

Journalistic Writing Spring 2010

Prof. Gord Sellar

Course Overview:

The purpose of this course is for students to master general (ie. non-academic) writing skills at a higher level than was studied in Reading & Writing 1 and 2, and Essay Writing 1 and 2, by giving students a chance to produce work using journalistic writing styles:

Students will learn how to brainstorm and generate interesting topics for articles

Students will produce a series of "pitches" (proposed articles); the best of these will be written up into articles, and published in the CUF Magazine and CUF Webzine accompanied by original photographs or other student-created multimedia content.

Students will learn to use bookkeeping to facilitate effective and reliable research.

Students will master and use sensible research methods for journalistic writing, including interviewing techniques and more.

Students will gain an appreciation of their own critical capacity and learn to read their own work critically by engaging as critical readers with the work of their peers, co-editing peer work, and engaging in rewrites as per the request of their instructor.

Students will produce interesting, engaging writing in English for an audience of their peers and for other likely readers of the CUF Magazine.

Teaching Method

Classes will involve regular meetings, hopefully in an office-like setting. There will be occasional lectures but more often discussions, brainstorming sessions, updates, (verbal) progress reports, as well as feedback sessions, assigned exercises, skills-troubleshooting sessions addressing challenges faced by students, and problem-solving or help-related discussion of issues faced and raised by students themselves. There will be reading for homework, and peer review/critique sessions as well.

Homework

This course will involve a considerable amount of research (reading, online, interviews, and more), writing, reading, and editing. Students will have solid deadlines which they will be expected to meet, with consequences for failure being considerable. Student work and assessment will be individual, but in some tasks, such as editing, a degree of teamwork is expected as well. Also, students may get the opportunity to receive a lecture from the CUF Club editor or staff members, or accompany them to the printing office, for a better understanding of the full journalistic process. See Assessment (below) for more details.

Textbook

There will be no textbook for the course, but readings will be assigned from resources available online. Students will occasionally be instructed to buy an English-language newspaper or magazine.

Should you wish to explore journalistic or other media not encompassed in this course, please feel free to ask me for recommendations. I will be more than happy to help you find materials which are suited to your needs and worth exploring.

Assessment

As you can see below, course assessment is not heavily focused on examinations.

General Class Participation/Attitude – 20%
Article Pitches, Drafts, and Edits – 40%
Brainstorming/Feedback Sessions – 25%
Midterm Self-Assessment – 5%
Final Self-Assessment – 5%
Department Events Attendance: 5%

However, a 0% in any of the above marks will result in an incomplete grade. Students must at least attempt all areas of the course in order to receive a passing grade.

While attendance is not a graded component of this course, if you do not regularly attend, you cannot participate in brainstorming/feedback sessions, and of course your class participation and attitude grades will suffer. These two components make up 45% of the course grade. Therefore students would be wise to miss as few classes as possible.

My contact information:

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Class Website: <http://gordsclass.com>

Course Outline:

This outline is subject to revision at any time. However, the deadlines remain relatively firm, as they follow the printing schedule for the print edition of the CUF. Pay careful attention to deadlines in this course!

Week 1: Intro & Paperwork, Brainstorming
Week 2: Article Pitches, Assignment of Desk Features & Other Articles.
Week 3: Research Methods Workshop, Drafts Critique
Week 4: Drafts Critique/Feedback. Research Workshop.
Week 5: Drafts Critique/Feedback. Proofreading Workshop. Possible trip to CUF office to see layout process.
Week 6: Drafts Critique/Feedback. Articles due by last class of the week.
Week 7: Webzine Publication Workshop, Webzine goes live. Brainstorming for Issue 2. Assignment of articles.
Week 8: Midterm Exam week -- Midterm Self-Assessment due.
Week 9: Drafts Critique/Feedback. Style workshop.
Week 10: Drafts Critique/Feedback
Week 11: Drafts Critique/Feedback. Articles due by end of week.
Week 12: Brainstorming for Issue 3. Assignment of Articles. Proofreading Workshop. Possible trip to print shop.
Week 13: Drafts Critique/Feedback.
Week 14: Drafts Critique/Feedback
Week 15: Drafts Critique/Feedback
Week 16: Final Exam week: Portfolio meetings (unless finished in week 15?); Final Self-Assessment due.