

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Colorado State University, Academic Partner

Voyage:	Spring 2018
Discipline:	Journalism and Media Communication
Course Number and Title:	JTC 361 Writing for Specialized Magazines (Focus on Travel Writing and Cultural Reporting)
Division:	Upper
Faculty Name:	Ralph D. Berenger
Semester Credit Hours:	3

Prerequisites: One (1) lower-level newswriting course
Per instructor: The standard prerequisite(s) as listed in the CSU course catalog will be waived.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This writing course begins with classic readings from a variety of publications—magazines, newspapers, websites, books and blogs—including but not limited to *National Geographic*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* travel sections. We'll examine techniques creative non-fiction writers use to make scenes, people, places and social issues come alive for readers. Since travel writing relies on insights about societies and countries many readers are unfamiliar with, Semester at Sea provides a unique opportunity to avoid "parachute journalism" by expanding your own reporting with insights from visiting lecturers, an international faculty and intelligent classmates. Most writers get drawn into this work as readers first, so it's not uncommon to think successful stories and articles arrived intact, without a lot of revision and rewriting. Rarely true. It usually takes tremendous dedication and work before features (especially freelance stories) impress an editor and reach an audience. You'll learn how to be as efficient as possible, recognize what works and what doesn't, and how to self-edit. You'll receive critiques from peers and me on all writing assignments. We'll also discuss how to "break in"—how new writers can introduce themselves and establish connections with editors and publications they have yet to work with. As Ira Glass of "This American Life" advised new writers who want to become as good as their ambitions aspire to be, the most important thing they can do to close that gap is create "a huge volume of work." (See two-minute video, "Ira Glass on Storytelling": <http://vimeo.com/24715531>) This class begins with small steps—sentences and paragraphs brought back on board after each field trip—and grows them into articles with deep insights and skillful portraits.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1) Write narrative journalism, social criticism, analysis/critiques, profiles, magazine features and radio commentaries.
- 2) Incorporate research, reporting and interviews into each genre.
- 3) Develop a distinctive voice and individual style.
- 4) Employ various structures to enhance pace and relevance.
- 5) Identify these techniques in assigned readings.
- 6) Explore multi-media additions, digital links and sidebars for each assignment.
- 7) Learn how to navigate the publishing world—submitting work, following-up, collaborating with editors and establishing networks.

REQUIRED BOOKS

In addition to the required books listed below (all paperbacks, any edition), you'll receive weekly handouts and links to longer articles. On hard copy handouts, make marginal notes and highlight passages for class discussion. You'll receive specific questions about what to look for in each reading before class discussions. Once an article/essay has been discussed, bring it to subsequent classes—we'll consult them periodically for other examples of voice, structure, language, theme development, etc.

AUTHOR: William Strunk and E.B. White

TITLE: *The Elements of Style*

PUBLISHER: Macmillan

ISBN #: ISBN 0-02-418220-6 (pbk)

DATE/EDITION: 3rd or subsequent editions, 1979 (or later)

AUTHOR: William Zinsser

TITLE: *On Writing Well, The Classic Guide to Writing Non-fiction*

PUBLISHER: Quill-An Imprint of Harper-Collins Publishers

ISBN #: 0-06-000664-1 (pbk)

DATE/EDITION: 2001

AUTHOR: Mark Kramer and Wendy Call, Editors

TITLE: *Telling True Stories*

PUBLISHER: Plume-Imprint of the Penguin Group

ISBN #: 978-0-452-28755-6

DATE/EDITION: 2007

RECOMMENDED READINGS (IN THE ISE LIBRARY)

Becoming a Writer, Dorothea Brande (Tarcher/Penguin)

The Essayist at Work, Lee Gutkind, (Heinneman)

The Beholder's Eye, A Collection of America's Finest Personal Journalism, Walt Harrington, (Grove Atlantic)

Cities, Cultures, Conversations—Readings for Writers, Richard Marback, Patrick Bruch, Jill Eicher editors, (Allyn and Bacon)

Woe Is I, Patricia O'Conner, (Harvest Books/Harcourt)

Eats, Shoots and Leaves, Lynne Truss (Putnam Books)

One Writer's Beginning, Eudora Welty

Inventing the Truth, William Zinsser

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

(Subject to Change and Revision)

Depart Ensenada, Mexico – Friday, January 5

A1—Sunday, January 7: Introductions, discussion of syllabus, triad assignments

A2—January 9: Discussion of *Telling True Stories*, Part I, Pgs 3-18.

A3—January 11: Discussion of personal essay handouts (TBA)

Honolulu, Hawaii – Friday, January 12

A4—January 14: Turn in OPM (field notes-Honolulu); Discussion of *Telling True Stories*, Pgs 19-33; 46-48.

