

Getting Your Writing Out There: Social Media, eBooks, and More

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Stanford University Online Writer's Studio
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Course Schedule: 4 weeks, April 16 -- May 11

Course Description:

In today's publishing landscape, writers are expected not only to write, but also to market and publicize themselves. This course explores how to do this effectively and in a manageable amount of time. Students will learn how to build an effective online presence using an active blog, Facebook, Twitter, and Google+. We will talk about what to post, when, and where, and students will learn how to utilize podcasts to create serialized audiobooks. By distributing audio recordings for free, writers can find an eager audience of potential readers.

A variety of websites will be demystified to show exactly what they offer. Since recent trends lean toward eBook sales, we will discuss how to create and self-publish our own eBooks, including how to use Kickstarter and other online tools to raise funds for a publishing enterprise. Whether you've been blogging for years and have thousands of friends on Facebook, or if the online world is brand new to you, this course can help you achieve your marketing and publicity goals.

By the end of the course, you should have completed several takes of audio experiments with your own readings and ideally a first episode for your audiobook. I also look to see you improve your position online, building from whatever level you begin.

Note: It's really exciting to be doing this class online because you'll be able to see one another's work in real time and respond to it online, both offering your feedback but also widening your scopes of view and social networks.

Required Text:

Podcasting For Dummies – Tee Morris and Chuck Tomasi
Also see AuthorBootCamp.com/Tools for further suggestions.

Grading:

Your grade will be largely based on your level of participation in the class. Whether it be the online forums, giving your peer-feedback or using class tools and assignments to build your online author presence, I'm looking for you to have fun and to stay engaged with the work.

Class Outline:

Week 1: Getting Off the Ground

- Introductions – Building Our Online Community
- Overview of Today's Publishing Industry—Where we are as authors and what we can do.
- Blogs, Facebook, Twitter and More: Where are you and how do you present yourself online?
- Creating your own serialized audiobook—Lesson 1: How to record, edit and share a sample reading with the rest of the class

Week 2: Your Online Presence

- Focus on Blogs: How to build one yourself (for newbies) and What to post, when and how often (for those with a blog already).
- Reposting to distribute your blog more widely—Using Facebook, Google+ and Twitter, Step 2.
- Creating your own serialized audiobook—Lesson 2: Reading Your Work and Editing Audio
- Discussion on eBooks: Pricing and Outlets

Week 3: Selling Your Work and Making a Profit: eBooks

- Making your own eBooks: How to use simple steps to build your .mobi and .epub files in MS Word. [Plus advanced tools demystified.]
- Where to post eBooks and how: Detailed instructions for listing your work on Kindle, Nook, iBooks and everywhere else.
- eBook review sites rundown.
- Creating your own serialized audiobook—Lesson 3: The Modular Approach—Creating Your Book's Intro and Outro

Week 4: What's Next from Here

- Extending your community: Ways to stay in touch with other writers online.
- Creating your own serialized audiobook—Lesson 4: Creating your episodes, promoting yourself and distributing to listeners.
- Serialized audiobook and blog combined: Your Podcast and where to put it!
- Ways to promote your eBook and Podcast.
- When free is best: using your serialized audiobook to your best advantage.

- Schedule for your writing future: objectives, timelines and what to expect along the way.

Weekly Schedule:

MONDAY MORNING: Each new week officially starts on Monday. Every Monday morning, I will send out an email to the class introducing the topics and lessons for the week and opening up the online discussion Forums for class members to start posting ideas, responses and links to assignments. (NOTE: Because many of you may have busy work schedules, the weekend might be your preferred time to work. Because of this, I will always post up the assignments and Forum threads the prior Friday so you can get a head start if you want.)

TUESDAY: 5pm (Pacific Time): First responses to discussion threads due. You may continue weighing in and participating in the discussion throughout the week, but this is when you should post your initial thoughts on the prompts.

WEDNESDAY, 5pm (PST): I will hold weekly office hours in the chatroom for our classroom on Thursdays (first week at 5pm and then we'll talk to figure out when is most convenient for everyone). Here we can talk more informally, discussing any general questions as well as specific issues you might be having with your exercises or the class ideas. You can get immediate feedback on your concerns from me and from your classmates. You're not required to come to office hours every week, and feel free to drop in for shorter periods of time within that hour.

THURSDAY, 5pm (PST): Weekly exercise(s) due (though the earlier you post, the more time you'll have to receive feedback). I respond to them in the order in which they come in. This is where you'll be posting audio segments and sharing links to your blogs, blog posts and other online platform endeavors.

Note: it's really exciting to be doing this class online because you'll be able to see one another's work in real time and respond to it online, thereby drawing attention to one another's work and growing a bigger circle of awareness to class projects.

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK: Respond to posts, participate in discussions.

WEEKEND: If you want, use the weekend to get a jumpstart on reading assigned chapters and trying out new ideas. I won't be in the classroom over the weekend but you're welcome to start posting for the next week whenever you're ready. The classroom is always open!

How All This Works:

Each week begins with an introductory lesson on serialized audiobooks and one on another topic germane to author platforms. You'll find these in the **Schedule** section. To enrich and expand this discussion, I will add questions and points for development under **Topics for Discussion**. Often your serialized audiobook lesson will involve readings from our class textbook. I will list these under **This Week's Reading**, where you'll also find links to relevant writing from the blogosphere that connects to class topics. Under **Assignments**, you'll find several different exercises designed to continue your work for the week. Our group conversation begins when you post your comments and exercises in the **Discussion Forum**. The Forum is a bulletin board where all the action happens. Here, we'll have ongoing conversations about your work, the assignments you'll be working on, popular trends in publishing and writing and the lessons from the class. This is where you'll post your work, and where our discussions as well as your peer feedback will take place.

My Online Presence:

I'll be online and actively responding to new posts in the classroom every other weekday. I generally work Monday, Wednesday and Friday, but sometimes vary these days if there's a holiday or I have some conflicting obligation. I also check my email at least once a day and respond as promptly as I can. The beauty of an online class is that we can all do our work when our schedules permit; we don't have to be working simultaneously. So log on when it's convenient for you, morning or night, daily or every few days. I will hold a one hour chat session, a kind of live office hour, once a week. Participation is encouraged but not mandatory.

A Final Important Note:

Although many students take online courses with the absolute best intentions of doing every last assignment, "real life"—family, illness, professional deadlines—often has a way of making that impossible. Sometimes, the frustration this causes prompts students to drop completely out of the class. Hold on! If you have to skip a couple exercises, this is also okay. As long as you're getting most of the work done and commenting on your classmates' submissions, you'll be fine. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any concerns about your standing. If you foresee some bumps in the road, let me know. We'll work together to find the best possible solution for you.

This is your class. I'm the guide, yes, but the quality of our discussions will depend upon your engagement, insightfulness, and good humor. This course will be as good as the work you put into it. So, please participate fully and generously in discussions. Respond to your classmates with generosity and do your best to complete the assignments. And please, let me know if there's anything I can do to make this a better experience for you. I welcome suggestions, detours, and even shortcuts on gravel roads. If there's something you want to discuss, let me know. If there's an assignment that you think would work in this class, tell me. This is your class.