Department of English
University of Waterloo
English 408A
Writing for the Media
Fall 2003

Instructor: Catherine F. Schryer
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Course Description:
This course provides students with an opportunity to investigate and practice several of the major genres used by various print and visual media. The course also provides experience in identifying and using many of the stylistic practices present in such media. Finally the course aims to provide students with an opportunity to explore some of the social implications of news making in Canadian society. Much of the course is oriented to hands-on practice and analysis, and much of this practical work will take place during the workshop sessions.

Required Texts:

Braden and Roth: Getting the Message Across: Writing for the Mass Media

Supplementary Course Material for English 408A. Available at Bookstore.

Assignments
More details will be provided for each assignment as the course progresses.

1. Analyzing the news assignment (15 %)
This traditional essay assignment (1,500 words) will ask you to analyze the way the news is constructed in Canadian newspapers or newscasts.

2. Style Portfolio (20%)  
During the course, you will be asked to submit 4-5 short style assignments. After editing and revisions, 3 will be selected for your final grade. These assignments will be scheduled once every two weeks and will emerge out of workshop activities.

3. Finding your niche assignment (25 %)
This assignment asks you to locate a type of journalism that interests you (sports, culture events reporting, travel writing, business reporting etc). You will need to do some research on your type of journalism to discover what the experts suggest. You will then write an essay analyzing the stylistic features of
your type of journalism with reference to specific writer(s) or articles. This assignment must also include a short, original piece written in the style you have selected.

4. Feature and analysis assignment (30%)
This assignment asks you to write a feature piece for a specific venue (print or online). Your piece must include interview material and original research. An essay must accompany this piece that explains your stylistic choices.

5. Editing (10%)
We will hold several editing workshops for the portfolio and feature assignments. You will be graded on the work you do assisting another writer on 2 occasions.

Course Policies

1. No plagiarism. You should know the rules and regulations that govern academic plagiarism by now. In essence, you cannot “borrow” the words or ideas of anyone and claim them as your own. The university takes plagiarism seriously and will punish students severely if they are found misbehaving in this way.

2. Papers, especially drafts, should be handed in on time. Papers and drafts will lose 2% of the final mark for every day the assignment is overdue. However, sometimes life intervenes. A coupon is attached that allows you to hand in one late final assignment (not a draft).

Course Schedule

Week 1
Introduction  Sept 9-11
- The History of the Media in Canada
Read: Osler's 2 chapters in Course Resources (CR)

Week 2
News Making—Analysis Tools  Sept 16-19
Read: Vipond's 2 chapters and Romanow's chapter in CR.

Week 3
Analyzing media  Sept 23-25
Read: Fowler's chapter and Porter's chapter in Media analysis section of course resources

Week 4
Media genres  Sept 30-Oct 2
Read: Braden and Roth: Chapters One, Four and Five

Week 5
Media genres and styles  Oct 7-Oct 9
Read: Tasko's 2 chapters in Course Resources
Due: Analysis Assignment (15%)

Week 6  
Media genres and style Oct 14-16
Read: Connell’s and Fowler’s chapters in Writing the News in course resources and Chapter three in Braden and Roth

Week 7  
Specialized writing (Sports, Culture, Fashion) Oct 21-23
Read: TBA according to student interest

Week 8  
Feature Writing Oct 28-30
Read: Braden and Roth Chapter 7

Week 9  
Feature and Personal Opinion writing Nov 4-6
Read: Braden and Roth Chapter 8

Niche assignment due (25%)

Week 10  
Public Relations Writing Nov 11-13
Read: Public Relations Section in Course Resources

Week 11  
Consultation with Instructor Nov 18-20
Meet with instructor to discuss drafting and planning of Feature piece

Week 12  
Final Editing workshops Nov 25-27

Final Portfolio due Friday, November 28 at 4 pm.

Final Feature Assignment due Friday December 5 at 4 pm

Free late paper coupon. Not to be used for drafts.

Name:

New due date: