

The Whole Freelancer

This is a sample syllabus. Actual course topics and assignments may vary by instructor and class.

Week 1

Breaking in with the bright idea. How to come up with story ideas. Personal experience. Write about what you know. Using news sources.

Assignment: Pick two story ideas and write a paragraph of about 50-100 words to describe and sell your story.

Week 2

Where to pitch. Targeting the right publications. A look at newspapers, consumer magazines, trade journals, and online publications. Where to find your target. Using writer's guidelines.

Assignment: Take each of your story idea from last week and find a publication that would be an ideal target. Re-tool the pitch for this publication.

Week 3

How to pitch. The art (and science) of selling your story. Crucial checklist of what to do before you pitch. The elements and format of successful pitch letters. The email pitch. What to do with clips. How to follow up.

Assignment: Finalize your pitch—and polish it to the point at which you will be comfortable, and confident, clicking “send” or dropping it in the mail. Use one of your two pitches from last week, or a new idea. The goal is to have at least one pitch letter that's ready to go.

Week 4

The business of freelancing. Getting paid. Understanding rights. Managing your work. What to do once your idea is accepted. Word counts and fees. Contracts and rights. How to add to your earnings. Maintaining connections. How to overcome writer's block.

Assignment: Write short teasers from at least 3 more story ideas, using 3-5 sentences that will grab the editor at get at the story quickly and cleverly.