

FACULTY of LIBERAL ARTS and PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

Writing Department

Professional Writing Program

**Course: PRWR 4004— Books Publishing Practicum [6 credits]**

Term: Fall 2023 and Winter 2024 // Location: McLaughlin College 001

Prerequisite / Co-requisite: PRWR 3004

Course Instructor: Matt Bucemi [[mbucemi@yorku.ca](mailto:mbucemi@yorku.ca)]

Lectures: Wednesdays, 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM

Office Hours: Please email me and we can make an appointment to chat!

Office Location: Ross S309

**Expanded Course Description**

This is it – your big entrance into Canada’s publishing world! This practicum allows students in their 4th year in the Professional Writing Book Stream to contribute to the publication of a mass market book that will be distributed across North America. This publication will happen in collaboration with Toronto’s independent publishing community. The books published in this course will be sold by major book retailers around the world.

Over the course of two semesters, students will collaborate with professional editors, designers, and production teams to create high-quality works of fiction and nonfiction, and they will go through all the steps to creating a book, from making an ISBN and sending copyright information to the government to working with authors, deciding on design elements, and securing a printer. Students will meet a wide variety of industry professionals, from the heads of Canada’s biggest publishing houses to senior editors, art directors, and sales experts.

We’ll begin the fall semester with a practice run on real manuscripts, going through every step of the publishing process and producing sample physical copies. As we work through the semester, students will meet the presidents of independent publishers from right here in Toronto, and will prepare to work on a big, real project that will be released by a Canadian press in Fall 2025.

**Course Learning Objectives**

Students will earn hands-on book publishing experience, supported by active industry partners from Ontario’s vibrant publishing world. We will work on books through a complete production pipeline, from acquisitions to publication—and beyond into the hands of real readers. By the time that students are done with this course, they will be able to sit down for an interview at a publishing house—or at almost any media production company that involves creating and distributing work to the public—and confidently state that they know the ins and outs of the business.

Students will learn skills related to:

- Reading, critiquing, and closely and carefully editing book manuscripts;

- Project management, including creating schedules, budgets, monitoring cash flow, and metadata creation;
- Working with creative talent on how to adjust their work to be more marketable and successful;
- Preparing creative briefs and communicating/working with designers on cover art;
- Production prep, including preparing files for designers, assigning ISBNs, obtaining CIP information, selecting paper, and obtaining printer quotes;
- Typesetting and design for print production;
- Accessibility in print and eBook production;
- Print and eBook distribution;
- Development & execution of marketing, publicity, and sales plans for books, including the maintenance of the press's website and social media accounts.

Students will also develop their teamwork, problem-solving, strategic planning, and creative thinking skills. Active participation in the publishing workshop portion of the class is crucial for each student's success, and the course's success.

### **Recommended Course Text / Readings**

- *The Complete Canadian Book Editor* by Leslie Vermeer

Additional readings may be assigned or recommended during the course.

### **Late Policy**

I will accept late work from students without a penalty, with an important condition: let me know about any issues that you have with an assignment at least five days in advance. We will plan out an alternate day and time to turn in your work. Otherwise, late assignments will receive a deduction of 10% for each day that the assignment is late.

### **Accessibility at York**

I'm 100% committed to making sure that the course is accessible for all students. York's goal is to provide an accessible and welcoming environment for faculty, staff, students, and visitors, both on campus and online. Please visit <https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca/> for more information on York's diversity policies. Please let me know if there's anything that I can do to assist you or if there is any important information that I need to know.

### **Evaluation**

The final grade for the course will be based on the following items, weighted as indicated: [c 90%]

Book Creation Project — 40% [Breakdown below]

- Manuscript Choice Letter — 2.5%
- Production Plan — 2.5%
- Manuscript Edit — 15%
- Cover Design — 10%
- Typeset Manuscript — 5%
- Sample Printed Copy — 5%

Career Goal Review — 5%

Unique Publishing in Action Project — 10%

Manuscript Edit Reflection — 10%

Invisible Prize Editorial Feedback Letter — 10%

Special Guest Reflection — 5%

Professional Project — 10%

Participation — 10%

Note: All assignments and tests will be returned to students **one to two weeks** after due dates and/or submission dates.

