English 509: Literary Genres
Literary Journalism
Summer II 2024

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COURSE DESCRIPTION	This course will study the genre of literary journalism—also called longform journalism—a genre that stands, in terms of style, at the intersections of journalism and literature, nonfiction and fiction. Literary journalism is a type of nonfiction writing that adheres to the basic journalistic tenet of objective truth-telling, while using storytelling techniques and structures more commonly associated with fiction. During the next five weeks we will explore some of the best dramatic reportage, covering a broad swath of subject matter, which has been published in newspapers, magazines, and books. As we go along, we will want to think about the interplay between "objective truth" and emotional truth, between imagination and direct presentation, between content and form. We will want to look at how—and why—journalists turn to the techniques and styles of fiction writing in order to tell important stories. Note: Though "literary journalism" as a blended form of writing can be traced back hundreds of years, most of our work will focus on stories written in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. If only we had more time to do much, much more!
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME	For TAMU-system assessment purposes, this course has the following Student Learning Outcome: students will produce a focused final paper, as measured by a rubric.
COURSE STRUCTURE	In brief, in addition to the literary texts you will read, this course will involve online Reading Notes, detailed online discussion, and one paper. ● **Reading Notes**: I have supplied for most weeks some notes to introduce and contextualize your reading assignments. You should always read these before you begin the assigned texts for the week. ● **Online Discussions**: This is the largest graded part of the course. You will have two deadlines for posting each week: one mid-week, and one by the end of the week, as indicated in the schedule of assignments below. I will be looking for you to post, that is, both by Thursday morning and later in the week, before

	Sunday night. For the first deadline, you can post even if you have not yet finished the entire assignment. In fact, sometimes it is very instructive to see people's responses when they are only midway through a book. I structure my deadlines this way in order to discourage students from posting all their ideas Sunday night, after the time most other students will see them and be able to respond. I have not set a specific quota for how many posts you need to provide for each week's discussion. However, as a very general guideline, I will be looking for perhaps four or five substantive posts total per week to earn something in the B+ or more range for that week's discussion. You can begin your own threads, but you must also respond to the threads that are already going in order to receive the best credit. (By substantive I mean posts that are more than two or three sentences in length, posts that are detailed and specific, posts that work to enrich the conversation—not, in other words, short, overly-generalized posts that simply say "I really liked this story" or "I agree"). Also, I expect you to read what other people have posted; don't just start a new thread that says the exact same thing that someone else has already started a thread about. **Additionally, it's vital that you READ everyone else's posts. Even if you post a gazillion times during the week, if I see that you have only read a fraction of the comments that others have written, you won't earn as strong of a grade as you could by reading all other posts.** I urge you to write your comments in response to what others have posted, in addition to starting your own threads. If someone has already posted the point that you had wanted to make, add to that thread rather than starting an entirely new thread that says the same thing. To me, that latter action implies that you are not reading what other people have written. Remember, the whole idea is to get a discussion going! Please be sure to provide a specific title for any threads you begin. For instance, don't just start a thread titled "Articles" and then go ahead and post about the use of imagery in the articles we read for that week. Instead, make your subject line say "Use of imagery in the articles." That way people know what the focus of the thread is and can respond in the appropriate place rather than starting a new thread about the same topic. Many weeks there will be a couple of separate discussion categories, and you don't have to post in every single one; however, you if there are multiple discussion threads set up for the week, you will want to hit at least several of them so it's clear that you've done all the reading.

Note: I will read everything you write, and I will chime in to some degree, but I will not respond to each post because I am more interested in what you have to say about the texts.

- **Paper**. Because this is a short course, I will only require one piece of writing, and you will have four options for this paper, due at the end of Week 5.

  Option 1: Creative/critical piece. Write your own piece of literary "reportage," supplemented with a short critical analysis (about 3 pages) about how your piece stands as an example of literary journalism, some of the challenges/rewards you encountered in writing your piece, and some of the decisions you made about style and structure. Length: 10 pages double-spaced. (I have put a couple of sample creative pieces from a different course in the Document Sharing part of D2L.)

