
Name	Maureen Boyle
Department	Communications
What course are you proposing to collaborate on?	JRN309 Narrative Writing
In which semester would you be teaching this class?	
Project Title	Devil in the details

Project Proposal (250-500 words)

Show don't tell. That's the mantra of narrative writers and that's what students need to learn. Details are what make effective non-fiction narrative stories work: the color of a wall, the sound of a bell, the exact age and size of a building. The minute details are what students will need to find for their stories in JRN 309 Narrative Writing. But many students still find it difficult to find what they need. Sometimes they don't even know how to look for information, whether it is a search of original records, in the library or in a Google search. Knowing how to search for information is the first step in both non-fiction narrative writing and news writing but it appears many students, even those who consider themselves tech-savvy, don't know how to do a sophisticated online search to get the right information. They don't know what string of words to use to get the best results and they don't know how to narrow the search so they aren't overwhelmed with information. They don't know how to search for information on where the final information might eventually be found. I've discovered a heavy reliance by students on information from msnbc.com and other online news sites - without double checking the original source to see if the information is reported correctly. Working with library staff, students in JRN309 will look for historic and current details to be woven into original non-fiction narrative pieces they will be crafting for class. The stories will range from a short historic-based piece crafted from documents and interviews to longer "story-telling" pieces. They will see how the details - no matter how small - found in their background searches can help craft a richer story for the reader.

The system used can also be expanded for JRN100 Newswriting and Reporting and JRN101 Advanced Newswriting and Reporting, where students report and write original news and feature stories. In both of those classes, it was clear to me that students did not know where to find basic statistics in government databases or how to "track back" and verify information found in some other news stories.

Course Description/Syllabus

Students will learn how to report, research and write non-fiction narrative stories in classic story telling style (no first person pieces allowed). They will be interviewing a variety of people and research details to be included in the stories developed throughout the semester. They will also be reading pieces by some of the masters of non-fiction narrative over the years, including Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, John Sack, Thomas French and Tom Hallman, and doing research for papers on topics relating to those authors.