profile subjects. List of 3 names, and one sentence about them.
- Tweet

WEDNESDAY July 13 IMMERSION REPORTING AND EMPATHY

- Student-led critique of NYT cultural profile
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural profile
- Peer review of Cultural Review drafts
- Hand in pitches for Cultural Profile to instructor, who will give feedback before final pitch to class for next week.

Assignment due July 20:

- Finish Cultural Review revision



- Develop pitch for three possible **Culture PROFILES**, with extensive research to make an argument about why the person is culturally significant, what dimensions around them make them newsworthy. Please print and be prepared to present to class.
- Tweet

WEDNESDAY, July 20 FINDING "THE" SCENE

- Submit FINAL Cultural Review drafts
- Student-led critique of NYT cultural profiles
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural profiles
- PITCH possible 3 profile ideas to class.
-

Assignment for July 27:

- PROFILE RESEARCH. Gather "b-matter" list of contextual sources, books, studies, academic sources, previous media coverage of the subject of your **Cultural Profile**. Gather profile subjects calendar;s for next several weeks, find opportunities to shadow them. Prepare 1 page update on profile.
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- Tweet

WEDNESDAY JULY 27 THINK LIKE AN EDITOR

- Student-led critique of NYT cultural profile
- Student-led critique of web-based cultural profile
- Submit B-matter, possible scenes (scheduled); be prepared to give updates to class

Assignment for August 3:

Complete first draft of Cultural Profile.

WEDNESDAY AUG 3 REVISIONS

- Peer review of final drafts.
- Discussion on the writing life: Where/how to pitch. Jobs, projects, opportunities to apply cultural reporting.

NH WILL BE OUT OF TOWN. GUESS LECTURER OR MAKEUP CLASS TBA

Assignment for August 10.

Complete revisions for cultural profile.



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WEDNESDAY AUGUST 10: PITCHING

How to Pitch
Where to Pitch

August 17 THE CULTURAL REPORTING LIFE

Building cultural essays into longer projects, including books, multimedia, film, etc.

FINAL PDF OF CULTURAL PROFILE DRAFTS DUE AUGUST 17th.