

Scholars' Writing Workshop
“Writing Beyond the Ivory Tower”
January 28, 2010 (Orford, Québec)

Instead of being famous for 15 seconds, one wag has noted, the successful academic is famous for 15 people—the small community that studies her topic within her discipline. This is the kind of writing that we are trained to do while pursuing a Ph.D. But what about those scholars who want to address a broader audience or engage in a different creative process? In this workshop, Trudeau Scholars Chris Tenove, Julia Christensen, and Alex Aylett will lead a discussion about the opportunities and the challenges of publishing in genres such as the op-ed, the magazine feature, the blog post, and the literary narrative.

The workshop will be divided into two 90-minute sessions. In the first we will present information ranging from how to pitch a newspaper editor or create a successful blog, and we will lead a discussion about the way that different genres enable different forms of engagement with different audiences. In the second session we will work in small groups on short writing samples (from op-eds to blog contributions to fictional sketches) and then reconvene for a final conversation about writing beyond the ivory tower.

Plan

The workshop will follow immediately the 2010 Mentors-Scholars Retreat (January 27-28, 2010). During a half-day workshop on the morning of January 28th at Manoir des Sables, Orford, we will cover the following:

Section One: 9 – 10:30 a.m.

Panel Discussion with Chris, Alex, and Julia: Engaging the mainstream media and its alternatives

1. *How to pitch editors and radio producers on your ideas.* Who do you talk to? What are the essential elements of that communication? How will editors and producers treat your stories? What kinds of rights and remuneration can you expect?
2. *Media impact on policy and identity.* A very brief discussion of social scientific research on news media effects.
3. *Analyzing the Op-Ed.* The opinion editorial is the easiest and most common way for “experts” to write to a general public on a particular issue. What is the genre of the op-ed – its form, exemplars, and limitations?
4. *Alternatives to the Mainstream.* Given the current sea change in mainstream media, as well as its limitations in engaging or empowering audiences, what are the alternatives? We will briefly discuss literary writing, online venues, and blogging.
5. *What are we trying to achieve?* We’ll end the section with a frank discussion about what we scholars hope to achieve by engaging a broader, non-academic audience. Who, exactly, are the “public” that we want to reach? How do we want to engage them? What would success and failure look like?

Break: 10:30 to 11:00 a.m.

Section Two: 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Writing workshop

1. *Break-out session.* Small groups will share and critique participants' paragraph-length submissions. Small groups will discuss their experiences with and objectives for media engagement. Participants may share examples of previous works they may have worked on or published. The aim is for participants in small groups to assist one another in story-building, as well as in identifying suitable media forms and then particular publications, networks, etc.
2. *Wrap-up discussion.* Where do we go from here? Is there a way we can continue to support one another? What kind of role can the Foundation community play in terms of supporting/facilitating scholars' engagement with media?

Organizers:

Chris Tenove

Chris Tenove is an award-winning freelance writer and broadcaster, now a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia and a Trudeau Scholar. He has a Master of Journalism from UBC. As a journalist his assignments have taken him to diamond pits in Sierra Leone, jazz clubs in Bosnia, prisons in Cambodia and jade mines in British Columbia. His features have appeared in magazines such as *Maclean's*, *The Walrus*, *Canadian Geographic*, *Adbusters*, *Vancouver*, *This Magazine*, and *Reader's Digest Canada*, and in newspapers such as the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and *National Post*. As a broadcaster, his documentaries have appeared on CBC's *Ideas* and *The Current*, on PRI's *This American Life*, and frequently on the *Radio Netherlands World Service*. He was the founding writer and an interim editor at *The Tyee*, and a contributing editor at *Adbusters* and *Vancouver Magazine*. He is a five-time finalist for a National Magazine Award, and the winner of a gold medal from the Canadian Science Writers' Association.

Julia Christensen

Julia Christensen is a Ph.D. Candidate in Geography at McGill University and a Trudeau Scholar. She is also a freelance writer and has published in a range of northern magazines, including *Up Here*, *Above and Beyond*, *Far North Oil and Gas Review*, and *News/North*. She was previously the Features/National Editor for the *Ubyyssey* newspaper. Julia also writes fiction and creative non-fiction and has recently published short stories related to her research interests in literary journals.

Alex Aylett

Alex Aylett is a doctoral student at the University of British Columbia studying the politics behind municipal climate change policy. He is currently a Trudeau Scholar and has worked as a consultant and researcher for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the International Center for Sustainable Cities. His articles have appeared in *The Tyee*, *THIS* magazine, the *Montreal Gazette* and *ReNew Canada* magazine. He splits his time between Durban (South Africa), Portland (Oregon) and Granada (Spain). You can read his blog at openalex.blogspot.com. He also occasionally contributes to worldchanging.com and a variety of other collective blogs.

Submission Procedure:

This workshop is open to Scholars, Mentors, and Fellows. We have room for up to 20 people. If you are interested in participating, please email Chris Tenove (cjtenove@gmail.com) with the kernel of a story to develop: **about 250 words** about the issue or the narrative you want to explore. If you have a particular genre or publication in mind, please note that, too. **Please send submissions to Chris by November 21, 2009.**