

Non-Fiction: Writing for Fun and Profit

WRCR6205

Course Outline

Description: If you want to learn how to create compelling non-fiction profiles and articles and the secrets of getting your story ideas noticed by editors and publications, this course is for you. Information, examples and individual and group exercises will help you learn how to improve and polish your non-fiction writing, how to locate markets for your writing and get your work published. You will learn how to write query letters that stand out, and write features for publications, e-zines and blogs that pay you for the article you write on topics that interest you. This course will provide you with hands-on writing assignments and the opportunity to receive feedback to hone those skills.

Course Goals: This course covers aspects of non-fiction as an overall view of this type of writing, learning about leads, getting a taste of the markets and range of publication possibilities, analyzing magazines, writing a profile of a fellow student and other writing assignments and information to help you move into the publication market. A mix of lecture and workshop will give you the basic tools to start you on your way to getting your work published.

Course Objectives:

At completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Analyze magazine, e-zines and blogs to find the right markets for your work
- Learn how to conduct interviews with article sources
- Understand the parts of the article – voice, lead and ending, structure
- Learn self-editing tools to help you improve your writing
- Know how to approach publishers and editors with your story ideas to find the right market for your work

Attendance & Assignment Requirements:

Students must **miss no more than two classes** and **submit 4 out of 5 of assignments** in order to receive a “complete” for this course. Completion reports will be issued by Continuing Studies.

Code of Student Conduct:

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For the complete Code of Student Conduct:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/board/code.pdf>

Course Schedule (some alterations may be made as we move along in class):

Week 1: Introduction - Analyzing the Magazine Market

Discussion of non-fiction writing, the role of the freelancer, the importance of knowing your audience. Learning to deconstruct magazines, target market, etc. In-class analysis of magazines. The importance of interviewing, research, taking notes and/or recording interviews, techniques for drawing out information, and taking notes.

Assignment 1: Follow instructions on handout to profile a magazine. Please bring your Magazine Profile and a copy of the magazine to class in two weeks.

Week 2: Writing a Profile

Discussion about how to write a profile and useful elements. Interview workshop: you will be given time to interview a fellow classmate followed by class feedback and further discussion about putting together the article.

Assignment 2: Write a profile of your classmate in 500 words or less.

Week 3: Finding your Voice and Writing Well

Discussion of magazine analysis assignments. Brief analysis magazine analysis sharing. Discussing your profiles. The challenges and triumphs. How to write light, tight and bright and keep readers reading – eliminating clutter and grammar tips. The Lead. Your writing voice.

Week 4: Types of writing, Where to find story ideas

Niche vs. Generalist. Where to find story ideas. Personal styles of non-fiction writing – essays, experiences observations and other types of writing. In-class sharing of articles (time permitting).

Assignment 3: Write 600 word, or less, article on one of the topics handed out in class.

Week 5: Query Letters & Writers Guidelines

- Query Letters: What's the magic formula? How to write query letters that stand out.
- Writer's Guidelines and how to stylize your queries to meet the publication's target market
- In-class sharing of articles (time permitting)

Assignment 4: Write one good query letter. Make sure you address it to the publication you want to write the story for – this might entail a call to their office.

Week 6: Writing for Trade Magazines, Blogs, Finding Story Sources

In class sharing of assignments. Writing for Trade and Organizational Magazines – what are they and why are they a lucrative market? Blogging Where to find sources

Assignment 5: Write an article approximately 600 words for a trade or organizational magazine.

Week 7: Running a Freelance Business and other types of freelance writing/Working with editors

Setting up your business and writing your bio. How to approach a busy editor. What they are – and aren't – looking for. How to polish ideas to make them more appealing to the publication. Being flexible and willing to change your idea to meet the editor's needs. Working with editors – how to approach a busy editor. Meeting deadlines, etc. What NOT to do. The importance of rewriting and looking at other angles to make your work marketable. Sharing class writing assignments.

Week 8: Copyright, Ethics, Negotiating pay rates, Recycling and Reselling

Writers need to be prepared to negotiate rates with publishers and clients. Discussion on how to negotiate better rates, kill feels. Other topics will include copyright and ethics related to various sectors of the industry, recycling and reselling your work. Sharing class writing assignments.