

**Opinion Writing Masterclass  
 Friday 24 and Saturday 25 September 2021**

**Outline programme**

**Friday 24 September**

10:30	<b>Welcome</b> Dalmeet Singh Chawla, science writer and ABSW Treasurer  <b>Introductions</b> Gerri McHugh
11:00	<b>Why ‘research-based’ opinion, and what you will learn from this course</b> Ehsan Masood, Editorial page editor, <i>Nature</i>
11:15	<b>Pitching and writing comment and analysis for <i>New Scientist</i></b> Penny Sarchet, News Editor, <i>New Scientist</i>
12:15	<b>Exercise 1: Learning the difference between News and Opinion</b> Ehsan Masood
13:15	Lunch break
14:15	<b>‘Tell me what you think’: Anatomy of an opinion piece</b> Ehsan Masood
15:15	<b>Briefing on overnight writing assignment – Exercise 2</b> Ehsan Masood
15:30	Break
15:45	<b>Writing opinion for <i>Undark</i> magazine</b> Ashley Smart, Senior Editor, <i>Undark</i> magazine
16:45	Reflections
17:00	Close/start homework assignment:

## Saturday 25 September

10:15	<b>Welcome</b> ABSW team
10:30	<b>Pitching and writing comment and analysis for a specialist audience</b> John Whitfield, Comment Editor, <i>Research Professional News</i>
11:30	<b>Three-minute homework presentations and discussion of homework opinion articles</b> (two groups)
13:30	Lunch break
14:30	<b>Getting your op-ed published in <i>The Boston Globe</i></b> Bina Venkataraman, Editorial page editor, <i>The Boston Globe</i>
15:30	Reflections and feedback
16:00	End of workshop

### Assignment summary

At the end of Friday, you will be asked to do a short task. We want you to write a 400/500 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 **06:30 UK time Saturday 25 September**. Please email the finished piece to [gerri.mchugh@absw.org.uk](mailto:gerri.mchugh@absw.org.uk)

### Please keep to the deadline and word length.

Workshop tutors Ehsan Masood and John Whitfield will assess your work before the Saturday 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 an international newspaper such as *The Boston Globe*, or a website, like BBC News or CNN. Or it could be for a science magazine, such as *New Scientist*. Or a publication read mostly by researchers, such as *Research Professional News*.

Please include the following:

- A headline and sub-head (the short description below the headline).
- The name of your intended publication.
- Write two sentences on how you would pitch your story to an editor. Choose a topic in the news, or a recent piece of research. In your pitch, you must say (i) 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: as you will need to read your article aloud, 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!

Links to some opinion sections of the sites mentioned:

<https://www.newscientist.com/section/opinion/>

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/>

<https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/category/opinion/>