

Department of English and Writing Studies

**2225G -650: The Inside Track- Sports Writing
Winter 2021**

Mark Kearney
mkearney@uwo.ca



**Office hours: Wednesdays 2 to 4 pm via Zoom
or by appointment on Zoom**

Course Description and Objectives

For decades, the sports pages have been an integral part of the daily newspaper and more recently the online versions. Sports makes up its own section in practically every daily paper on the continent, and in the past 60 years or so has spread widely into the magazine world. Sports TV channels are an integral part of every cable or network operation, there are countless websites devoted to sports, and the sports themselves have become multi-billion dollar enterprises. The best sports writing combines elements of history, event coverage, biography, narrative, and opinion. This course will give you the chance to delve into some of these different genres while offering you the chance to discuss sports online regularly. You should also develop skills in the ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences. You will also develop skills in researching and writing stories, revising and editing, and meeting the deadlines that sports writing often requires. Strong emphasis will be on the practicalities of writing for different audiences and in different sub-genres of the field.

Required Text

In lieu of a text, you will be reading a variety of sources online throughout the course. You are also strongly encouraged to read about sports daily and to watch events on television.

Recommended Text:

Stofer, Kathryn T. et al., 2010 *Sports Journalism: an Introduction to Reporting and Writing*, Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. (I will try to put this on two-hour reserve at Weldon Library for anyone who's interested)

Course Requirements

Covering a sports event (live or virtually)	25%	Due Feb. 2
Sports Feature Article	40%	Due March 8
Sports column	30%	Due March 31
Online discussion/exercises/workshopping	5%	ongoing

Assignment Format

All assignments should be double-spaced, **in Word** (no pdfs, Pages etc.), and as close to the assigned word count as possible (within 10% either way is acceptable). Assignments should be submitted via the OWL site for the course. Emailed assignments may be acceptable in certain circumstances.

Submitting Assignments

I don't like to penalize late assignments; however, since one of the purposes of this course is to familiarize you with the writing profession, you need to know that **deadlines are crucial**. For this reason, all assignments will be due on the date specified **unless you negotiate an extension at least 48 hours in advance**. Assignments are submitted electronically. **Late assignments will be penalized at 3 marks per day, including weekends.**

Attendance Policy

Obviously we do not meet formally as a "class" in an online course. Therefore "attendance" and participation on the Discussion Board (Forum) are intertwined. Online classes are generally self-paced, so you must attend class (defined as logging into our OWL section) and participate by introducing yourself, and posting questions and thoughts each week based on the given week's set discussion topic(s) **a minimum of two times weekly. This means at least two separate posts per week (a week is defined as running from Monday to Sunday), at least one of which must be a "new" post, and not just a reaction to someone else.** Extended absences, defined as a failure to post into the OWL classroom for more than seven consecutive days, must be coordinated with the instructor.

Postings on the Discussion Board must have the following characteristics:

- Must contribute something meaningful to the Board;
- Must support your opinion with sufficient reasons or evidence;
- Must display good grammar and organization.

Postings should not:

- Contain disrespectful or insulting language;
- Be excessively long or excessively short;
- Be unrelated to the week's topic;
- Say things that do not contribute anything, e.g. "I agree with you" or "nice comment".

- I will track your postings to the discussion Board, and it will be part of your 5% Online Discussion/ Exercises/Workshopping mark indicated above. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements **may result in your final grade in the course being reduced by 10% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 72).**

Although this is an online course, you are expected to check into the OWL site on a regular basis, to participate in online discussions and to interact online with your fellow classmates by workshopping your drafts as much as online allows you. I also encourage you to join me during Zoom office hours or to set up an appointment on Zoom if you have questions or concerns. This policy will be waived only for medical or compassionate reasons. If your absence is extended and prolonged (over one week of continuous non-attendance), then you should discuss it with your academic advisor in your home faculty, who may require documentation. That advisor may then contact all of your instructors. See also: ‘**Medical Accommodation Policy**’ below.

