PROPOSAL TITLE: Nonfiction Workshop

SPONSOR(S): Carl Hausman and the Department of Journalism and Creative Writing

DEPARTMENT: Journalism and Creative Writing

COLLEGE: Communication

IF LAS CHECK ONE: ___ History/Humanities ___ Math/Sciences ___ Social/Behavioral Sciences

Check one: ___ Undergraduate ___ Graduate

THE ATTACHED NON-GEN-ED PROPOSAL IS BEST DESCRIBED BY THE ITEM(S) CHECKED.

___ New non-gen-ed course

___ Short-term non-gen-ed course

___ Minor curricular changes (fewer than three) to:

___ existing non-gen-ed course

___ non-gen-ed degree requirements

___ major

___ minor, specialization, concentration, track, certificate program

DEPARTMENT
(Signature indicates approval)

Dept. Curriculum Chair / Date

Dept. Chairperson / Date

ACADEMIC DEAN

Approved ___ Not Approved ___ Comments:

Dean's Signature/Date ____________
COLLEGE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
Date of open hearing (if necessary) 5/7/94 Approved ___ Not Approved ___
Comments:

Signature of College Chair/Date: __________________________ 5/7/94

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
Date Received/Processed __________________________
Comments:

Curriculum Chair Signature __________________________ Date Announced At Senate 5/15/94

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT/PROVOST
Approved ___ Not Approved ___ If no, reasons are as follows:
Student Credit Hours ______ Faculty Load Hours ______ Equalized Credit Hours ______
Official Copy & Approval Sheet Filed (Date): ________________ Executive VP/Provost Signature/Date: ____________________________

REGISTRAR
Date Approved Course Description Received ________________ Hegis Taxonomy & Course Number Assigned 0602.392
Registrar Signature/Date __________________________ 5/7/94

NOTIFICATION FORWARD
___ Senate Curriculum Committee Chairperson ___ Academic Dean(s)
___ Department Chairpersons ___ Registrar ___ Sponsor(s)
1. Details of the Proposed Course

This section lists and explains the title, credit hours, course level, prerequisites, time and scale of implementation, curricular effect, adequacy of present resources, and recommended library resources as they pertain to the proposed course.

Course Title:

Nonfiction Workshop.

Sponsor:

Carl Hausman, Ph.D., associate professor of journalism in the College of Communication.
Sponsored by the Department of Journalism and Creative Writing

Credit Hours:

The course will carry 3 credit hours.

Course Level:

Nonfiction Workshop will be a 400-level undergraduate course.

Prerequisites:

For undergraduates: News Reporting II (0602311) and Magazine Article Writing (0602313) or permission of instructor. For graduates: None.

Suggested Time and Scale of Implementation

The course will first be offered in spring, 2003. This course will be offered once per year or more often if demand necessitates.

Curricular Effect:

Nonfiction Workshop will be offered as an elective course for the undergraduate journalism program and for the journalism/creative writing track in Rowan’s Master of Arts in Writing. The course will be open to students throughout the university.
Adequacy of the Present Staff, Resources, and Space Needs.

*Staff:* The course will be taught by teaching faculty on staff, consistent with the College of Communication budget. Initially, the course will be taught by Carl Hausman. Hausman is the author of 21 nonfiction books. Hausman has a professional background in newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and web publishing.

*Resources:* Resources are currently adequate. Nonfiction Workshop requires no special facilities.

**Recommended Library Resources**

The library currently holds a reasonably large collection of books about journalism in general. The listing of current holdings is attached as Appendix A. However, the collection is dated in parts and I recommend the additional purchase of nine books and two periodicals, at a cost of approximately $300 for the books and $150 yearly for the periodicals. The proposed additions are listed in Appendix B. Note that these additions may partially duplicate book requests for other courses proposed for the program.

2. Rationale for the Course

Nonfiction accounts for more than 90 percent of all books published yearly and fuels the overwhelming majority of periodicals.

Writers of nonfiction are part of not only a large market but a dynamic one. Nonfiction publishing is anything but static; emerging trends such as immersion journalism and hyperlinked Web-based nonfiction continue to challenge writers.

Nonfiction Workshop illuminates the connections among various nonfiction disciplines (detailed later in this proposal), and provides students with an over-arching view of the fundamental techniques of nonfiction. In addition, students will learn about the intricacies of markets for nonfiction and the fine points of producing compelling, muscular, and ultimately saleable prose.

The workshop setting allows extended discussions of works in various genres and critique and evaluation by students’ peers. Students analyze and evaluate what works for other writers and students, and apply what they have learned to their own writing.
This course allows students who desire fundamental training in the structure of nonfiction, such as scene construction, use of anecdotes, effective handling of quotes, and organizational structure, to apply these skills to diverse and sometimes experimental genres. The course does not overlap with existing courses in feature writing or creative nonfiction to the extent that any material is redundant. While those formats are introduced in Nonfiction Workshop, they are treated as part of the overall scheme of nonfiction writing. Nonfiction Workshop is not a prerequisite for the feature or literary journalism courses, but will be recommended by a student’s adviser if that student does not possess a command of nonfiction basics. By the same token, because the course covers so many genres and techniques not dealt with in existing courses, it will be useful and relevant to many students who have already completed the feature article course (a more news-and-information-based course) or the literary journalism course (which deals with a highly specialized form of nonfiction).

