

Comm 323 Topics In Journalism Writing: Food Writing

Fall 2019: Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to 10:50 a.m., CAC 201

Professor Elizabeth Fakazis, CAC 327

lfakazis@uwsp.edu

Office Hours: Tu/R 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. and by appointment

About this course

A modern-day Johnny Appleseed, reviving long-forgotten varieties of apples; a group of neighbors transforming an abandoned parking lot into a thriving community garden; a college graduate opening his hometown's only artisanal bakery; a lower-income neighborhood's last grocery store moving elsewhere. These are just some of the compelling and important food stories that journalists have uncovered and shared online and in print; in magazines, newspapers, podcasts, documentaries, blogs, and Instagram; through text, audio, and images.

Over the next 15 weeks, you will immerse yourself in food journalism and its many forms, which include not only restaurant reviews and recipe stories, but also profiles, histories, memoirs, travel features, and yes, news. Through critically reading, viewing documentaries, listening to podcasts, and writing about food, you will develop fundamental media writing skills, including finding compelling stories, conducting background research, identifying and interviewing relevant sources, verifying information, and writing in a style appropriate for different platforms, journalism genres, and audiences. You will also develop skills in packaging stories visually, a fundamental element in stories about food.

By the end of the course, you should be able to pitch the story you are most proud of to a publication; you should also have a challenging final project to add to your portfolio. Whether you are taking this course to develop professional skills or/and to explore a personal passion, you will do well to bring to your endeavors a driving curiosity, healthy dose of skepticism, and, of course, your appetite.

Objectives

By the end of the course, you should:

- Critically analyze a variety of forms of food writing, including news, memoirs, histories, reviews and more
- Identify and explain some major contemporary food controversies and problems
- Explain differences and commonalities between news and lifestyle journalism
- Produce a variety of food stories by finding compelling subjects, conducting background research, interviewing relevant sources, verifying information, writing in a style appropriate for a chosen genre, platform, publication and audience, and combining text with images and, perhaps, sound.
- Revise and copyedit your work to make it stronger and be able to explain the differences between these two tasks.

Assignments and Grading

The major assignments listed below will be included in your final grade. Additional in-class and out-of-class warm-up assignments and peer critiques will be required. While these additional assignments are not graded, they will be quite helpful in helping you develop the knowledge and skills needed to produce compelling food stories – and to successfully complete the graded assignments.

You will work in small editorial teams to critique the personal essay, food history, profile and recipe stories. You may use feedback that you get from me and your peers to improve your work. You may also revise two of these four stories; your grade for the assignment you choose to revise will be based on an average of the grades you received on the first and revised drafts. You will have a chance to get feedback on your issue piece as you are working on it; however, given that it is due the last day of class, you will not have the opportunity to revise this. Detailed guidelines for each assignment will be distributed in class.

- Food Memoir 500-700 words 20 points September 18
- Food history 800-1000 words 20 points October 9
- Profile 800-1000 words 20 points October 30
- Recipe story 400-600 words 20 points November 20
- Issue piece 1000-1200 words 20 points December 17

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

A 94-100%	B 84-86%	C 74-78%	D 64-66%
A- 90-93%	B- 80-83%	C- 70-73%	D- 60-63%
B+ 87-89%	C+ 77-79%	D+ 67-69%	F Below 60%

Texts

We will engage with and critically analyze a variety of food stories in and out of class. Some of these texts will be available on Canvas, others will be available online. I will provide you with several texts that we will use to explore each week's topic and to serve as models for your own writing; I will also ask you to contribute texts that you discover and find to be helpful, interesting, challenging, inspiring.

- Chapters from the *Best Food Writing Series* edited by Holly Hughes (Boston, MA: De Capo Press)
- Additional texts from:
 - *Saveur*, *Eater.com*, *SeriousEats.com*, *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* food sections, and other newspapers and magazines
 - episodes from *Gravy*, produced by the Southern Foodways Alliance and other podcasts
 - posts from *Food 52*, blogs, Instagram, Twitter
 - episodes from NPR's *Hidden Kitchens* series
 - documentaries including "Decoding Ferran Adria," "Alice Waters Delicious Revolution," "The Future of Food," and others

Below is a list of texts you may find useful as a writer. We can collaborate to expand this list as the semester progresses.

- *The Associated Press Style Book* available in print and online
- Strunk, W. & White, E.B. (2019). *Elements of Style*. (New York: Pearson).
- Zinsser, W. (2016). *On Writing Well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction*. (New York: Harper Perennial).
- Truss, L. (2006). *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero tolerance approach to punctuation*, (New York: Averly).
- O'Connor, P. (2019). *Woe is I: The grammarphobe's guide to better English in plain English*. (New York: Riverhead Books).