  Option 2: Analysis. Locate some other pieces of literary journalism and choose a couple/few articles about which to write. Analyze how the articles are structured, what literary and journalistic elements they include, and what they accomplish in terms of reaching readers. You can find fine examples of literary journalism all over the place, from the *Dallas Morning News* to *Vanity Fair* and all sorts of periodicals in between, but here is a collection of some noteworthy articles, both old and new: Length: 10 pages, double-spaced.
  https://longform.org/best

  Option 3: Bibliographic Essay. The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS) publishes a biannual scholarly journal titled *Literary Journalism Studies*. For this option, choose a minimum of 7 articles from this journal to read and to summarize in a bibliographic essay of 10 pages. Alternatively, you may find articles about literary journalism in general or about the journalism of a particular author via an MLA search (e.g. Truman Capote, John Steinbeck, Stephen Crane) and use those to write your bibliographic essay; be sure to leave enough time for Interlibrary Loan in case the articles you need are not full-text and you need to order them. (I have put a sample bibliographic essay from a different course in the Document Sharing part of D2L.) Length: 10 pages, double-spaced

  Option 4: Digital Project. Are you interested in doing something with Digital Humanities? Let's talk! Perhaps you're interested in

	putting together something using a story map (see https://storymap.knightlab.com/) or a timeline (see http://timeline.knightlab.com/). Or perhaps you want to create something using the free tool Scalar (see https://scalar.me/anvc/scalar/features/ and https://scalar.me/anvc/scalar/showcase/) or some other platform. Let's talk about it! Just drop me an email and we can discuss parameters. In addition to the digital project itself, you will turn in a 3-page rationale describing your goals for your project, the kinds of decisions you had to make, challenges you faced, etc. I will also expect you to incorporate some secondary scholarship into your project. Option 5: Optional syllabus or unit plan. For this option, create either a learning unit (3 week minimum) or course syllabus (5 week course minimum) concentrating on any aspect of literary journalism. If you are teaching at the middle or high school level, provide details about learning outcomes, projects, and TEKS requirements. In addition to the unit or syllabus, prepare a 3-page rationale describing your goals for your class, the decisions you made in preparing your project, etc. I will also expect you to incorporate some secondary scholarship into your project. ● And, of course, plenty of **reading**. Each week you should review the schedule on the syllabus carefully each week and make sure you are looking at the "Lecture" and "Discussion" areas under the "Week" tabs on the left side of the screen. Be thorough in examining relevant areas of D2L, and let me know if you can't find something or if you find an error.
REQUIRED TEXTS	You are required to purchase the following two books for the class. In addition, you will have a number of readings that you will obtain from the internet or download from D2L from the "Readings" folder for that week (see schedule of assignments). ● John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (originally published in book form in 1946). ● Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (originally published in book form in 1966). ● Additional readings in D2L
GRADING	Your final grade for the class will be calculated using the following weights: ● Discussion, 75% (15% per week) ● Paper/Project, 25%

	The Department of Literature and Languages does not, as a rule, allow the grade of "Incomplete" (X) for its courses; incompletes are only granted under extraordinary circumstances, pending Department Head and Dean approval. If personal issues or conflicts arise that lead to your missing a substantial amount of class, I encourage you to consider withdrawing from the class. As a rough guideline for what A-F grades mean, realize that an A is awarded for truly outstanding work (superior), a B denotes work that is significantly above the level necessary to meet basic requirements (above average), a C is for work that meets basic requirements in every way (acceptable), a D is given for work that meets only some of the requirements yet is still deserving of credit (under average), and an F results if work is not completed or if it fails to meet the requirements of the assignment/course.
LATE WORK	I grant extensions on discussion posts and other assignments only under the most exceptional of circumstances. I will **only** accept late papers if you make explicit prior arrangements with me and provide documented proof of your inability to complete the paper on time due to extenuating circumstances (dire illness, death in the immediate family).
COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY	I will send several emails during the semester, and I will use your university email account (myLeo), so be sure to check it every day. This course will be supplemented using D2L in myLeo Apps, the Learning Management System used by TAMU-Commerce. You will need your CWID and password to log into the course page via the myLeo portal. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 902- 468-6000 or helpdesk@online.tamu.org. To complete this course successfully, you will need a computer with internet access (high speed recommended) and a word processor equipped with Microsoft Word. Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you are using a Windows operating system and a recent version of a browser like Internet Explorer or Google Chrome. Your course will also work with Macintosh OS along with a recent version of Safari or Firefox. TAMU-Commerce provides students with technical support in the use of D2L. Technology problems are not generally an excuse for a late assignment--make sure you submit your work in time to allow for any problems accessing the Dropbox. You may reach the help desk by the following means, 24 hours a day, seven days a week: Phone 866-656-5511, email helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. Click on "Help" button for information regarding working with D2L.
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	• You are responsible for reading and understanding all the items included on this syllabus and on additional materials you receive from me over the course of the term.

