

Department of English and Writing Studies

Writing 2203G — 650

Writing for Publication: From Deadline to Headline

Winter 2026

Instructor: Melanie Chambers

Email: mchambe4@uwo.ca

Office hours: by appointment on Zoom

Text: In lieu of a text, there will be a range of handouts and/or links to websites posted on the syllabus and the course OWL site for you to read.

Recommended Texts:

Ivor Shapiro. Editor. The Bigger Picture: Elements of Feature Writing. 2009. Emond Montgomery Publications Limited. (on reserve in Weldon) Approx: \$41

William Zinsser. *On Writing Well: the Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction.* 30th anniversary edition. Quill Harper Resource. (on reserve in Weldon) Approx: \$26

Course Description and Requirements

From Deadline to Headline is designed to teach students how to write for various forms of publication including news stories, profiles, and magazine feature articles. Students will learn the ability to communicate information, arguments, and analyses accurately and reliably, orally and in writing to a range of audiences. Students will develop skills in the research, writing, editing, formatting and marketing of materials for publication. Students will acquire the ability to develop story ideas, research, interview, write query letters, produce features, revise and edit, prepare and meet the requirements of specific genres and publications. Strong emphasis will be given to the practicalities of writing as a career, including getting started, working towards success (and coping with rejection) and learning how to manage the organizational side. Students will be encouraged to submit their work to outside publications when applicable.

Assignment Format

All assignments should be double-spaced as they are easier to grade and as close to the assigned word count as possible. Assignments 10% over the assigned word count will be deducted 10% of your grade. Please include your name, the course name and professor's name on the top left hand side of the first page. **PUT YOUR NAME IN THE SUBJECT HEADING**, as well as the title of the assignment.

A separate title page is not required. **Assignments must be submitted via the OWL site for the course.** Emailed assignments may be acceptable in certain circumstances.

Assignments

1. Local news story	25%
2. Profile of classmate	30%
3. Feature Article	35%
4. Feature pitch	10%

****Failure to submit first drafts for editing will result in a 10% deduction of your mark. Second, if a student does not edit their partners' work, it will result in a further 10% deduction.**

Assignments Submission

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. Following any other policy would be an injustice to you as a future writer.

Assignments are submitted electronically. **Late assignments will be penalized at 3 marks per day, including weekends.**

Attendance Policies

Obviously we do not meet formally as a "class" in a Distance Studies course. Therefore "attendance" and participation on the Discussion Board 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 five 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 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/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>).”

In this course, students are permitted to use AI tools for information gathering and preliminary research purposes only (unless otherwise indicated in the assignment instructions). These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. It is essential, however, that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking and engage in original research to synthesize, develop, and articulate their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploration, but students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all source and avoiding plagiarism in any form. Note that for all assignments completely outside of class, the instructor can require you to attend an in-person interview to discuss your work before a mark is finalized. Assignments should always reflect students’ own thoughts and constitute independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking, supports independent inquiry and encourages original written contributions.

Prerequisites

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, 2130F/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.

Antirequisit

Please note that MIT 3929, Writing for Magazines, and Writing 2203 are antirequisite to each other. You will not receive credit for both courses if you take both.

Medical Accommodation Policy

For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>

(downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading)

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical or other grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds cannot be granted by the instructor or Writing Studies, and Writing Studies requires students in these circumstances to follow the same procedure when seeking academic accommodation on non-medical (i.e. non-medical compassionate or other) grounds.

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth less than 10% of their final grade** must also apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Where in these circumstances the accommodation is being sought on **non-medical grounds**, students should consult in the first instance with their instructor, who may elect to make a decision on the request directly, or refer the student to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an ‘Attendance’ policy in the course). **All** medical documentation **must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student’s home Faculty.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> **for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.**

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 9, 2026. OUTSTANDING WORK AS OF THIS DATE WILL RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO.

Class Meeting Schedule

Date	Meeting focus	Readings
Week 1	Learn to write leads to a variety of story styles; using quotes Dissect a newspaper or magazine lead. Why does it pull you into the story and does it match what the story is about? Find a fresh quote. Tell your fellow students why it's compelling or not And, introduce yourselves!	Award winning leads— https://www.poynter.org/news/and-winner-best-pulitzer-prize-lead-2017 Article on quoting – http://journalism.about.com/od/reporting/a/goodquotes.htm 10 Writing Tips – (see OWL) Article on Leads – (see OWL)
Week 2	Developing news sense; write a local news story	See sample localizing story posted on course site

	Using the details provided in the lecture notes, write a practice news lead and story. Comment on each other's stories: does the lead include enough details? Is it too long?	
Week 3	Discover magazine styles and understand the magazine you will write for. Learn about the five major differences between journalistic and academic writing.	Choose a magazine or newspaper from online links provided and write a few sentences about it. What makes its tone and style different from academic writing? What magazines do you read and why?
Week 4	Interviewing techniques for writing a profile. If you could interview anyone, dead or alive, who would it be and why? What two questions would you ask? Why is interviewing important to the stories we write?	http://www.thestar.com/life/fashion_style/2012/01/02/mickey_man_covers_body_in_whimsical_world_of_disney.html <u>AND</u> Sample profiles with analysis provided on OWL
Week 5	Ideas for stories; learn how to find a winning idea that sells and how to spin it into several ideas. Start thinking about what you would like to write for a feature. It takes some time to develop a good idea—so let's start now. In three sentences, write your idea. Include an angle and what steps you'll take to get it written.	Getting Good Story ideas. Posted on OWL.
Week 6	Query letter Pretend you are an editor who just received the sample query letter provided? Would you accept it? Why or why not? Why is the query letter vital to the writing for publication process?	21 Rules for Writing Stellar Query Letters Sample Query Letter with Analysis
Feb 16-20	Study Break	No classes
Week 7	Feature writing How do features differ from news story? What elements make for a good feature and how do you go about developing a story that can be done in a relatively short time.	See sample feature articles posted for this week. Feature article tips Sample feature with analysis

Week 8	<p>Research techniques. Where to find data, research and content online and elsewhere.</p> <p>For the following story provided, find five possible sources and explain their relevance to the story: is it factual information, colour and description, etc...</p> <p>What sources would you include for your potential story idea?</p>	Exercise on finding information
Week 9	<p>Editing, headlines and fact checking/feature update</p> <p>Write headlines for stories provided. Update the class on the progress you've made on your feature. Are you running into challenges getting it done? What solutions can you offer? Other types of stories that magazines use.</p>	http://journalism.about.com/od/writing/a/headlines.htm
Week 10	<p>Markets online and learning to write for the internet</p> <p>Find two web sites that accept freelance writing. What type of stories do they accept? Do not include writer's guideline details; rather, provide your opinion of the tone and style, length and details.</p>	How much they pay (on OWL)
Week 11	<p>Online ethics and copyright. Discuss the provided ethical situation you might find yourself in as a writer and decide what you would do in this scenario. In light of what you've learned about copyright this week, do you feel any differently about downloading various materials without paying for them?</p>	<p>Watch Harlan Ellison video --</p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj5IV23g-fE</p> <p>An article on recycling your work (on OWL)</p>
Week 12	<p>Freelancers tool box</p> <p>Do you think your feature could be sold to a publication outside of this class? What publications do you have in mind and how do you plan to go about getting an editor's attention for it. Final thoughts on magazine writing.</p>	
Week 13	Wrapping up!	