

**FACULTY of LAPS  
Writing Department  
Professional Writing Program**

**Course title: 3002 Introduction to Periodical Writing and Publishing**

**Class Time & Location: Monday 2:30 VH 1018**

**Course Instructor:** Paul McLaughlin 416-951-1957 (cell); paul@paulmclaughlin.ca;  
www.paulmclaughlin.ca

**Meetings With Me:**

I don't have an office. I encourage you to call my cell and/or email me to discuss any issue at any time. I will call/write back; if you don't reach me please leave a message.

**Course Description and objectives:**

The course offers an introductory survey of the primary genres involved in periodical publication, for online, newspapers and magazines. Genres addressed include feature articles, news and investigative reports, commentary, reviews, profiles, etc. To do so requires an understanding of the basic skills of periodical journalism, including: finding and developing story ideas, conducting research, interviewing, formatting quotes, establishing scenes, working ethically and legally, and story structure. These skills will be explored through lectures and in-class discussion and deconstruction of existing articles. They will ultimately be learned by writing articles.

Be aware that you will have to conduct two interviews (minimum) with people for your final article.

Periodicals are written in a non-academic language and style. **ALL** written material for this course will be submitted, to the best of your ability, in the style used in magazines, newspapers and quality online publications. Your work for this course does **NOT** require a bibliography or footnotes. You will be shown examples in class of how to incorporate sources into your work.

The goal is to develop a style that is clear, concise, active in voice, descriptive, interesting, engaging and accurate.

**Spelling, punctuation and grammar are extremely important.** If you are weak in these areas you will have to work on these essential basics throughout the course.

Knowledge of current affairs is also essential for journalists. You will be expected to follow what's happening in news, the arts, politics, sports, etc. on an ongoing basis.

**Be prepared for pop quizzes on current events and on assigned readings.**

How you do on these will have an impact on your participation mark. **My best advice:** read newspapers daily, in print and/or online.

**IF YOU MISS A CLASS** it is up to you to find out from a fellow student or from me if any work was assigned for the following week. **IGNORANCE** is not an excuse at this level.

**You must check your email on a regular basis** for messages from me as I will be sending readings to you that will be tested on in class.

The classes will vary in style but the emphasis, apart from practical writing work, will be on discussion and exploration of ideas. You **MUST** do the assigned readings. Even if you are shy, try to contribute in class. Participation is an important part of the course.

By the end of the course, I hope you will have a far greater understanding of how to write feature articles at a professional level. Even if periodical writing is not your primary interest, the skills acquired will serve you in whatever kind of writing you eventually pursue.

This is a highly practical course conducted by an ongoing professional writer. You will be introduced to the world of professional writing as it exists today, to help prepare you for a possible career in which you write for a living.

### **Course Text / Readings:**

*The Art and Craft of Feature Writing*, by William E. Blundell

*Asking the Best Questions*, by Paul McLaughlin, Centennial College Press

Other readings will be assigned via email. It is **your responsibility** to find out if there's a reading for a class. You can always ask me.

### **Marks:**

Your grade will be based on the following assignments (all assignments due by 11:59:59 p.m. on the due date; details for each will be provided in class):

Assignment #1:	Op-ed column, worth 25%, due Sept. 29
Assignment #2:	Detailed outline of local hero profile, worth 25%, due October 13
Assignment #3:	Local hero profile, worth 40%, due Dec. 14
Assignment #4:	participation, submitting materials, test marks throughout the term 10%

### **Assignment Submissions:**

All assignments must be emailed to paul@paulmclaughlin.ca in a Word document. If there are attachments, incorporate them into one file.

**IMPORTANT:** Put your name on the file so it's easy for me to keep track of you. Example: johndoequery.doc. If you don't, I will send it back to you unmarked.

**Late Penalties:** There are no extensions without a valid, documented reason (such as illness). Please do not ask for more time so the assignment can be improved. Making a deadline is essential in the professional writing world. Late assignments will lose 20% per week (one day late = 20%; eight days late = 40%, etc.).

### **Course Outline:**

Like journalism, the course can change as events dictate, so keep tuned for any syllabus updates.

- Sept. 11: Course intro; local hero assignment explained
- Sept. 18: How to write an op-ed. Email me an example of one prior to the class.
- Sept. 25: Elements of a feature article  
Reading: Chapter 1, The Art and Craft
- Oct. 2: Interviewing (email an example of a published Q&A); chapters from Asking the Best Questions will be assigned
- Oct. 9: Reading week
- Oct. 16: Writing Profiles (email a profile that you enjoyed)  
Reading: Chapter 2
- Oct. 23: Interviewing part 2. chapters from Asking the Best Questions will be assigned
- Oct. 30: Scenes and Reconstruction  
Reading: Chapter 3 The Art and Craft
- Nov. 06 Descriptive writing
- Nov. 13: Out-of-class time to work on your features. I will be on Zoom to answer any of your questions
- Nov. 20: Structure  
Reading: Chapter 5, The Art and Craft
- Nov. 27: Using quotes properly; nut graf exercise
- Dec. 04: Optional one-on-one with me to discuss your profile

**Also:**

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents) - [http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate\\_cte\\_main\\_pages/ccas.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm)

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity Website
- Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation

**AI**

You are not permitted to use generative artificial intelligence (AI) in this course. Submitting any work created through the use of generative AI tools will be considered a violation of York University's Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. If you do not know whether an online resource or tool can be used in this course, please contact your instructor for guidance. For more information, please review AI Technology & Academic Integrity: Information for Students.