

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Colorado State University, Academic Partner

Voyage: Fall 2018
Discipline: English
Course Number and Title: E 311C Intermediate Creative: Nonfiction
Division: Upper
Faculty Name: Andrew Altschul
Semester Credit Hours: 3

Meeting: A Days, 1700-1820, Adlon

Prerequisites: One (1) college composition course AND one (1) creative writing course (with a minimum grade of B) OR one (1) newswriting course

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Creative nonfiction takes the whole world for its subject – the external world, with its infinite wonder, teeming diversity, and intractable conflicts; and the internal world, with its neverending struggle for identity and self-understanding. The most memorable works succeed in bridging this divide, chronicling the subject’s encounter with her objective environment, and noting the many ways in which both may be changed in the process.

This course will explore some of the established forms of creative nonfiction – personal essay, lyric essay, travel writing, et. al. – and seek to create new forms of our own. We will read published work by masters of the genre and discuss fundamental elements of craft such as description, characterization, structure, and voice; students will write exercises and longer pieces in a number of styles and forms. In this we will have the incomparable advantage of our round-the-world voyage, affording encounters with numerous peoples and cultures, so that our work may “make the strange familiar and the familiar strange.” Throughout the semester we will also discuss the complicated ethics of telling true stories in an era of “reality television” and “fake news.”

Additionally, students will have the opportunity to submit finished pieces to the shipboard magazine, *The Odyssey*, for possible publication.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop familiarity and proficiency with a variety of creative nonfiction forms.
- Read and analyze work by acknowledged masters of nonfiction writing.
- View the numerous destinations and cultures of the Semester at Sea experience through the lens of narrative nonfiction.

- Examine one’s identity and cultural standpoint by writing about personal matters in the context of foreign travel.
- Improve one’s critical skills through examination of the work of one’s peers and revision of one’s own writing.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Hemley, Robin
 TITLE: A Field Guide for Immersion Writing: Memoir, Journalism, and Travel
 PUBLISHER: University of Georgia Press
 ISBN #: 978-0820342559
 DATE/EDITION: 2012

AUTHOR: Williford, Lex and Martone, Michael, Eds.
 TITLE: Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction: Work from 1970 to the Present
 PUBLISHER: Touchstone
 ISBN #: 978-1416531746
 DATE/EDITION: 2007

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Depart Hamburg, Germany — September 9

A1—September 11: Course introduction. What is “creative nonfiction”? What brings you here? Having something to say.

A2— September 13: The Travel Essay. Setting and Description. Read: Hemley, “An Introduction to Immersion Writing”; Wallace, “A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again.”* Due: 30 Things I Noticed exercise.

Barcelona and Valencia, Spain — September 15-18

A3—September 19: Read: Hemley, Chapter 3; Saunders, “The New Mecca.”* Due: Barcelona Souvenirs.

A4— September 21: Brainstorm travel essays. Read: Harrison, “Present Tense Africa.”

Study Day — September 23: No Class

A5—September 24: Voice. Read: Stein, excerpt from *Paris, France*.*

A6—September 26: Scenemaking. Read: Lopate, “Facts Have Implications.”*

Tema, Ghana — September 27-30

Field Class—September 30: Takoradi, Ghana

Community Programming — October 2: No Class

A7—October 3: Due: Travel Essay; Ghana Souvenirs.

A8— October 5: Workshop travel essays.

Cape Town, South Africa — October 7-12

A9—October 13: The Memoir. What makes a story worth telling? Read: Franzen, Introduction to *The Best American Essays 2016*; Levy, “Thanksgiving in Mongolia.” Due: South Africa Souvenirs.

A10—October 15: Character. Read: Hemley, Chapter 1; Lopate, “On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character.”*

Study Day —October 16: No Class

A11—October 18: Read: Didion, “Goodbye to All That”*; Fletcher, “The Beautiful City of Tirzah.”

Port Louis, Mauritius — October 19

Study Day —October 21: No Class

A12—October 22: Brainstorm memoirs. Self-interviews.

A13— October 24: Read: Carson, “The Glass Essay.”

