Media Writer Profile — due Thursday, Oct. 18

A personality profile is a feature that draws a portrait of one individual. The person about whom you’re writing is the main source of information for the piece. Some profiles also include comments from those around your subject, excerpts from stories about him or her and quotes from his or her past work (in print, video or online).

Select an active media writer whose work interests you. Call him or her to set up an interview of about half an hour. Prepare your questions (need not be written, though) and do basic research on the individual. Then, during your session, be sure to take lots of detailed notes so you can write and quote accurately. Direct and indirect quotes add life and texture to your profile. Routine information, on the other hand, is best summarized and paraphrased.

The story (written media-style in third person) should be two to three double-spaced manuscript pages in length. Include a title or headline. Be sure to subtract yourself -- that is, avoid the temptation to use your own value judgments (“talented, ambitious, successful”) without including specific evidence so readers can make these judgments for themselves.

Your interview session should be concluded by Thursday, Oct. 11. Email a report on who you’ve interviewed and the main point of your story by that date. (nancyh@mnstate.edu)

The finished interview is due Thursday, Oct. 18.

Feature or News Feature: College Students and Alcohol — due Thursday, Nov. 15

Select a specific angle for your story within the impossibly broad topic of college students and alcohol. This is not a morality play! Consider the wider range of possible specific stories: Students who work their way through college as servers; the responsibility of not serving underage customers; how alcohol is approached in different social settings (small towns vs. cities, for example); health risks of drinking alcohol; alcohol use and school success; or another angle that appeals to you.

You’ll need a minimum of three sources. At least two must be "live" interviews; the third can be a published source online or in print. You’ll also need at least two categories of sources (first person, second degree, expert or "man in the street"). All statements of fact must be attributed to their source. No anonymous sources!

Length is two to three double-spaced pages. Write in media-style third-person voice. No footnotes are needed; instead, work published sources into the narrative of the story.

Feature or News Feature: Open Topic — due Dec. 6

Follow the same overall specs as in the previous assignment ... but choose a topic and narrow angle of specific interest to you. It could be related to a career interest, hobby, activity or some other topic that fascinates you.