Policies

Attendance. The success of this course depends on your participation. Please arrive on time for each class, ready to contribute to class discussion and assignments. If you **MUST** miss class, please:

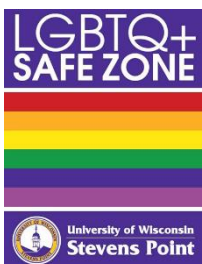
- Notify me in advance. In case of emergency, notify me as soon as possible.
- Arrange to get notes from a fellow student. Do NOT ask me what you missed!
- Arrange to have any work due that day turned in at the beginning of class.
- Understand that there will be NO MAKE-UPS for missed in-class assignments; you will be able to make up a missed exam ONLY if you have a documented excused absence for reasons of medical or other **emergencies**, such as a doctor's note, a funeral notice, or a police report of an accident; emergencies do NOT include family vacations, job obligations, car trouble, faulty alarms, etc.

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal law designed to help ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to education in part by requiring educational institutions to offer reasonable accommodations. Please visit the UWSP [Disability and Assistive Technology Center](#) if you need accommodations, and please talk with me during the first week of class, if possible, about what I can do to ensure you have equal access and opportunity in my classroom.

UWSP Disability and Assistive Technology Center
609 Albertson Hall
715.246.3365, datctr@uwsp.edu, www.uwsp.edu/datc

Academic Integrity. You will be producing new, original work for this class. Whenever you incorporate the work of others into your writing, you must cite that work properly using the format required by specific style manuals (we will discuss this in class). This requirement applies to print and digital sources, and published and unpublished material. For more information, consult [Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students](#).

Technology. Please use laptops, tablets, cell phones and other technology in the classroom only to conduct classroom business when needed. Please email me with questions or concerns in between scheduled class meetings. I check my email twice a day, Monday through Friday, and will respond within 24 hours during regular business hours.



Safety and Respect. Please treat others with respect. If you feel uncomfortable, threatened or silenced because of your race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation, please let me know. You can find links to resources on UWSP's Diversity and Inclusion page, including Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, International Students and Scholars, Multicultural Resource Center, among others.

Working Schedule (May be revised as needed)

Additional REQUIRED readings and “warm-up” and critique assignments will be distributed weekly in class.

Unit One: Telling Life Stories Through Food Sept. 4, 11

- NPR’s *Hidden Kitchens*: Introduction & The George Foreman Grill
- “Night of Lobster,” Robert P. Coffin, *Gourmet*, September 1946
- “Jellied Consomme,” William Hamilton, *Gourmet*, August 1985
- “Getting Jiggy,” Steven Rinella, *Outside*, December 2002

Writing: Food Memoir due Sept. 18

Unit Two: How Americans Learned to Love the Avocado and other Food Histories Sept. 18, 25; Oct. 2

- “So You Want to Pitch a Food Article?” Max Falkowitz, *SeriousEats.com* 2014
- “Forgotten Fruits,” Rowan Jacobsen, from *Mother Jones* (BFW 2013)
- “The Selling of the Avocado,” Olga Khazan, *The Atlantic*, January 2015
- *SeriousEats.com* Food Histories selections

Writing: Food History due Oct. 9

Unit Three: Denizens of the Food World/Writing Profiles Oct. 9, 16, 23, 30

- “Agave Diplomacy, *Gravy* podcast, Southern Foodways Alliance
- “The Cheese Artist,” Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl, from *Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine* (BFW 2013)
- “The Piano Man of Zuni Café,” Rachel Levin, from *Lucky Peach* (BFW 2017)
- Documentary: “Decoding Ferran Adria: Hosted by Anthony Bourdain” (2006)
- Documentary: “Alice Waters and Her Delicious Revolution,” *American Masters*, PBS (2017)
- Select episodes from Netflix *Chef’s Table*

Writing: Profile Story due Oct. 30

Unit Four: More than Just Ingredients/The Recipe Story Nov. 6, 13, 20

- “The New Perfect Tomato Sandwich,” Kristen Miglore, *Genius Recipes*, *Food 52*, August 2019
- Additional posts from *Genius Recipes*
- Posts from EAT, *New York Times*

Writing: Recipe Story due Nov. 20

Unit Five: Food Makes the News Nov. 27; Dec. 4, 11, 17

- “Hogonomics,” Barry Estabrook, from *Gastronomica*
- “Let it Bleed (Humanely),” J. Kenji Lopez-Alt, from *SeriousEats.com* (BFW 2017)
- “Seaweed Dreaming,” Rowan Jacobsen, from *Yankee Magazine* (BFW 2017)
- “What’s the Difference Between a \$240 Sushi Roll and a \$6.95 Sushi Roll?,” Greg Rosalsky, from *Pacific Standard* (BFW 2017)
- We will watch a selection of documentaries on major food issues, such as: *Cowspiracy*, *Food, Inc.*, *Sushi: The Global Catch*; *Bite Size*; *Beer Wars: Brewed in America*; *A Place at the Table*; *Dive!*

Writing: Issue Piece due Tuesday, December 17, 5 p.m.

