



**FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN  
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM**

**JN 8203 Narrative**

**Winter 2019**

Wednesdays 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., VIC 101

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Consultation: Monday 1–3 p.m. (Or by appointment.)

**The Part About the Course Goal**

This course immerses students in the process of writing a long-form narrative. We'll be reading great examples of narrative and analyzing them. We'll be learning about researching, interviewing and structuring stories specifically for long narratives. We'll be developing story-telling voice for long narrative. And we'll be writing a series of drafts that results in a great story. The ultimate goal is to write a long feature, enhanced by multimedia, worth publishing. Successful students will be encouraged to sell their work.

**The Part About the Heavy Reading Load**

This is a heavy reading course (see list below), with texts of both magazine feature length and book length. Students must come to class prepared for discussion. Participation is mandatory. If the reading load seems daunting, please be aware that studying good narratives almost by definition guarantees an improvement in the quality of one's own writing. Each week students will write short (250-word) responses to the readings, to be sent to the instructor the evening before class, that focus on story theme plus one other aspect (see deadlines for more).

**The Part About the Learning Outcomes**

**NEWSGATHERING**

1. Understands "newsworthiness" (e.g. timeliness, proximity, etc.);
2. Identifies and locates human sources and seeks informed consent from them;
3. Locates and verifies digital, institutional and community facts and knowledge;
4. Captures relevant and appropriate photos, videos, text, social edit to convey news to audiences;
5. Conducts informational journalistic interviews.

**SOCIETY + LAW**

1. Understands basics of libel/copyright/accessibility law;
2. Understands government, human rights, economy and courts;
3. Incorporates broadest possible practices re: reporting diversity, including appropriate language;
4. Understands Indigenous history, language, culture and TRC obligations;

5. Understands own biases.

### **The Part About the Deadlines**

#### **Assignment: Three Pitches**

Due: Wednesday, January 23, 10 A.M. (WEEK 1)

Bring a hard copy of 3 story ideas to class on January 23 and pitch them in class. If you pitch has been assigned by me then you may revise as necessary for Wednesday, January 23, Midnight, by email.

Note: Each pitch should be 90–100 words in length, have a headline and a sub-headline, and have a Canadian publication target (e.g. *The Walrus*, *Toronto Life*, *This Magazine*, etc.)

#### **Assignment: Query + Source List 1**

Due: Friday, February 8, Midnight, by email. (WEEK 4)

Once a story idea has been approved, students must write a query letter. Queries should be written as a formal letter to the editor of the publication to which the story idea is directed, e.g. Emily Landau, Senior Editor, *Toronto Life*. Query letters should be 500 words in length (one to one-and-a-half pages), be strong examples of the writer’s style and convince the editor to commission the story.

#### **Assignment: Feature Draft 1 + Source List 2**

Due: Friday, March 1, Midnight, by email. (THE FRIDAY AFTER READING WEEK)

The word count for the first draft of the feature is 2,000 words. Any first draft under 1,800 words or over 2,200 words will be docked one grade (A to A–, A– to B+, and so on). All first drafts should have at least 5 live interview sources and at least 10 research sources.

#### **Assignment: Structure Chart**

Due: Friday, March 15, Midnight, by email. (THE FRIDAY AFTER WEEK 8)

Generally, features are written in sections or block format, i.e., something like:

1. Lead Scene
2. Contextual Set-up + Theme Statement
3. History/Background of Topic
4. Second Scene
5. History/Background of Lead Character(s)
6. Third Scene
7. Fly in the Ointment (Counter-Theme)
8. Rebutting the Fly
9. Ending (Final Scene, Anecdote, or Concluding Argument).

There should be a natural, logical flow to these blocks and, generally, the blocks should alternate between “live footage” scene material and information blocks.

#### **Assignment: Feature Draft 2 + Source List 3**

Due: Friday, March 29, Midnight, by email. (THE FRIDAY AFTER WEEK 10)

The word count for the second draft of the feature should climb because, based on the first-draft critique, additional information will likely be needed. All second drafts should have at least 10 live interview sources and at least 20 research sources.

#### **Assignment: Feature Draft 3 + Source List 4**

Due: Wednesday, April 24, Midnight, by email. (2 WEEKS AFTER WEEK 12, THE FINAL WEEK)

The word count for the third draft will depend on the scope of the story and how much research has been put into the first two drafts. It will be set after the second draft has been graded. All third drafts should have at least 15 live interview sources and at least 30 research sources.

### **Assignment: Weekly Responses to the Readings**

Due: Tuesdays evenings by 10 p.m. so I can read the responses before I go to sleep. The responses should be short and to the point—250–300 words (marks will be docked for being under or over word count)—and focus on (a) theme of the story, and (b) one other aspect of the piece (the author’s voice, the structure of the feature, the lead scene, the ending, the use of quoted material, etc.).

### **Assignment: Précis on Multimedia Strategy for Feature**

Due Date: To be determined after class discussion.

