

LITERARY NONFICTION

Lit 365/HM1 , Fall 2024

Office: 413 Cullimore Hall

Hours: Wed. 2:30-3:30 & by appointment

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Course Digital Venue, Canvas Conferencing

System

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines forms of journalism, focusing ultimately on literary journalism and other literary forms such as creative nonfiction, with respect to their relationship with either fact or truth, or both (especially considering literary nonfiction's vital role in a politically free society). Aside from brief written assignments (N.B. honors college students must also compose a relatively brief term paper in consultation with the instructor), and oral reports, required work in the course will consist of reading journalistic / literary-journalistic and like nonfiction texts of various kinds.

Prerequisites: ENG 102 with a grade of C or higher, and one History and Humanities GER 200 level course with a grade of C or higher.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course students should be able to: demonstrate critical thinking within a narrowly focused subject area through both oral and written communication; write argument-based essays in response to thematic questions; and explain the dynamic of news media within a free society.

COURSE TEXTS

Books:

Capote, Truman. *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences*, 1965. New York: Vintage, 1994. ISBN: 0679745580.

Kovach, Bill, and Tom Rosenstiel. *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2014. ISBN:9780804136785

Various other short readings are listed below in the Week-by-Week schedule and at the course homepage in Canvas.

Other Useful Texts:

Help for Doing Literary Analysis: <http://web.njit.edu/~kimmelma/LitAnalysisHelp.html>

[Writing and Documentation Guides](#) (explanations, examples, etc.)

A suggested protocol for team oral/visual reports can be found toward the bottom of this page.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Oral/Visual Reports as part of a group.
- Weekly Canvas postings (one original comment of 100 to 150 words, another of 50- to 100-word response to someone else's post in the week).
- A midterm and final exam (these exams are required for course credit).
- An optional * original work of literary journalism (or voiced investigative reporting), developed in consultation with the instructor.

Failure to sit for the final exam will result in all written assignments and the midterm exam being disqualified.

Weekly Canvas posts should be single-spaced but otherwise must also be spell-checked and to the best of one's ability grammar-checked, and must be in standard English and adhere to standard formal writing protocols.

As regards all writing submitted in this course, please keep the following in mind. If on occasion use is made of the ideas or words of someone else in one's writing, then the source(s) of those ideas and/or words must be cited; that is, when appropriate, papers must be fully documented (you must cite sources--using footnotes, endnotes, or

parenthetical documentation, which include specific page numbers keyed to particular passages in your text, and complete bibliographical information). WRITTEN TEXTS NOT MEETING ALL OF THESE REQUIREMENTS WILL NOT BE READ AND WILL NOT RECEIVE CREDIT.

N.B. Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, **it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity** whose policy can be found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>.

Please note that **it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office.** Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

All written work is to be submitted to the instructor via Canvas, in Word or a compatible program; no written work is to be submitted in PDF.

N.B.: Failure to participate in class discussions (especially online) at a minimally acceptable level will result in disqualification and so must inevitably spell failure in the course. In order to pass this course a student must be consistently active in weekly class work starting from the beginning of the course term. Furthermore, *only three unexcused absences will be allowed*; more than these can mean automatic course failure.

COURSE GRADE

Final Examination - 30%

Midterm Examination - 10%

Class Participation online (initial, originating posts - graded weekly) - 20% (10% if late)

Class Participation online (responses to classmates' posts) - 10% (5% if late)

Follow-up Questions or Comments - 5%

Portfolio of Eight Best Posts online - 5%

Group Reports - 20% (10% each)

Extra credit project*

* The original work of literary journalism project is required for Honors credit, and can be used for gaining extra credit for all students (a Honors student who wishes to earn extra credit as well as gain Honors credit, would have to write two individual works of literary journalism).

Honors / Extra-credit project (optional): 10 points (extra credit):

Honors students are required to submit the term paper (and its preliminary document, the term paper proposal) and have the option of submitting a second paper project for extra credit (10 points extra). In this course, the term paper and its necessary proposal preceding it, take the form of an original work of literary journalism. The grade on the term paper will govern the grade on the term paper proposal, so long as the term paper proper receives a higher grade (otherwise, of the two submissions, if the proposal receives a higher grade, than 10 of the total 30 percent of the course grade will count; the term paper grade itself is worth 20 percent of the total course grade). If the grade for the term paper project as a whole is greater than grades for other assignments (excluding the exams), then that higher grade will supplant the assigned percentage of another assignment or assignments, which add up to 30 percent of the course grade. For example, if the total grade for the term paper project is greater than, say, the total grades of the weekly forum posts (up to a total of 30 percent of the course grade), then the higher term-paper-project grade will be counted instead of the grades for the forum posts.

COURSE SCHEDULE (access texts via course homepage in Canvas; see due dates and details of assignments at course homepage)

Week 1: Introduction to the course.

Week 2a: Kovach and Rosenstiel, *Elements of Journalism* pp. 1-19, 22-26, 47-61, 65-68, 97-116.

Week 2b: Kerrane and Yagoda, "Preface" and "Introduction" to *The Art of Fact*; "Introduction" to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*; Naselli, "Truth in Memoir" (1986); Minkowitz, "How I Broke, and Botched, the Brandon Teena Story" (2018).

Week 3a: Hersey, *Hiroshima* excerpt (1946).

Week 3b: Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son" (1955).

Week 4a: Baldwin, "Nobody Knows My Name"(1955).

Week 4b: Breslin, "It's an Honor" and "A Death in Emergency Room One" (1963).

Week 5a: Didion, "On Self-Respect" (1961), "Los Angeles Notebook" (1965, 67, 68), and "Why I Write" (1976).

Week 5b: Thompson, *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang* excerpt (1965).

Week 6a: Herr, "Keshan" (1969).

Week 6b: Midterm Exam.

Week 7a: Capote, *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences* (January 1966), Preface and up to p. 74 (Part I).

Week 7b: *Capote*, Dir. Miller (2005).

Week 8a: Capote, *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences*, pp. 75 to 248 (Parts II and III).

Week 8b: Capote, *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences*, pp. 75 to 248 (Parts II and III).

Week 9a: Capote, *In Cold Blood: A True Account of a Multiple Murder and Its Consequences*, pp. 249-343 (remainder of the book).

Week 9b: *In Cold Blood*, Dir. Brooks (1967).

Week 10a: Gornick, "To Begin With" (1977), through p. 12.

Week 10b: Simpson, "Tiananmen Square" (1989).

Week 11a: Kincaid, "On First Seeing England" (1991).

Week 11b: Shah, "Kinship, Cousins, & Khichidi" (2004).

Week 12a: Dean, "Dee Dee Wanted Her Daughter to Be Sick" (2016).

Week 12b: Fan, "How My Mother and I Became Chinese Propaganda" (2020).

Week 13a: Alexander, "The Trayvon Generation" (2020).

Week 13b: Parham, "TikTok and the Evolution of Digital Blackface" (2020).

Week 14a: Roberts, "Wonder Women: The Fight for Female Superheroes in Hollywood" (2020).

Week 14b Sestanovich, "The Missionary in the Kitchen" (2024).

Week 15: Course review.

Numerical conversions from letter grades: A+ = 4.4 A = 4 A- = 3.7, etc.