Note: a class meeting missed in order to write a test, exam, or other form of ‘make-up class’ in another course will count as non-attendance, and will attract penalties as defined above if applicable. Instructors at the University of Western Ontario **shall not require** a student to write a make-up test or similar at times which conflict with that student’s other scheduled class times. If you are asked or ‘required’ to do this, you should immediately contact an academic counsellor in your Dean’s office. If you elect to miss a class in order to write such a test, that is your choice; your absence will not be excused.

Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism

The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

Prerequisites

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

The prerequisite for registration in this course is a) a final grade of 65 or more in one of Writing 2101F/G, 2125F/G (or the former 2121F/G), 2111F/G, or 2131F/G, or b) a final grade of 70 or more in one of Writing 1000F/G, 1030F/G, 1031F/G, or c) Special Permission of the department.

Accommodation Policy

Note: the official Western Accommodation Policy appears below. This is in effect, but may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change.

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors by email within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, Aegrotat Standing

Please refer to the “Information for All Students in a Writing Course” for more detailed information.

Briefly, remember that your instructor does not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean’s office of your home faculty.

NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER April 12, 2021. OUTSTANDING WORK AS OF THIS DATE WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO.

Class Meeting Schedule

Date	Meeting focus	Readings
Week 1 Starts Jan. 11	Introduction/ Sports Writing Basics	I will provide you a link to a current sports story in a newspaper from this week. Also read Chapter 1: From Sports Fan to Sports Reporter at this link: http://books.google.ca/books?id=vn30_SPUn44C&printsec=frontcover&dq=field+guide+to+covering http://irenebakistan.weebly.com/sports-writing.html
Week 2 Jan. 18	Writing a sports news story/ Covering events	http://www.cjr.org/essay/back_to_the_future_1.php?page=all http://www.jprof.com/going-online-workshop/teaching-sports-reporting/day-1-writing-the-game-story/
Week 3 Jan. 25	The art of interviewing and challenges with athletes, coaches, etc. Other types of sports coverage	https://www.sportsmediaguy.com/blog/2018/10/8/interview-tips-and-advice-for-sports-journalists https://www.writermag.com/improve-your-writing/nonfiction/tips-for-rookie-sports-writers/
Week 4 Feb. 1	Introduction to feature writing	https://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/article-kickback-club-fosters-love-of-running-in-underserved-toronto/ <i>Note how this story starts with people, gives you a sense right away about what they do and has several quotes throughout to liven up the story.</i>

Week 5 Feb 8	More on Features. Headlines and editing	Read this sports feature: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/hockey/hockey-night-in-hershey-minor-league-hockey-with-major-league-fans/article4709124/ Write your sports-related bucket list — three you can likely do and three pie-in-the-sky items. Post that on OWL before the next class
	Reading Week Feb. 15-19 No class	
Week 6 Feb. 22	Improving your writing and more feature tips	Read a long-form sports feature. Several to choose from at https://www.si.com/sports-illustrated/2018/12/20/the-25-most-read-stories-2018-sports-illustrated Although these stories are more than two years old you may find ones that hold up even now. Good features often do.
Week 7 March 1	Writing from news conferences. Refresher on style and grammar Workshop Features.	Working on your feature which is due March 8 Read http://journalism.about.com/od/reporting/a/pressconf.htm
Week 8 March 8	Writing from Personal Experience and Sports Columns	https://sportsfieldguide.org/2014/11/04/take-chances-vary-approaches-when-writing-sports-columns/
Week 9 March 15	Making money from your writing.	Read this column from Cathal Kelly of the Globe and Mail and note how he makes his points with humour even if you might disagree with him https://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/article-its-time-to-get-rid-of-team-nicknames-altogether/ Post a favourite recent sports column on Forums and explain why you liked it. Read
Week 10 March 22	Researching sports events. Knowing markets Why Numbers Count in Sports Writing	http://www.grantland.com/story/ /id/9419687/chicago-blackhawks-win-2013-stanley-cup
Week 11 March 29	Sports Writing in Other Media	https://mediaethicsinitiative.org/2018/12/20/the-wild-west-of-sports-journalism/ Column due on March 31

Week 12 April 5	More On Markets/Sports Writing Ethics
--------------------------	---