### **The Part About the Grades**

The feature is worth 60% of the final grade, broken into the following parts:

1. Three Pitches: **5%**
2. Query + Source List 1: **5%**
3. Draft 1 + Source List 2: **15%**
4. Structure Chart: **5%**
5. Draft 2 + Source List 3: **15%**
6. Draft 3 + Source List 4: **15%**

Other marks in the course are for:

7. Weekly responses to readings: 10 X 3% (best 10 of 11) = **30%**
8. Précis: Multimedia representation of feature (500–600 words): **10%**

### **The Part About the Late Penalty**

Students must hold fast to assigned deadlines. The penalty for lateness is one grade per day. (A to A–, A– to B+, B+ to B and so on.)

### **The Part About the Reading Schedule**

#### **Required Texts**

1. Malcolm, Janet, *The Journalist and the Murderer* (New York: Vintage, 1990).
2. Langewiesche, William, *American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center* (New York: North Point Press, 2003). Originally published 2002.
3. Vaillant, John, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed* (Toronto: Knopf, 2006). Originally published 2005.

Note: Books available at the Ryerson bookstore. All other reading material provided.

### **READINGS, WEEKS 1 – 12**

#### **January 16 (Week 1)**

- Scene Exercise
- Course Outline

- Pitches Letter / Samples of Pitches / Samples of Reading Responses
- In Class: Tom Wolfe, Introduction, *The New Journalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

### **JANUARY 23 (Week 2)**

- Student Go-around / 3 Story Pitches
- Janet Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer* (New York: Vintage, 1990).
- Magazines Exercise

### **JANUARY 30 (Week 3)**

- Interviewing for features
- Profile Writing (Don Obe: theory of a person)
- Ross, Lillian, “How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?” *New Yorker*, May 3, 1950.
- Moon, Barbara, “Bill Shatner’s Adventures in Hollywood,” *Maclean’s*, Oct 26, 1957.
- Didion, Joan, excerpt (Waiting for Jim),” *The White Album* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979).
- Talese, Gay, “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold,” *Esquire*, May 1966.
- Boynton, Robert S., “Gay Talese Q&A,” *The New New Journalism* (Vintage, 2005).

### **FEBRUARY 6 (Week 4)**

- Scene Exercise (Small Group Work)
- Indigenous Storytelling
- David, Dan, “All My Relations,” *This Magazine*, Nov–Dec 1997
- McCue, Duncan, *The Shoe Boy: A Trapline Memoir* (New Westminster, BC: Nonvella, 2016).
- Cooper, Afua, *The Hanging of Angelique* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2006) [excerpts]
- Tom Wilson, *Beautiful Scars* (Toronto: Doubleday, 2017) [excerpts]

### **FEBRUARY 13 (Week 5)**

- Scene Exercise (Voice)
- From Idea to Pitch to Service Piece to Feature to Book
- Holling, Holling Clancy, *Tree in the Trail* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1942).
- Vaillant, John, “Paddling in a Ghost World,” *Outside*, Jul 2002.
- Vaillant, John, “Freak of Nature (Query),” Sent to the *New Yorker*, 2002.
- Vaillant, John, “The Golden Bough,” *New Yorker*, Nov 4, 2002.
- Vaillant, John, *The Golden Spruce* (Toronto: Vintage, 2006).
- Reynolds, Bill, “The Man, the Tree, the Tribe, and the Loggers,” *This Magazine*, Jan–Feb 2006.
- Wake, Hal, “Greed, Betrayal and the Murder of the Golden Spruce,” *Tyee*, Aug 3, 2005.
- Wake, Hal, “The Lasting Mysteries of The Golden Spruce,” *Tyee*, Aug 4, 2005.

### **FEBRUARY 27 (Week 6)**

- Political Literary Journalism
- Klein, Naomi, “Baghdad Year Zero,” *Harper’s*, Sep 2004.
- Macfarquhar, Larissa, “Outside Agitator,” *New Yorker*, Dec 8, 2008.
- Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, “A Most American Terrorist: The Making of Dylann Roof,” *GQ*, Aug 2017

- Lauren McKeon, *F-Bomb: Dispatches from the War on Feminism* (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane, 2017), “How a feMRA Is Made,” 81–105

### **MARCH 6 (Week 7)**

- The Process Story + Various Structures
- Langewiesche, William *American Ground* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux 2002).
- Langewiesche, excerpt, *Sahara Unveiled* (New York: Vintage 1996).
- Langewiesche, excerpt, *Inside the Sky* (New York: Vintage 1998).
- Langewiesche, William, “Towers of Strength,” *New York Times*, Dec 27, 2009.
- Raz, Guy, Langewiesche Q&A, *All Things Considered*, NPR, Sept 11, 2011.
- Langewiesche, “Storm Island,” *Atlantic Monthly*, Dec 2001.
- Boynton, Langewiesche Q&A, *The New New Journalism* (New York: Vintage 2005).
- Murray, Wendy, “Disaster Man,” *Books & Culture*, Mar 2007.
- Langewiesche, “How I Write,” *Writer*, Aug 2004.
- Kindler, Dorsey, “Langewiesche Unveiled,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov 25, 2007.

