Advanced Writing Course: **Magazine Writing**  
Gallatin — Spring 2012  
WRTNG-UG 1024-001  
Bobst 836, Tu, 6:20pm-9pm

Instructor: Taylor Antrim, ltantrim@gmail.com, lta2@nyu.edu  
Office Hours: Wednesdays, Gallatin, Room 613, 6:30pm-8pm or by appointment

**Course Description:**  
For more than a century the American print magazine has provided a distinct literary experience—timely subjects, a juxtaposition of text and image, a rich grab bag of styles and forms. In this seminar we’ll look at examples of reporting, profile writing, criticism, and memoir from the pages of magazines past and present. How have magazines, and their distinctive design vocabulary, driven the national conversation? How do we understand "facts" in these publications? What roles do voice, point-of-view, character, dialogue, and plot—the traditional elements of fiction—play? Can criticism be the equal of art? Over the course of the semester students will be expected to discuss readings, shape a feature pitch and write and revise a variety of stories on deadline.

**Required Texts**

*Slouching Towards Bethlehem* by Joan Didion  
*The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* by Tom Wolfe

The majority of readings will be available as pdfs on Blackboard, so be prepared for a lot of printing. **You must bring hard copies of all Blackboard readings to class.**

**Writing Assignments**

4 assignments  
3-4 rounds of written feature pitches  
1 presentation with handout  
1 feature-length story  
Final edit of feature-length story
Attendance

As this course meets only once a week, I expect perfect attendance. I’ll allow one unexcused absence. Any subsequent absences will count against your participation grade—though they can be excused due to illness with a doctor’s note or a note from your academic advisor. **Miss more than three classes and you will receive a failing grade for the semester. There will be no exception to this policy.** If you do miss a class it is your responsibility to gather all reading and complete all assignments for the subsequent class.

Class Preparation

*Participation:*

Speak up! Class participation is a major (30%) part of your grade. To ensure that everyone is involved in discussion, please come to class prepared with a comment or question on the week’s reading. How does the writer or journalist approach his subject? How does she capture the reader’s attention? How are facts communicated? How does the reading compare to other pieces from the semester? **Preparing this comment or question before you get to class is a requirement of the course.** You will be called on to deliver your comment/question aloud.

*Writing assignments:*

Students are expected to follow the assignments as written, turn in stories on time and should not exceed word count limits. As much as a third of a grade may be deducted from any piece each day it is turned in late.

All work written for this class should be original work. No student should repurpose articles they have written elsewhere, and any confirmed cases of plagiarism will result in the student’s automatic failure of the course.

*Presentations:*

Each student is required to give a 15 minute presentation assessing a magazine of his or her choice. He/She should summarize the editorial approach, assess the visual style of the publication, be knowledgeable about its history, including any major controversies the publication has undergone, and offer his or her opinion about the best article in the latest issue. This presentation must be accompanied a copy of the physical magazine to share around and a handout summarizing the points of the presentation.

*Pitches:*

Students will be required to pitch ideas three to four times over the course
of the semester, a process that will result in a final feature-story assignment. A pitch should be tailored to a specific magazine or category of magazines and include images if appropriate. These pitches will be discussed and critiqued in small groups.

*Feature story and revision:*
Each student will write a 2000-2500 word feature story based off of his or her most promising and developed pitch. After turning the piece in and receiving feedback the student will have to revise the story for the end of term.

**Grading**

Your grade will be based on the quality of your written work and on effort. What does effort mean? Attendance, class participation, and on-time delivery of assignments.

Final grades will be composed as follows:
Assignments/Pitches: 30%
Feature and revision: 30%
Attendance/Participation: 30%
Presentations: 10%

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CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1
Jan 24: Introduction

Week 2
Jan 31: BEGINNINGS
Stephen Crane, “When a Man Falls, A Crowd Gathers” (New York Press, 1894) - Blackboard (BB)
Morris Markey, “Drift” (The New Yorker, 1931) - BB
Assignment #1 DUE

Week 3
Feb 7: REPORTING
John Hersey, “Hiroshima” (The New Yorker, 1946) - BB
Feature Pitches DUE round 1 (min 5 ideas)

Week 4
Feb 14: PROFILE
Lillian Ross, “How Do You Like it Now, Gentlemen?” (The New Yorker, 1950) - BB
Assignment #2 DUE

Week 5
Feb 21: TOM WOLFE
all readings from The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby (1963-65)
Introduction
“Clean Fun at Riverhead”
“The First Tycoon of Teen”
“The Marvelous Mouth”
“Loverboy of the Bourgeoisie”
“The Girl of the Year”
Pitches DUE round 2
Week 6  
Feb 28  
JOAN DIDION  
all readings from *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1961-68)  

Preface  
“Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream”  
“John Wayne: A Love Song”  
“Slouching Towards Bethlehem”  
“Guaymas, Sonora”  
“Los Angeles Notebook”  
“Goodbye to All That”  

Assignment #3 DUE

Week 7  
March 6  
WRITER AS SUBJECT  
Hunter S. Thompson, “The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved” (Scanlan’s Monthly, 1970) - BB  
Joan Didion, “The White Album” (various mags, 1968-78) - BB  

Pitches DUE round 3

Week 8  
———SPRING BREAK———

Week 9  
March 20:  
TACKLING WAR  
Michael Herr, “Hell Sucks” (Esquire, August 1968) - BB  
Martha Gellhorn, “High Explosive for Everyone” (Colliers, 1937) - BB  

Assignment #4 DUE

Week 10  
March 27:  
OPINION  
Anthony Lane, “Space Case” (The New Yorker, 2005) - BB  
Martin Amis, “Don Juan in Hull” (The New Yorker, 1993) - BB  

Pitches finalized

Week 11
April 3: **ENIGMA**
Gay Talese, “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold” (Esquire, 1966) - **BB**
John Updike, “Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu” (The New Yorker, 1960) - **BB**

Week 12
April 10: **DAVID FOSTER WALLACE**
“Shipping Out” (Harper’s 1996) - **BB**
“Consider the Lobster” (Gourmet, 2004) - **BB**

Week 13
April 17: **JANET MALCOLM**
“The Journalist and the Murderer” (The New Yorker, part 1, 1989)

**Feature story DUE**

Week 14
April 24: **JANET MALCOLM**
“The Journalist and the Murderer” (The New Yorker, part 2, 1989)

Week 15
May 1: **Final Edit DUE**