January 16—International Date Line crossing (Lost Day)

A5—January 17: Discussion of personal essay handouts, TBA

Study Day, No Classes –January 19

A6—January 20: **Due:** Personal essay, first draft. Provide three copies—one for me and two for your triad editors. Sign up for a conference time on Jan 22. In class: Round table discussion of writing problems.

A7—January 22: Triads meet during class time. I'll meet individually with you before or after class. Be prepared to discuss topics and reporting plans for your final paper. I'll also return your personal essay with my critique.

Kobe, Japan –January 24-28

A8—January 29: **Due:** Final draft, personal essay. Turn in OPM (field notes-Japan). We'll listen to several radio commentaries that have aired on NPR and other broadcasts, and analyze what makes them successful.

Shanghai, China — January 31 - February 1

In-Transit — February 2-3

Hong Kong, SAR — February 4-5

A9—February 6: Turn in OPM (field notes-China). We'll listen to and discuss more radio commentaries from international broadcasters.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam — February 8-13

A10—February 14: **Due:** First draft, radio commentary. Turn in OPM (field notes-Vietnam). Rehearsal and critique of your radio commentary.

Study Day, no classes—February 16

A11—February 17: **DUE:** final radio scripts, to be recorded in class.

Myanmar — February 19-23

A12—February 24: Turn in OPM (field notes-Myanmar). Discuss Readings for “Scene and Heard” (Talk of the Town handouts, TBA)

A13— February 26: Lecture on interviewing and reporting practices. Discussion of selected essays on structure, ethics and editing from *Telling True Stories*, TBA.

Cochin, India— February 28 - March 5

A14—March 6: Turn in OPM (field notes-India). Discussion of “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” in *Cities, Cultures and Conversations*. (Pgs 89-101)

Study Day, no classes — March 7

A15—March 9: **DUE:** first draft, “Scene and Heard.” (Three copies) Round table discussion of writing problems.

Port Louis, Mauritius — March 11

A16—March 12: Turn in OPM (field notes, Mauritius)
Triad teams meet during class time to critique “Scene and Heard.”

A17—March 14: Discussion of *On Writing Well*, William Zinsser, parts I and II. (Pgs 3-95)

A18—March 16: Discussion of *On Writing Well*, William Zinsser, writing about people and places, (pgs 100-132)

Cape Town, South Africa — March 18-23. **Field Trip for JTC 361 is the first day,** Sunday March 18, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (See below)

A19—March 24: Turn in OPM (field notes, Cape Town) Q and A on *The Elements of Style*, Strunk and White.

A20—March 26: Class discussion about publishing and “breaking in,” contacting editors, creating networks.

A21—March 28: **DUE:** Query letter for final paper.

Tema, Ghana — March 30 - April 1

Takoradi, Ghana — April 2-3

A22—April 4: Turn in OPM (field notes, Ghana). **DUE:** First draft, final paper (Three copies)

A23—April 6: Triads meet during class time to critique final papers.

Study Day, no classes — April 8

A24— April 9: **DUE**—Final Paper, final draft.

Casablanca, Morocco — April 11-14

A25—April 15: Final class. I’ll return and discuss your final papers and suggest what else needs to be done before they’re ready to submit for publication. You’ll turn in your last OPM (field notes, Morocco) and all triad critiques. Q&A on all other topics you want to discuss.

Re-entry programming—April 17

Arrive Hamburg, Germany — April 19

FIELD WORK

Semester at Sea field experiences allow for an unparalleled opportunity to compare, contrast, and synthesize the different cultures and countries encountered over the course of the voyage. In addition to the one field class, students will complete independent field assignments that span multiple countries.

Field Class attendance is mandatory for all students enrolled in this course. Do not book individual travel plans or a Semester at Sea sponsored trip on the day of your field class. Field Classes constitute at least 20% of the contact hours for each course.

