

Department of English and Writing Studies

2225G-650: The Inside Track- Sports Writing
Winter 2023

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Office hours: Wednesdays 10:30 to noon 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. 6
Sports Feature Article	40%	Due March 7
Sports column	30%	Due March 29
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. **There are no exams in this course.**

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 a Distance Studies course. Therefore "attendance" and participation on the Discussion Forum on OWL are intertwined. Distance Studies 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) **at least 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 rather than just a reply to someone else's. Extended absences, defined as a failure to post into the OWL classroom for more than a week, must be coordinated with the instructor. **The use of racist or any language that works against the values of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will not be tolerated.**

Postings on the Discussion Forum must have the following characteristics:

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

Postings should also 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 up to 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 read the material and your fellow students' comments, participate in online discussions and to interact online

with your fellow classmates by workshopping your drafts as much as online allows you. 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.

See also: ‘**Medical Accommodation Policy**’ below.

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/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.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
<https://www.turnitin.com/>

Medical Accommodation Policy

The link to the official Western/Writing Studies Medical Accommodation Policy appears below. This remains in effect but may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change. Western has a comprehensive policy covering requests for accommodation by students who are not registered with Student Accessibility Services. All students should review this policy here, under the heading ‘Accommodation for Illness – Undergraduate Students’, noting the procedures, restrictions, and notice requirements:

http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#Page_12

Academic Accommodation and Consideration

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 in Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

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. For the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

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

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, 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 at

<https://www.multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>

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.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a 1000- or 2000-level course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. Generally, students can expect some form of feedback on their performance in a course before the drop date.” March 7 is the last day to drop a first-term half-course without academic penalty.

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.

NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER April 10, 2023. OUTSTANDING WORK AS OF THIS DATE WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO.

Class Meeting Schedule

Date	Meeting focus	Readings
Week 1 Starts Jan. 9	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://irenebakisan.weebly.com/sports-writing.html
Week 2 Jan. 16	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. 23	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 Jan. 30	Introduction to feature writing Why Numbers Count in Sports Writing	Completing your game coverage assignment which is due Feb. 6. 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 6	More on Features. Headlines and editing	<p>Read this sports feature:</p> <p>http://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/hockey/hockey-night-in-hershey-minor-league-hockey-with-major-league-fans/article4709124/</p> <p>Write your sports-related bucket list — three you can likely do and three pie-in-the-sky items. Post that on the OWL Forum before the next class</p>
Week 6 Feb. 13	Improving your writing and more feature tips	<p>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</p> <p>Although these stories are more than four years old you may find ones that hold up even now. Good features often do.</p> <p>You can also try https://www.reviewjournal.com/sports/our-most-read-sports-stories-from-2019-1924763/</p>
	Reading Week Feb. 20-24 No Classes	
Week 7 Feb. 27	Writing from news conferences. Refresher on style and grammar Workshop Features.	<p>Working on your feature which is due March 7</p> <p>Read http://journalism.about.com/od/reporting/a/pressconf.htm</p>
Week 8 March 6	Writing from Personal Experience and Sports Columns	https://sportsfieldguide.org/2014/11/04/take-chances-vary-approaches-when-writing-sports-columns/
Week 9 March 13	Making money from your writing.	<p>Please 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</p> <p>https://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/article-the-show-must-go-on-amid-a-flood-of-covid-19-cases-because-well-the/</p> <p>Post a favourite recent sports column on Forums and explain why you liked it.</p>
Week 10 March 20	Freelance sports writing. Knowing markets	<p>Read https://www.nba.com/news/stephen-curry-changed-game-long-before-3-point-milestone</p> <p>This is a long feature, but even just reading some of it will give you an idea of how in-depth you can go with a sports story.</p>
Week 11 March 27	Sports Writing in Other Media Sports Writing Ethics	<p>Please read https://mediaethicsinitiative.org/2018/12/20/the-wild-west-of-sports-journalism/</p> <p>Column due on March 29</p>

Week 12 April 3 -10	More On Markets/ Ethics
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