



**SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES**

**Writing Programme  
WRIT203: Writing For Print Media**

**TRIMESTER 2 2009**  
13 July to 15 November 2009

**Trimester dates**

Teaching dates: 13 July to 16 October  
WRIT 203 has no examination

**Names and contact details**

***Course Coordinator***

Dr Sky Marsen  
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***Course Administrator***

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**Class times and locations**

Workshop CRN 11335 time: Wednesdays 9-12  
Workshop CRN 11335 venue: New Kirk 203

Workshop CRN 11054 time: Thursdays 12-3  
Workshop CRN 11054 venue: Murphy 302

**Course delivery**

WRIT 203 has writing workshops. Students are expected to participate in class discussions, practical writing activities and analyses of texts.

**Communication of additional information**

Additional information will be communicated through e-mail and Blackboard,  
[www.blackboard.vuw.ac.nz](http://www.blackboard.vuw.ac.nz)

## Course content

This is a course in advanced writing techniques, focusing on the non-fiction genres of personal essays, personality profiles, commentaries, reviews, features and researched investigative articles. It is not a course in journalism, but will include techniques and forms typical of magazine journalism. The course aims not only to teach the techniques required in these different genres, but also to help students discover their writing strengths.

*The course comprises:*

- assigned readings for critique and discussion
- writing exercises and assignments
- weekly three-hour workshops for writing practice, presentation, discussion, and peer review

*The course covers five main topics:*

- Introduction: the context and nature of professional, non-fiction writing
- Auto/biographical writing (essays, memoirs and portraits)
- Interactive writing (information articles, arguments, commentaries and reviews)
- Investigative writing (features and researched articles)
- Editing for publication.

## Learning objectives

During the course you will

- explore a variety of non-fiction writings
- undertake a variety of writing exercises
- read about and discuss aspects of writing theory, process, techniques and style
- analyse the requirements, problems and constraints in writing contexts
- develop two writing assignments to publication standards through multiple drafts, revision and editing
- review other students' texts
- submit a portfolio of writings for final assessment.

## Course description

The aims and objectives listed above will be met as follows. The earlier part of the course will deal with writing based on personal experience and observation, followed by more interactive modes, i.e. writing that aims to inform, or present a viewpoint or argument to the reader. The focus in this part of the course will be on representing reflection, action, observation, person, place, point-of-view, and time in writing, as well as on organisational techniques. In-class writing exercises will provide opportunities to experiment with subjects, forms and styles. One piece of writing, of about 1000 words, plus two shorter writing exercises, will be required from this part of the course.

The second part of the course will focus on developing a researched piece of writing of 1500-2000 words, with a non-academic, public audience in mind. This piece will use the techniques developed in the earlier part of the course, but the emphasis will be on presenting research findings and personal knowledge in an interesting and intelligible way. This part of the course will cover research and interviewing, structuring, cutting and editing. It is recommended that you start planning the assignment early. Guidelines will be given for this.

Up to 10 marks will be given for your assignment plan, including interview plans. A separate interview and write-up exercise will also be required.

Throughout the course we will be working in non-fiction, particularly “creative non-fiction”, also known as literary journalism. This is an increasingly popular hybrid form that uses fictional writing techniques to create non-fiction works.

### **Expected workload**

Although this will vary depending on individual competence, students are expected to spend approximately 16 hours per week on the course outside of class.

### **Readings**

#### **Essential texts:**

WRIT 203 Course Readings (available from Student Notes)

#### **Recommended:**

Gerard, P. (1996) *Creative Nonfiction*. Cincinnati: Story Press. (Available from VUW library on closed reserve)

Cheney, T. *Writing Creative Nonfiction*. Ten Speed Press. (Available at Victoria Books at price of \$34.95 or at VUW library on closed reserve)

Minot, S. *Literary Nonfiction: The Fourth Genre*. Prentice Hall. (Available at Victoria Books at price of \$47.95)

Perl, S. and M. Schwartz (2006) *Writing True: The Art and Craft of Creative Nonfiction*. Houghton Mifflin. (Library closed reserve)

Other reading material to be distributed in class

For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of VicBooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from VicBooks and student notes from the Student Notes Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz) or can email an order or enquiry to [enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz). Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from the shop. Customers will be contacted when they are available. Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.