Field Class and Assignment

The Field Class for this course will take place on *Sunday, 18 March, in Cape Town, South Africa.*

Field Class Description:

The field class for JTC 361, “Travel Writing and Cultural Reporting,” is on the first day in Cape Town, South Africa: Sunday, March 18. It begins aboard the ship with an introduction, followed by onboard lectures and discussions with three distinguished South African luminaries—journalist and author Zubeida Jaffer, South African Public Radio producer Antjie Krog, and Constitutional Court Justice Albie Sachs. All three spent several decades organizing resistance to the apartheid government established by Dutch colonists and succeeded in 1994, when the new democracy in South Africa elected ANC leader Nelson Mandela as its first president. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has also been invited to join his colleagues, who were instrumental in setting up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In addition to lectures and discussions with these fascinating speakers, students will take a guided tour of Robben Island and visit the cell where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for nearly 30 years. The speakers are invited to join us for lunch. After the tour of Robben Island, we’ll return for dinner and the film, “Material—Life is a Funny Business,” starring stand-up comic Riaad Moosa. This “landmark in South African cinema” (Peter Wilhelm, *Financial Mail*) addresses the “timeless themes of destiny, responsibility, forgiveness and ultimately the importance of family.” It also demonstrates how critical humor is in the wake of tragedy, allowing citizens to laugh, heal, and find the courage to carry on. Depending on his schedule, Moosa would like to join us for a discussion about his work on the film.

The boat trip from Cape Town to Robben Island is approximately a half-hour, and provides a breathtaking view of Cape Town nestled at the foot of Table Mountain. (When I mentioned this to fellow passengers twenty years ago, the South African ambassador aboard remarked, “I know. Too bad. If it weren’t so spectacular, the Dutch may have sailed right on by...”)

If time permits, we’ll meet with some of the student contributors to *The Journalist*, the weekly newspaper founded by Zubeida Jaffer to close the generation gap between the activists to ended apartheid and the beneficiaries of the new democracy.

Independent Field Assignments

All independent field assignments are listed under the preceding “Topical Outline of Course,” and will be explained in greater detail during the first class discussion (A1).

Since you can't know exactly which countries you'll want to include in your final paper before you've explored them, you'll write an OPM (One Page Max) after visits to each port. Collectively, they serve as both a journal and detailed summary of observations and interviews in each country. Obviously, you'll want to expand these insights on countries that become part of your final project. The OPMs provide reliable information—and inspiration—to begin.

ATTENDANCE/ENGAGEMENT IN THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Attendance in all classes, including the Field Class, is required. Students must inform their instructors prior to any unanticipated absence and take the initiative to make up missed work in a timely fashion. Instructors must make reasonable efforts to enable students to make up work which must be accomplished under the instructor's supervision (e.g., examinations, laboratories). In the event of a conflict about this policy, individuals may appeal using established CSU procedures.

METHODS OF EVALUATION/GRADING

The following Grading Scale is utilized for student evaluation. Pass/Fail is not an option for Semester at Sea coursework. Note that C-, D+ and D- grades are also not assigned on Semester at Sea in accordance with the grading system at Colorado State University (the SAS partner institution). Pluses and minuses are awarded as follows on a 100% scale:

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory/poor</u>	<u>Failing</u>
97-100%: A+	87-89%: B+	77-79%: C+	Less than 60%
93-96%: A	83-86%: B	70-76%: C	
90-92%: A-	80-82%: B-	60-69%: D	

ASSIGNMENTS

Personal essay: A cultural issue revealed through a character's story or experience, in reference to one of your own. (Approx. 850-1,000 words)

"Scene and Heard" column: A glimpse into one of the ports visited through the voices and stories of someone in the population. (600 words each)

Radio broadcast: A short story, critique, or commentary using humor and/or drama to create a "driveway moment" (so fascinating it keeps listeners in their cars until you reach the conclusion.) Choose an "evergreen" subject that will not become dated. (Approx. 300 words)

Final project: An in-depth examination of how at least four different societies address *one* cultural issue that interests you—childhood, adolescence, motherhood,

sexuality, education, politics, aging, healthcare, medicine, gender relationships, family structures, travel, entertainment, etc. Identify your subject in our first individual conference. Once approved, this topic will become the subject of all your field trip OPMs, providing sentences and paragraphs throughout the voyage to weave into your final paper. In the last conference, we'll discuss target publications and editorial expectations. (Approx. 1,500-2,000 words)

Critique/Analysis of Field Class: A short, succinct and tightly written analysis/critique of the South Africa field class. Address how the field class was beneficial to your understanding of media effects and how the field class could be improved for future classes on this topic. (Length: 2-3 pages, 500-700 words).

Query Letter: After the class discussion on marketing, you'll write a query letter about your final project addressed to target publications. Magazines today require queries before issuing contracts. (One page)

Don't mistake the brevity of some word counts for easy composition—as Blaise Pascal apologized to a friend at the end of a lengthy missive: "I would have written you a shorter letter, but I didn't have the time." All first drafts of writing assignments are ungraded but thoroughly critiqued.