	● The Department of Literature and Languages will not tolerate plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students who are found guilty of academic dishonesty include failure of the assignment and/or course, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion. Refer to the Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 13.99.99.R0.10 for details: (http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf. Examples of plagiarism include but are not restricted to: turning in an essay written entirely by someone else; copying any portion of someone else's words and presenting those words as your own (e.g. without quotation or citation); copying paragraphs, sentences, or parts of sentences from another source; using the same ideas that you have found in another writer's essay and presenting those ideas as your own; using someone else's basic sentences but changing just a few words (again, without quotation or citation). If you are not clear about how to avoid any of these acts, it is us to you to clarify. Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism, and I expect all students to understand what constitutes an act of academic dishonesty. ● Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained. ● The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services** Texas A&M University-Commerce Gee Library, Room 132 Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148 Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/

	● Students who have concerns regarding their courses should first address those concerns with the assigned instructor to seek a resolution. Students who are unsatisfied with the outcome of that conversation or have not been able to meet individually with their instructor, whether in-person, by email, by telephone, or by another communication medium, should then schedule an appointment with the Department Head or Assistant Department Head by completing a Student Grievance Form (available in the main office, HL 141). In the event the instructor is the Department Head, the student should schedule a meeting with the Dean of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Humanities after following the steps outlined above; if the instructor is the Assistant Department Head, students should schedule a meeting with the Department Head. Where applicable, students should also consult University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.05 ("Student Appeal of Instructor Evaluation"). ● Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors 'guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources. **I DO NOT ALLOW THE USE OF TEXT-GENERATING AI IN THIS CLASS.** 13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty ● You are responsible for reading and understanding all the information on this syllabus, as well as on any additional materials I distribute during the course.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS AND READING

Week 1: July 8-July 14

- What IS Literary Journalism/Longform Journalism, anyway?
  - A Contemporary Example
  - Nineteenth-Century Predecessors

Before you begin reading:

- **Read the syllabus**
- **Go to the discussion board and introduce yourself**

Read:

- Read the course syllabus in entirety.
- Week 1 Reading Notes
- Mark Canada, "A Brief History of Literature and Journalism in the United States," in *Literature and Journalism*, ed. Mark Canada (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1-23. (Located in Week 1 Readings.)
- Mark Kramer, "Breakable Rules for Literary Journalists," in *Literary Journalism*, ed. Norman Sims and Mark Kramer (New York: Ballantine, 1995), 21-34. (Located in Week 1 Readings.)
- Wright Thompson, "The Barn," *Atlantic*, September 2021, 68-79. (Week 3 Readings.)
- Jonathan Fitzgerald, "The Sentimental Roots of Literary Journalism," *Literary Journalism Studies* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 8-27. (Week 2 Readings.)
- Walt Whitman, "Scenes of Last Night," *New York Aurora*, April 1, 1842. Link: https://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/journalism/tei/per.00421.html
- Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-house; or, Nellie Bly's Experience on Blackwell's Island* (New York: Munro, 1887). Originally published in *New York World*. Link: https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/bly/madhouse/madhouse.html

Post on the Week 1 discussion board. Remember that you should post both before Thursday morning, and then after that as well.

