

Nellie Errett

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Reflection

Jour 3162-002

Feature Writing Self-Assessment

My name is Nellie Errett, and I am majoring in Communications with a concentration in Public Relations, and a minor in Journalism at UNC Charlotte. These three fields of study require different formats of writing, mostly in AP style, including byline articles, press releases, and essays. I found my love for journalism in high school, as I was a part of my high school's publication titled "The Omniscient" for three years, earning the Social Media Manager position for two of those years. In the beginning of the Fall 2025 semester, I was hoping to grow in areas of creative aspects in writing during my JOUR 3162 course, which was titled "Feature Writing." I was used to more objective elements of writing, such as breaking news, so I thought this course would help me develop reporting skills from a more creative approach.

This semester I have had the opportunity to grow this aspect of my writing, which I significantly noticed in my place feature piece about the lake at the Shoppes in Charlotte, N.C. The lead sentence of the piece was: "Wind travels through the lake by The Shoppes at University Place in Charlotte, N.C., creating ridges in the water and rustling through the weeping willow trees." In this sentence, I was able to use imagery and creativity to convey what the lake looked like during my reporting, which differs from breaking-news-style writing. I also learned about formatting in all of the articles from this course, including the "-30-" or "####" that needs to be at the bottom of each page, along with the word "MORE" that needs to be in the bottom heading of each page. I also learned that there are ways to report information from an interview without directly quoting the individual. In a mini feature article, I wrote, "Blue was able to find this community through chance, as groups were not chosen by the students themselves." In our interview, Blue explained the process of how groups were chosen for his project, but in my writing, I tied the information back to the angle of community.

The writing process our feature writing course used in reporting was helpful for time management and breaking down the articles in a way that was easier to write. The process started with brainstorming ideas, and researching about the person, place, or topic to find background information for the piece. In that research, you find different people to interview, which will tie in the human element of the story, which is important in feature writing. After conducting the interview either in person or digitally, you can write specific details that are

personal observations, enhancing the story's creative elements. All of these details and research can be drafted into a story, making sure to include an engaging lead sentence and quotations between information paragraphs in the article. The draft would be edited by proofreading, then by peers or a professional writer, and in our course, that was classmates and our professor. Techniques such as extensive brainstorming, research, and peer editing were effective in ensuring an in-depth story that conveys the subject well.

Throughout this course I have learned that I am a writer that prefers in-person reporting. I found it very interesting to go out and experience the reporting, places, and subjects for myself. For my place feature, I went with a friend to the lake and spoke to strangers about the place, and walked around the perimeter of the lake and enjoyed its beauty firsthand. It made the assignment fun, and I was very observant in picking up details that would be included in the story. This was similar in writing my mini profile feature stories, where I interviewed multiple people throughout the semester, and I had the opportunity to hear many different inspiring stories of people with different passions. This relates to a strength in my reporting that I have found, which is interviewing. I appreciate meeting new people and learning about them and what they are passionate about. However, a weakness that I would like to alleviate is awkward sentence structures. After this semester I would like to strengthen my writing skills in the way I structure sentences because I think that could be improved.

Overall, this course has developed my writing skills through creativity, extensive brainstorming, in-person reporting, and more. After revisiting my work from this semester in the JOUR 3162 course, I have found that my pieces are more interesting to read than previous semesters. Sentences are slightly less awkward, and there is more "soul" in the stories. There are human elements embedded in the pieces, which creates more interest for an audience. I have enjoyed this course and am excited to move forward with more journalistic writing in the future.