In sum, Nonfiction Workshop allows students to experiment with varying techniques in order to find their own voices.

The course will be repeatable; students may take a maximum of two semesters. This will allow students who wish to pursue extended projects the freedom to devote considerable amounts of time to the work and receive evaluation that has overall continuity.

3. Essence of the Course

This section lists and explains the course’s objectives, content, and evaluation procedures.

Objectives of the Course

When students complete this course, they will be able to:

- Comfortably execute the mechanics of nonfiction writing: interviewing, research, structuring, transitioning, using quotes and anecdotes to maximum effect.

- Understand the differences and the similarities among primary styles of nonfiction writing, including reporting, features, opinion, reviews, creative nonfiction, explanatory nonfiction, and profile/biography.

- In a workshop setting, critically evaluate the works of others, offer constructive criticism, and apply the criticism from others to their own work.

- Navigate the markets for nonfiction, market their work, and negotiate rights and contracts with agents, editors, and publishers.
- Assess their particular strengths and develop their special skills in nonfiction writing.

- Understand nonfiction from a historical perspective.

- Mine current nonfiction works and learn from the techniques of modern authors as well as students’ peers.

- Critically evaluate nonfiction -- becoming not only better writers but more informed consumer of information.

- Develop a basic understanding of how nonfiction techniques are adapted to new technologies.

- Cultivate an ethical view of the information marketplace and enforce a personal code of ethics when writing nonfiction.

**Topical Outline and Content**

Students will be required to complete the following assignments:

- Writing three major (at least 2,000 words) articles or segments of larger works from differing nonfiction genres, including explanatory, opinion, satire, commentary, newsfeature, entertainment feature, profile, biography, history, documentary script, hard news, and creative nonfiction. At least one of these works must be submitted for publication.

- Several short exercises in mechanics of techniques of nonfiction, including dialog, narrative, and scene creation.

- A presentation about the works of one author, with the goal of explaining to the class what it is in the author’s style that makes the work fly.

- Regular and constructive participation in the workshopping of scenes, segments, and articles in the course.
Over a standard 14-week semester, we will cover the following areas. In most cases, lecture material will be presented in the early portion of the class, followed by workshopping.

Week 1: The World of Nonfiction. Nonfiction’s place in the market...Different genres....Overview of markets and market requirements.

Week 2: The Interconnected World of Nonfiction. How nonfiction developed in relation to what was happening in the rest of the world...Historical overview...Connections among various genres.

Week 3: Structure. Similarities and differences among structures...News versus feature versus opinion versus narrative, etc. ...Why a writer chooses one structure over another. Examination of writing exercises.

Week 4: Mechanics. Scenes, style...Word choice...Dialog...Transitions...Interviews and how to use interview material...Fine points of research.

Week 5: Writing to Persuade. What pushes peoples’ buttons?...Ethos, pathos, logos...Persuasion versus propaganda. Conferences; one-on-one conferences with instructor.

Week 6: Writing to Inform. Making sense of information overload...Explanatory journalism...Ordering main points...How people absorb information and how a writer helps.

Week 7: Writing to Entertain. What’s so funny about nonfiction?...The very serious side of humor...Satire...Narrative and drama and how it relates to nonfiction. Workshop conferences with writing exercises.

Week 8: Writing to Chronicle. Biographies and profiles...Historiography... What writers can learn from historians...The ethics of re-creating scenes you have not witnessed...The difference between history and repeating the words of other historians. Workshop conferences with writing exercises.

Week 9: The Media and the Message. How the medium affects the style, content, and expression...Emerging digital media...Broadcast media. Workshop conferences with writing exercises.

Week 10: Ethics and Law for the Nonfiction Writer. Rule-based versus ends-versus-the-means ethics...Case histories...Libel and privacy...The limits of liberties taken when writing nonfiction.

Week 11: Markets. A comprehensive look at markets, editors, agents, contracts, rights, and resales. Workshop conferences on sections of final projects.
Week 12: The Future of the Nonfiction Writer. Advancing your career...Writing books...Choosing a specialty...How future trends might impact the writer.

Week 13: Workshop on final projects.

Week 14: Workshop and concluding remarks.

**Evaluation and Grading Procedure of Students**

Students will be graded on their three major articles, their short writing exercises, and their presentation. A portion of the final grade will be based on class participation in mutual discussion and critique, a process that will take place during most class sessions. One of the articles (or, if the student desires, a sample book chapter and a book outline) must be submitted for publication. While the schedules of publishers -- who may take many months to make decisions -- do not permit the luxury of exhibiting the success of the effort to the class, students must demonstrate that they have researched the markets and the publisher and appropriately contacted and correspondence with the publisher.

**Course Evaluation**

Standard student evaluations will be administered during the final weeks of the course. The course will be reevaluated by the department of Journalism and Creative Writing after the initial semester.