### **MARCH 13 (Week 8)**

- The Write-Around / Reconstructions
- Vanessa Grigoriadis, “The Tragedy of Britney,” *Rolling Stone*, Feb 21, 2008.
- Robert Caro, “The Transition,” *New Yorker*, Apr 2, 2012.
- Boynton, “Jon Krakauer Q&A,” *The New New Journalism* (New York: Vintage 2005).

### **MARCH 20 (Week 9)**

- Reconstructions, Pt. 2
- Krakauer, Jon, “Death of an Innocent,” *Outside*, Jan 1993.
- Paterniti, Michael, “The Long Fall of One-eleven Heavy,” *Esquire*, Jul 2000.
- Curwin, Thomas, Why’s This So Good: “The Long Fall of One-Eleven Heavy,” Nieman Storyboard, Nov 30, 2010.

### **MARCH 27 (Week 10)**

- Unspeakable Crimes
- Bowden, Charles, “Torch Song,” *Harper’s*, Aug 1998.
- Veselka, Vanessa, “The Truck Stop Killer,” *Esquire*, Oct 2012.
- Bowden, Charles, “Laughter, Gunfire and Forgetting,” *Harper’s*, Sep 1995.
- Reynolds, Bill, “Magic Realism with Bullets: Charles Bowden and Ciudad Juárez,” Richard Lance Keeble and John Tulloch (eds.), *Global Literary Journalism, Vol 2* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).
- Kohls, Ryan, “Charles Bowden,” *IWKWIWK*, Dec 17, 2012.
- Clara Jeffery, “‘I Still Live’: A Remembrance of Charles Bowden,” *Mother Jones*, Sept 14, 2014
- Scott Carrier, “The Final Rhapsody of Charles Bowden,” *Mother Jones*, Mar 15, 2015

### **APRIL 3 (Week 11)**

- Social Issues / Immersion / Undercover / Hanging Out Time
- Conover, Ted, “The Way of All Flesh,” *Harper’s*, May 2013.

- Shane Bauer, “My Four Months as a Private Prison Guard,” *Mother Jones*, Jun 2016.
- Conover, Ted, *Immersion* (selections)

### **APRIL 10 (Week 12)**

- The New Journalism
- Goldsmith, Barbara, “La Dolce Viva,” *New York*, Apr 29, 1968.
- Ephron, Nora, “A Few Words about Breasts,” *Esquire*, May 1972.

### **The Part About the Principles of Honesty + Integrity**

All work you submit must be entirely your own. Penalties for fabrication, plagiarism or other forms of cheating will range from failing an assignment to failing the course and may include a disciplinary notice being placed on your academic record, disciplinary withdrawal or expulsion. As additional guidance, please note the following:

- You must adhere to Ryerson University’s Code of Academic Conduct: (<http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol60.pdf>)
- You must adhere to the School of Journalism's Rules of Conduct, which contain greater detail about truth-telling issues specific to the practice of journalism: [http://www.ryerson.ca/journalism/student\\_handbook/rules\\_of\\_the\\_game/index.html](http://www.ryerson.ca/journalism/student_handbook/rules_of_the_game/index.html)
- For more information: <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/> (Policies 134 and 145).

### **The Part About the Religious Holidays**

Requests for accommodation of specific religious or spiritual observance must be presented to the instructor no later than two weeks prior to the conflict in question (in the case of final examinations within two weeks of the release of the examination schedule). In extenuating circumstances this deadline may be extended. If the dates are not known well in advance because they are linked to other conditions, requests should be submitted as soon as possible in advance of the required observance. Students are strongly encouraged to notify instructors of an observance accommodation issue within the first two weeks of classes.

### **The Part About the Prof**

After a couple of decades in journalism, Bill began teaching at Ryerson in 2002–2003. His current title is Associate Chair. His teaching specialty is narrative feature writing. His research focus is literary journalism. He is Editor of the scholarly publication, *Literary Journalism Studies*. He and John S. Bak of Université de Lorraine, France, co-edited *Literary Journalism across the Globe: Journalistic Traditions and Transnational Influences* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011).

Bill’s latest scholarly work includes: “Eternal Present Tense: Deeper Narratives About Chicago ’68,” a chapter in *The Routledge Book of American Literary Journalism* (Spring 2019); and “Indigenous Literary Journalism, Saturation Reporting, and the Aesthetics of Experience,” *Literary Journalism Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Spring 2018).

Prior to joining Ryerson, Bill worked at the Toronto-based alternative *Eye Weekly*, 1991–2002, where he was Associate Editor, then Managing Editor, then Editor. He began his journalism career as Editor of the Calgary-based alternative music/culture monthly, *Vox*, 1986–1988. Bill then moved to Toronto to become a freelance writer, 1988–1991, before joining *Eye Weekly*. Over the years Bill’s features have been published in the *Walrus*, *Maisonneuve*, *This Magazine*, *Canadian Business*, *Swerve Magazine*, the *Globe and Mail* and other outlets and he has won National Magazine Awards and Western Magazine Awards.