Week 2: July 15 – July 21

- A Taste of the Late Nineteenth-Century Literary Journalism
  - A Mid-Century Classic: *Hiroshima*

Read:

- Start with the Week 2 "Reading Notes"
- Thomas Connery, "A Third Way to Tell the Story: American Literary Journalism at the Turn of the Century," in *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman Sims (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3-20. (Week 2 Readings.)
- Ida B. Wells, Mob Rule in New Orleans, 1900. (Week 2 Readings.)

- John Hersey, *Hiroshima*. Read in book form. Originally published in the *New Yorker*, August 31, 1946.
- Kathy Roberts Forde, "Profit and Public Interest: A Publication History of John Hersey's 'Hiroshima,'" *Journalism and Mass Communications Quarterly* 88, no. 3 (2011): 562-79. (Week 2 Readings.)

Post on the Week 2 discussion board

Week 3: July 22 – July 28

- Introducing "The New Journalism" of the 1960s
- More Contemporary Examples

Read:

- Start with the Week 3 "Reading Notes"
- John J. Pauly, "The New Journalism and the Struggle for Interpretation," *Journalism* 15, no. 5 (2014): 589-604. (Week 3 Readings folder.)
- Joan Didion, "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 1966. (Week 3 Readings.)
- "Why's this so good? Joan Didion on Dreamers Gone Astray," *Nieman Storyboard*, September 4, 2012. (Week 3 Readings.)
- Jessica Pressler, "Maybe She Had So Much Money She Lost Track of It," *New York Magazine*, May 2018. (Week 3 Readings.) (If you have Netflix, you may be interested in watching the docudrama series *Inventing Anna*, which is [more or less] the true story of how this article came to be. It offers an interesting view of the kind of immersive, investigative work that goes into a long-form article of this sort.)
- Laura Preston, "Human_Fallback," *n+1*, Winter 2023. (Week 3 Readings.)

Post on the Week 3 discussion board

Week 4: July 29 – August 4

New Journalism and *In Cold Blood*

Read:

- Start with the Week 4 "Reading Notes"
- Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (1966). So that you can see what Capote's work was like in the original, take a quick glance at the first of the *New Yorker* articles that eventually became *In Cold Blood*. See "In Cold Blood: An Unspeakable Crime in the Heartland," *New Yorker*, September 25, 1965. Link: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1965/09/25/in-cold-blood-the-last-to-see-them-alive
- Ben Yagoda, "Fact-Checking *In Cold Blood*," *Slate*, March 20, 2013. Link: http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2013/03/fact_checking_in_cold_blood_what_the_new_yorker_s_fact_checker_missed.html.

Post on the Week 4 discussion board.

Week 5: August 5 – August 10
"Jimmy's World": When Literary Journalism Goes Wrong

Read:

- Start with the Week 5 "Reading Notes"
- Andie Tucher, "The True, the False, and the 'Not Exactly Lying,'" in *Literature and Journalism*, ed. Mark Canada (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 91-118. (Week 5 Readings folder.)
- Janet Cooke, "Jimmy's World," *Washington Post*, September 28, 1980. Link: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/09/28/jimmys-world/605f237a-7330-4a69-8433-b6da4c519120/?utm_term=.323ec30b618e (also located in Week 5 Readings folder).
- Mike Sager, "The Fabulist Who Changed Journalism," *Columbia Journalism Review*, Spring 2016. Link: https://www.cjr.org/the_feature/the_fabulist_who_changed_journalism.php.
- Maia Szalavitz, "30 Years Since 'Jimmy's World': The Media and Drugs," *Time*, October 1, 2010. Link: http://healthland.time.com/2010/10/01/30-years-since-the-phony-heroin-addict-article-the-media-still-blows-it-on-drugs/.

Post on the Week 5 discussion board:

- Deadline **SATURDAY** by midnight (preferably earlier)

SUBMIT FINAL PAPER TO WEEK 5 DROPBOX
BY THURSDAY AT 11:59 p.m.