**4. Consultation**

This course does not substantially duplicate content of any existing course. Letters from interested parties are attached in Appendix C.
5. Catalog Description

Nonfiction Workshop provides an in-depth examination of nonfiction genres, including news reporting, features, opinion, immersion journalism, documentary, biography, criticism, and social commentary and analysis. Lectures cover the methods, techniques, and ethics of nonfiction. Various nonfiction markets and market requirements are discussed. Students read model selections in various nonfiction genres and experiment with writing their own similar selections, which are discussed and critiqued. Extensive workshop-style evaluation and constructive criticism will be offered. Students complete substantial published articles and/or book selections in their chosen nonfiction genres.
Current Library Holdings

Books About Broadcast News Reporting and Writing


Books about “Authorship” of Television News


Books About “Authorship” of Radio News


Books About the General Study of News


Carter, Jimmy, 1924. We are prepared to meet confrontation or cooperation [Sound recording]. 1978.


Books About Political Aspects of Television News


Books About Print Journalism and Journalism in General


McClendon, Sarah, Reporting from the White House [sound recording]. 1982.


*Journalism Periodicals*

The Author's & writer's who's who. London: Burke's Peerage, Ltd.

Columbia journalism review.

Editor & publisher.

Journalism & mass communication quarterly.

The Journalism quarterly.

Nieman reports.
Appendix B:
Suggested Additions to the Library’s Holdings

Books


Periodicals

American Journalism Review
Journalism and Mass Communication Educator.
Writers Digest
Appendix C
Letters of Consultation
February 13, 2002

Dr. Carl Hausman
Chair
Department of Journalism/Creative Writing
Bozorth Hall
Rowan University
Glassboro, NJ 08028

Dear Carl:

I read your course proposal for Nonfiction Workshop. The content of this course is important for those students who wish to enter freelance writing or who wish to develop stronger skills for article writing. While many critical areas are covered in the course outline, I do hope there is an emphasis on the workshop model in this proposal and students are given opportunities to work on their ideas in a collaborative setting. The workshop aspect is also important for developing strong nonfiction writers. I’m sure you will address this concern in your completed proposal.

I look forward to being able to add this course to our offerings starting with the spring 2003 semester.

Best,

Diane Penrod, Ph.D.
Graduate Program Advisor
February 11, 2002

Dr. Carl Hausman, Chair  
Journalism and Creative Writing  
College of Communication  
Rowan University

Dear Carl,

I have reviewed the following curriculum proposals you plan to submit to the Senate Curriculum committee: Journalism Ethics; Nonfiction workshop; Principles and Practices of Publishing; and Writing the Nonfiction Book. This is a letter of support for all four proposals. Your Master's in Writing program has quickly been deemed valuable and worthy in the Delaware Valley region. These additional courses will only strengthen this degree.

It is evident that much time and consideration were used while drafting these proposals. Your effort has paid off well as these proposals are well written and argued as necessary courses for your program.

It is good to know that these courses allow you to "round out" your graduate program and have all necessary courses "on the book" for the foreseeable future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Cindy Corison, Chair  
Communication Studies  
College of Communication  
Rowan University
February 11, 2002

Dr. Carl Hausman, Chair
Journalism & Creative Writing
Rowan University

Dear Carl:

I am delighted to support your proposal for the Nonfiction Workshop course.

An abundance of evidence shows that the nonfiction market has expanded tremendously in recent times – and it continues to grow. But to successfully contribute in the marketplace, communication professionals must appreciate the dynamic nature of successful nonfiction publishing.

This course offers a comprehensive look at the intricate publishing environment. And, importantly, it offers students the opportunity to experience this environment – and experiment with it.

This course will be a strong addition to the College’s M.A. in Writing program.

Sincerely,

Edward H. Moore
Chair,
Public Relations/Advertising

EHM/jlh
Janice Rowan  
Chair, Department of Composition and Rhetoric  
College of Communication  
Rowan University

Date: Feb. 13, 2002  
To: Dr. Carl Hausman  
From: Janice Rowan, Chair, Composition and Rhetoric  
Subject: Course Proposals

The Journalism/Creative Writing track of our M.A. in Writing program will be greatly strengthened by the four courses you propose.

Journalism Ethics is a course which is sorely needed to help writers with crucial decisions about privacy, accuracy, and other essential topics. The course requirements reflect a necessary rigor, including the three research papers and a formal presentation.

Principles and Practices of Publishing will no doubt attract a large audience among the graduate students in our program and across the campus. It has particular appeal in that you plan to treat many different kinds of publishing, from books and newspapers to electronic documents. The work on analyzing trends in the publishing industry will also provide students with a fine background for their professional work.

The pair of courses—Nonfiction Workshop and Writing the Nonfiction Book—are essential to rounding out the offerings in the graduate program. Since there is considerable interest among the students in our program in mastering the skills necessary to author a work of nonfiction, the course should be well received. Many aspects of the course content—including the emphasis on technology, the connection of nonfiction to other genres, and the exploration of publishing markets—are most appropriate. Having students submit a manuscript for possible publication challenges students to achieve excellence.

I support the approval of these four additional courses to the M.A. in Writing.