GRADING

Personal Essay	150 points
"Scene and Heard" column	150 points
Radio commentary	150 points
Final project	250 points
Class discussion	100 points
Triad critiques	50 points
Query letter	50 points
Conference preparation, Round Table contributions	50 points
Critique/Analysis of South Africa Field Class	50 points
Total	1,000 points (100%)

MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

Keep electronic files of first and final drafts of all class assignments. *Whenever possible, submit hard copies of final drafts, typed and double-spaced, 12 pt, Times Roman type, standard margins* The top left corner of the first page should include your name, e-mail address, assignment and story slug. *Include page numbers on all manuscripts.* (I get seriously cranky if you forget this since it's a sign of unprofessionalism.) Please use a staple or paper clip to keep pages together instead of folded corners, vinyl folders, hairpins or chewing gum. If these instructions seem petty or inane, it's nevertheless good practice because newsroom supervisors and future employers are prone to OCD. (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, an occupational hazard.) I'll assume your journalistic integrity—that you are writing the

unplagiarized truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth—on all assignments. Nevertheless, you should always be prepared to produce a "fact checking" package—contact information for all sources and interview subjects, as well as references for all quotations cited. (Long before “fake news” and “failed newspapers” became common in American discourse, the mainstream media required this documentation. You’ll save time and frustration with research departments at every publication if you make it a habit now.) If you need more information about what constitutes plagiarism in the digital age, you’ll find many links to excellent essays at Salon.com and other websites. You can also raise questions during classes and conferences.

Since you’ll receive extensive comments on first drafts from your triad editors (see below) and me, you should be able to submit successful rewrites to national and international magazines, newspapers, web publications and radio programs. To achieve that quality of writing, however, be prepared to do additional rewrites after the semester ends.

ROUND TABLES

Brief writing assignments will be read aloud and discussed in class. (See dates on syllabus.) These class sessions hone your skills as both presenters and peer evaluators, and keep you updated on each other’s work. Round tables also serve as informal “think tanks” that professional writers often use to brainstorm ideas, unravel writer’s block, share research and provide ongoing "adult education."

TRIAD EDITING TEAMS

During the first class, you’ll be assigned to a three-person “Triad Team” for the entire semester (not to be confused with Japanese Triads, a crime organization). Your triad will edit the first draft of each assignment and provide a written critique. Triads meet during the class immediately following the due date for each assignment. The goal is to sharpen editing skills—becoming a good critic invariably improves your own writing skills. Triads are encouraged to meet outside class throughout the semester. All critiques must be submitted with your final paper so peer editors are credited for their work.

OPMs

An informal OPM—One Page Maximum—is due after each field trip to the eleven countries we’ll be visiting. Together, they become a journal of important observations made in each port. You may well have more to report than one page per country...so the page you submit to me should address the main issue you’re covering in your final project. There is no required word count—one paragraph, even one sentence, may be all you have to report in some places. OPMs can be drafted from journals you keep for other classes, and get you in the habit of noticing small details.

INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES

Two conferences are scheduled during the semester to guide your final project, and are vital to its success. Come prepared with questions about research issues and

writing problems particular to you and not likely to be covered in class. The syllabus lists the dates...your triads meet during class time, and I'll meet individually with you for a half hour before or after. Please keep track of your assigned time--it's very difficult to make up missed conferences.

OFFICE HOURS

You are welcome to make additional appointments at any time during the semester to discuss your work in progress. Office hours are often heavily trafficked during peak deadline periods, so reserve time in advance.

LATE POLICY

Since life is fraught with unforeseen crises and events (a hard drive crash, an attack of the flu), you may request one grace period for a late assignment. Since life is also unfair, after you have exercised this option you will drop one grade on each assignment that is late.

LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS

Semester at Sea provides academic accommodations for students with diagnosed learning disabilities, in accordance with ADA guidelines. Students who will need accommodations in a class should contact ISE to discuss their individual needs. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation.

A letter from the student's home institution verifying the accommodations received on their home campus (dated within the last three years) is required before any accommodation is provided on the ship. Students must submit this verification of accommodations to academic@isevoyages.org as soon as possible, but no later than two months prior to the voyage.

STUDENT CONDUCT CODE

The foundation of a university is truth and knowledge, each of which relies in a fundamental manner upon academic integrity and is diminished significantly by academic misconduct. Academic integrity is conceptualized as doing and taking credit for one's own work. A pervasive attitude promoting academic integrity enhances the sense of community and adds value to the educational process. All within the University are affected by the cooperative commitment to academic integrity. All Semester at Sea courses adhere to this Academic Integrity Policy and Student Conduct Code.

Depending on the nature of the assignment or exam, the faculty member may require a written declaration of the following honor pledge: "I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment.

--Adapted from Syllabus drafted by Dr. Mary Kay Blakely