

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
3221F 001: Crime Scene
to Courtroom: Forensic
Writing

Fall 2023

Course Objectives

From true crime reporting to writing search warrants and workplace harassment and discrimination reports for employers, this course introduces students to advanced investigative composition and the process of chronicling noteworthy incidents likely to result in criminal prosecution, litigation, arbitration, or public inquiry. Students will also learn the art of drafting rhetorically complex documents capable of withstanding public, political, and media scrutiny across a wide range of legal and investigative occupations, including how to defend these documents in court.

Required Texts

 Arntfield, Michael & Gorman, Kelly A. (2014) *Introduction to Forensic Writing*. Toronto: Carswell.

 Arntfield, Michael (2020) *Workplace Violence & Harassment: A Forensic Investigation Handbook*. San Diego: Cognella.

Course Assignments & Requirements

1. Crime scene summary: 500 words approx. (20%) –
Due Oct 10, 2023
2. Investigative journalism feature: 1500 words approx. (30%) –
Due Nov 7, 2023
3. Workplace harassment investigation report: 2000 words min. (40%) –
Due Dec 5, 2022
4. Peer review & editorial activities over course of term (10%) –
No submission required



Tentative Course Schedule

Part I: The Fundamentals of Forensic Writing

‡ Week 1: The Forensic Age in Perspective

Read Arntfield & Gorman, pages 3-46

‡ Week 2: Lexical Distinctions & Hostile Audiences

Read Arntfield & Gorman, pages 78-108

Part II: Documenting Crime & Criminal Offenders

‡ Week 3: Field Notes & Expository Writing for Justice Professionals

Read Arntfield & Gorman, pages 109-172

‡ Week 4: Describing crime scenes

Read Arntfield & Gorman pages 173-200.

Peer review session for crime scene summary

‡ Week 5: Overview of Investigative Journalism

No readings

Crime scene summary due via OWL by 11:59 p.m.

Part III: Investigative Writing & Reporting

‡ Week 6: Forensic Writing & Advocacy Journalism

Read Arntfield & Gorman, pages 337-344

‡ Week 7: Source Integrity & Legal/Ethical Considerations

Read Arntfield & Gorman, pages 345-367

Peer review session for investigative journalism feature

‡ Week 8: READING WEEK – NO LECTURE

Read Arntfield & Gorman, pages 368-379

Part IV: Investigating & Documenting Workplace Misconduct & Inequality

‡ Week 9: Identifying & documenting harassment

Read Arntfield, pages xiii-xxix & 33-72

Investigative journalism feature due via OWL by 11:59 p.m.

‡ Week 10: Identifying & documenting discrimination

Read Arntfield, pages 73-106

‡ Week 11: Strategies for summarizing verbal evidence

Read Arntfield, pages 141-173

‡ Week 12: Course wrap-up

No readings

Peer review session for workplace investigation report

‡ Week 13: Independent writing/editing session – no class

Workplace investigation report due via OWL by 11:59 p.m.

↳ Assignment Format

All assignments are to be typed, using 12 point font unless otherwise specified. All assignments must have your name, course name, section number, and the professor's name on the first page. When using sources in a paper, you will be expected to follow MLA, APA, or CMS standards for documentation, detailed in *The Brief Penguin Handbook* sections 22, 23, 24, and 25.

↳ Assignment Deadlines

Assignments are due via OWL by 11:59 p.m. on the date specified on the schedule. Late essays will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day, including weekends, unless I've granted an extension at least 72 hours in advance and in writing. A "day" ends at 4:30 p.m. You must apply for extensions, via self-reporting, no less than a week ahead of the due date. I don't like to penalize late assignments; however, since the purpose of this course is to prepare you for a career in writing, you need to know that deadlines are not a matter of negotiation. For these reasons, all assignments will be due on the date specified barring some catastrophic event. Following any other policy would be an injustice to you as a future writer.

N.B.: NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE TERM/STUDY PERIOD ENDS AT 4:30 P.M. ON DECEMBER 8, 2022.

How to Submit Assignments

Assignments are due via OWL on the date specified on the schedule. Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day unless I have granted you an extension, as explained in the previous section. Note that late assignments submitted after 4:30 p.m. (the end of the "business day") in subsequent days are graded as though they are received the day after they are uploaded.