### **Materials and equipment**

#### **Required:**

1. Writing material, such as a writing pad, a pen and a pencil (for editing activities)
2. A folder to keep handout material

## Assesment requirements

### Assignment 1 (25%)

A personal essay (memoir, portrait or reflective commentary), developed, peer reviewed, and revised.  
Length: 1000 words.

The first draft of this essay will receive written feedback from a peer in the class. You will then rework it and submit it on the appointed date for tutor feedback. You will further revise it for re-submission in your final portfolio.

### Assignment 2 (45%)

A researched article written for a non-academic audience, developed, peer reviewed, and revised.  
Length: 1500 – 2000 words.

As with Assignment 1, the first draft of this article will receive written feedback from a peer. You will then rework it and submit it on the specified date for tutor feedback. You will further revise it, with tutor help if requested, and re-submit it in your final portfolio.

Ten of the marks allocated to this assignment will be for your assignment plan.

### Assigned Exercises:

These are short, informal, but compulsory tasks which will be done both in class and at home. All must be peer reviewed, and included in your final portfolio. Together, they will be worth 30% of your final assessment (i.e. 10% for each). Each exercise will be one to two A4 pages long.

**Exercise 1:** *Personality profile* - of a class member or someone else you know or have met

**Exercise 2:** *A review* of a play, film, show, concert, book, new CD, restaurant, OR a *commentary* on a topical issue

**Exercise 3:** *Interview and write-up*

**The due date for the final revised portfolio is 9 a.m. on Tuesday 27 October. Dates of interim submission of drafts for tutor and peer review will be given in the first workshop.**

## Victoria University Grades

|        |     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |     |
|--------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Marks  | 85+ | 80-84 | 75-79 | 70-74 | 65-69 | 60-64 | 55-59 | 50-54 | 40-49 | <40 |
| Grades | A+  | A     | A-    | B+    | B     | B-    | C+    | C     | D     | E   |

## **Explanation of the Grading Scale for WRIT 203**

### **A – Very Good to Superior**

- Meets or exceeds all the objectives of the assignment.
- Content is sophisticated, thorough, and well suited for the audience; original, substantive, persuasive; ambitious in its goals, presents complex ideas in an interesting manner.
- Style is clear, accurate, concise and forceful.
- Organisation and format make the information accessible, and attractive.
- Mechanics and grammar are correct.

### **B – Competent to Good**

- Meets the objectives of the assignment, but may need improvement on style or organisation.
- Is generally well written but may contain minor errors or inconsistencies in grammar, format, or content.
- Content is well expressed but not fully developed. No major flaws.
- May be well organised and clearly written, but reasoning may be routine or self-evident, or the information may be inadequate for the intended audience.

### **C – Acceptable**

- Misses some important objectives.
- Needs significant improvement in concept, detail, development, organisation, grammar, or format.
- May be formally correct but superficial in content, or may be adequate in content but contain numerous or major grammatical and stylistic errors.
- Fulfils basic requirements but offers little of genuine importance; lacks in intellectual content beyond opinion or description.

### **Fail Grades (D – E) - Unacceptable**

- Misses most or all objectives.
- Has scant information, does something other than the assignment requires, or contains several major errors.
- Contains seriously inappropriate style or content for the intended audience.
- Assignment has been penalized for unacceptably late submission, or for plagiarized content.

### **Penalties**

Assignments submitted late without permission are penalised by 2% per late day, including weekends.

### **Mandatory course requirements**

In order to qualify for grade assessment at the end of the course, you must meet these conditions:

1. Complete all assignment drafts by their due dates (unless you have formal permission from the co-ordinator to submit late).
2. Attend all workshops. You may not miss more than 6 hours of workshops unless the course coordinator agrees that there are exceptional circumstances.

## **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

## **GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC(Academic) website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/Publications.aspx>