

**Opinion Writing Masterclass
 Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th October 2023**

Outline programme

Saturday 7th October

10:30	Welcome and Introductions
11:00	Opinion in science and research journalism. What you will learn from this course Ehsan Masood, Editorials Editor, <i>Nature</i>
11:15	Keynote Day 1 – Pitching and writing opinion for <i>The Washington Post</i> Sara Abdulla, Senior Editor <i>The Washington Post</i>
12:15	Exercise 1: Spot the difference between News and Opinion writing Ehsan Masood
13:15	Lunch break
14:15	‘Tell me what you think’: Anatomy of an opinion piece Ehsan Masood
15:15	Briefing on overnight writing assignment – Exercise 2 Ehsan Masood
15:30	Feedback/Reflections
15:45	Close of Day #1/start of homework assignment

Sunday 8th October

10:15	Recap of Day 1
10:30	Keynote 2: Pitching and writing comment and analysis for readers who are researchers John Whitfield, Comment Editor, <i>Research Professional News</i>
11:30	Three-minute homework presentations and discussion of homework opinion articles (two groups)

13:30	Lunch break
14:30	Keynote 3: From science journalists to science commentators Philip Ball, science writer, broadcaster and commentator
15:30	Reflections and feedback
16:00	End of workshop

Homework assignment summary

After the first day of the course you will need to submit a 500-word **opinion article** on a topic of your choice. Literally, anything.

This could be something you have prepared ahead of the course. The deadline for submission is **7pm UK time Saturday 7th October**. Please email the finished piece as a Word doc to ehsan.h.masood@gmail.com

Please keep to the deadline and word length.

Workshop tutors Ehsan Masood and John Whitfield will assess your work before the Sunday session starts. We will then divide into two small groups and you will be asked to read your article aloud, with an opportunity for feedback from the tutors and the rest of the group.

Your article could be for a UK or international newspaper or a website. Or it could be for a science magazine, such as *New Scientist*; or a publication read mostly by researchers, such as *Research Professional News*.

In addition to your 500-word opinion article please also include the following:

- A headline and standfirst (the short description below the headline).
- The name of your intended publication.
- Two sentences on how you would pitch your opinion article to an editor. In your pitch, you must say (i) what is your topline and what is distinctive about your argument or point of view and (ii) why you are the person that readers need to hear from.

Important tip: we want you to **read your article aloud**. This means please practise a few times - ideally with someone listening. If a sentence or an idea doesn't *sound* right to a listener, it won't sound right to a reader either!

Some free online sources for style/content:

Theconversation.com

Website featuring comment and analysis by academic researchers

The Guardian's comment pages

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/commentisfree>