Hard copies of assignments are not currently being accepted via the drop-box. Further, do not:

- fax assignments
- e-mail assignments
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Also, be aware that **you are responsible for keeping copies of all assignments submitted.**

*N.B: In addition to submitting final drafts on/by the due date for each assignment, you are required to bring a rough draft of each assignment to class for each of the scheduled peer-review sessions. Failure to attend a scheduled peer-review session with a sufficiently completed rough copy to enable a meaningful review, or to otherwise participate in the peer-review session, **will** result in the earned mark for that assignment being reduced by 10%. In other words, an assignment that would have normally earned a 75, for example, will instead receive a recorded grade of 65. This penalty will be applied in addition to any other penalties incurred, e.g. for late submission.*

↳ Attendance policies

Attendance at class is required to improve as a writer. Here is the Writing Studies attendance policy in this class:

- You may miss up to three hours (the equivalent of one week of class) of class meetings during the term without explanation. That means that the first three class hours you miss will be recorded as absences but *excused provided you don't miss any more*.
- However, if you miss a total of four to nine class hours (the equivalent of up to three full weeks of class), your final grade will be reduced by 10% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 72).
- If you miss a total of more than nine hours of class meetings (the equivalent of more than three weeks of class meetings) your final grade will be reduced by 15% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 68).
- Note that the three-hour exemption does not, however, apply to missed peer review sessions. These editing workshops are essential to the collective success of the class. Failing to attend peer review workshops without corresponding approved accommodation will result in an immediate 10% deduction on the associated pending assignment once submitted.

This policy will be waived only for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have good reasons for waiving an absence of one class meeting (e.g. if you've missed three hours, and need or want to miss another class meeting) discuss these reasons with your instructor within one week of that absence. 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: '**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 Western University **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 Writing class in order to write such a test in another class, that is **your** choice; your absence will not be excused.

Attendance also extends to tardiness. If you are more than 20 minutes late, you will be penalized an hour of attendance. Please make every effort to be on time as late entry can disrupt the flow of discussion in our class. Early departures from class, which have not been previously arranged with the instructor, will also be counted as an absence. If you leave during the break, you will be docked an hour of attendance.

↳ **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/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>).”

Note: In this course you will be required to submit an electronic copy of the final version of each of your essays to turnitin.com through your section’s OWL homepage.

↳ **Prerequisites**

The prerequisite for registration in this course is a) a final grade of 65 or more in one of Writing 2101, 2121, 2111, or 2131, or b) a final grade of 70 or more in Writing 1000F/G, or c) Special Permission of the Program.

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

“Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded and that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If the student does not have the requisites for a course, the University reserves the right to remove the student from the course and to delete it from the student’s record. This decision may not be appealed. A student will receive no adjustment to his or her fees in the event that he or she is dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

Accommodation Policy

Note: the official Western Accommodation Policy appears below. This is in effect, but may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change.

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 here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors by email within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

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. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

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

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), 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](#).

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 MentalHealth@Western:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Additional Resources:

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

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

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

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Policy on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Note that the use of racist, discriminatory, or any language that works against the values of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will not be tolerated in any course or university communication, whether oral or written.

‡ My Additional Policy on “Wrong Version” Resubmissions:

A recent tech-driven trend has also, and regrettably, necessitated a new course policy on what might be best described as the questionable “wrong version” submission of assignments on OWL. In brief, all submissions for course assignments are *first and final* in nature as though they were (and as was the case for the initial 130-year history of this university) hard copies either hand delivered in person or submitted via department mailbox. Thus, you are *not* permitted to make supplemental submissions via OWL, email, or even in person as addendums to your original submission. Aside from the fact that writers are expected to maintain a diligent file management system and exhibit an appropriate attention to detail so as to avoid sending improper or incomplete files to editors, agents, publishers, or—in this case—professors, there is obviously also no way to ensure that the ostensibly “correct version” sent after the fact is not actually some improved version on what was previously sent. In either case, what you upload to OWL for each assignment cannot be changed, replaced, or added to—no exceptions.