**Drop deadline (last date to drop a course without receiving a grade): February 8**

## FALL 2023 SCHEDULE

Week 1 (September 6)

### Introduction

- Syllabus review and class policies
- Keynote talk and field trip
- Guests, assignments, questions

**Publishing in Action: Invisible Prize Slush Pile**

**Practicum Time: Decide on book creation project team**

**Closing Conversation: What's to be done about the Internet Archive?**

Week 2 (September 13)

### Editorial Feedback Letter Demo

- What do the author and the publisher need to know?
- Clarity, major tonal/thematic issues, sensitivity
- Focus: Invisible Prize winner

**Publishing in Action: Badlands war crime subtitle**

**Practicum Time: Discuss project manuscript with your team**

**Closing Conversation: Equity reviews and publishing for children**

Week 3 (September 20)

## **Mechanics Demo**

- ISBN registration
- Metadata
- Copyright information and Library & Archives Canada

**Publishing in Action: Two different covers for *Welcome Back!***

**Practicum Time: Finalize project manuscript choice**

**Closing Conversation: The consequences of ageism in publishing**

**Career Goal Review due**

Week 4 (September 27)

## **Editing Demo**

- Personal taste, authorial intent, and your mandate
- How to tackle a large manuscript as a team
- Editing hierarchy: structure (chapter edit), mechanics (copy edit), content (line edit)

**Practicum Time: Mechanics + reading**

**Publishing in Action: *Looney Tunes* production legalities**

**Closing Conversation: James Grey, Zoe Greenberg, and the big non-fiction problem**

**Manuscript Choice Letter due**

Week 5 (October 4)

## **Job Application Demo**

- Where to find jobs that you're interested in
- Getting past automated resume-screener software
- Polishing your resume

**Practicum time: Reading + editing**

**Special Guest: Melanie Tutino, literary editor at Doubleday Canada**

**Closing Conversation: ChatGPT is coming for books (or is it?)**

**Production Plan due**

Week 6 (October 11)

**Fall Reading Week—have a great break!**

Week 7 (October 18)

Extended feedback meetings + group check-in

**Practicum Time: Editing**

**Special Guest: Sydney Hegele, award-winning author of *The Pump***

**Closing Conversation: What happens to books if we ban TikTok?**

Week 8 (October 25)

**Typesetting Demo**

- Formatting
- Fonts
- Chapter headings, table of contents, etc.

**Publishing in Action: Kosovo War non-fiction endpapers**

**Practicum time: Editing**

**Closing Conversation: What can we learn from Amazon's bestselling book topics?**

Week 9 (November 1)

**Entrepreneur Demo**

- How to apply for federal and provincial funding
- Getting distribution
- Differentiating yourself on the market

**Practicum Time: Editing**

**Special Guest: Rebecca Eckler, publisher at RE:BOOKS and author of *Knocked Up: Confessions of a Hip Mother-to-Be***

**Closing Conversation: The case of Filippo Bernardini**

Week 10 (November 8)

**Work Life Real Talk**

- What it means to be an employee
- Dealing with conflict
- Work from home vs. Physical office

**Practicum Time: Editing**

**Special Guest: Cayley Pimentel, publicist at Simon & Schuster Canada**

**Closing Conversation: Should we change how and where we buy books?**

**Book Package Critique due**

Week 11 (November 15)

On **November 16th at 6:30 PM**, Dr. Matt Bucemi and York's Book Publishing program will hold the 2023 edition of our publishing speaker series. Our guest is **Lily Bergh**, Publisher and Vice President at Canadian Scholars & Womens Press. Lily will deliver a keynote talk about what it means to be a national leader in redefining who gets to be heard in the book world.

Her talk will be followed by a Q&A and a reception with food and drinks. The event will be held in **Ross S802**.

This event is open to the public, but students in PRWR 3004 and 4004 will **meet earlier at 5 PM** for a workshop and discussion with Lily.

Week 12 (November 22)

Extended feedback meetings + group check-in

**Practicum Time: Typesetting**

**Closing Conversation: The wrath of Goodreads**

**Manuscript Edit due**

Week 13 (November 29)

Extended feedback meetings + group check-in

**Practicum Time: Typesetting**

**Closing Conversation: What do you want to do next semester?**

**Manuscript Edit Reflection due**

## **WINTER 2024 SCHEDULE**

As we begin the winter semester, your publishing teams will move from the editing stage to production of your big book project. We'll meet more special guests and get ready to print our books at the end of the semester!