Cochin, India — October 25-30

Reflection and Study — October 31: Global Studies Reflection

A14—November 2: Due: Memoir; India Souvenirs.

Yangon, Myanmar — November 4-8

A15—November 9: Workshop memoirs.

Community Programming — November 11: No Class

A16—November 12: The Lyric Essay. Read: D’Agata, “We Might As Well Call It the Lyric Essay”; Moore, “Son of Mr. Green Jeans.”* Due: Myanmar Souvenirs.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam — November 14-18

A17—November 19: Structure. Read: Biss, “The Pain Scale.”

Study Day — November 21: No Class

A18— November 22: Brainstorm Lyric Essays. Read: Nye, “This Is Not Who We Are.” Due: Vietnam Souvenirs.

Shanghai, China — November 24-29

A19—November 30: Read: Roorbach, “Shitdiggers, Mudflats, and the Worm Men of Maine.” Due: China Souvenirs.

Kobe, Japan — December 2-6

A20— December 7: Humor. Read: Sedaris, “Repeat After Me”; Wallace, “Derivative Sport in Tornado Alley.”*

A21—December 9: Due: Lyric Essay; Japan Souvenirs.

A22—December 11: Workshop Lyric Essays.

Study Day — December 12: No Class (International Date Line Crossing (2 days)

A23—December 13: Ethics of Nonfiction Storytelling. Read: Hemley, Chap. 4. Due: Complicated Moment exercise.

A24— December 15: Revision clinic. Due: 2-3pp. of Final Essay.

Honolulu, Hawaii — December 16

Study Day — December 18: No Class

A25—December 19: Course conclusion. Due: Final Expanded Essay.

Arrive San Diego, California — December 23

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 & Assignment

The field class for this course is on **Sunday, 30 September in Takoradi, Ghana**. 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, and are developed and led by the instructor.

Making It Personal: The Atlantic Slave Trade and Contemporary American Life

Though slavery in the United States was outlawed 150 years ago, every American has been affected by its bloody history and its persistent legacy. By exposing students to the history and experiences of Africans who were sold into slavery, this field class will enable students to make connections between distant, historical events and the realities of their own lives. We will begin with a visit to the Donko Nsuo “Slave River,” where kidnapped Africans were given their last bath and made “presentable” before being taken to the auction blocks and loaded onto ships. From there, we will visit St. George’s Castle in Elmina to see the auction rooms and dungeons in which the slave’s fates were sealed. Before leaving each stop, we will set aside time for students to free write and consider their relationship – historical, emotional, socioeconomic – to the events that took place here centuries ago. This field class will form the basis of one of three works of creative nonfiction that students produce over the course of the semester.

Objectives

1. Students will learn about the actual, real-life conditions of the slave trade by visiting sites associated with its legal and commercial implementation.
2. Students will experience aspects of daily Ghanaian life outside of Takoradi, both in the countryside and in the modern town of Elmina.
3. Students will make connections between this centuries-old system of atrocities and their own lives by writing about their encounter with the mechanics of the slave trade and the ideas, memories, feelings it engenders.

Field Class Assignment and Due Date

The first draft of a memoir-style essay in which students are asked to consider connections between slavery, civil rights, race relations in the U.S., and their own lives and circumstances, will be due November 2 and worth 15% of their final grade. They may choose to expand this first draft as a final project for the course which would count for another 20% of the final grade.

Independent Field Assignments: Souvenirs

The French verb *souvenir* means “to remember.” While tourists often bring home trinkets and knick-knacks to commemorate a visit, in a deeper sense a souvenir is something that returns us to a place and returns the place to us. In each port, students are encouraged to acquire a souvenir that draws your attention, moves you, in some way encapsulates the moment or speaks to the encounter with another culture. This need not be a large purchase – items might include a local periodical, a product package, a menu, or something else intrinsic to place; it need not even be an object at all – it might be a photograph, a sound recording, or a brief written account of a conversation or incident.

After each port we will devote part of a class meeting to sharing “souvenirs.” Students who present a souvenir should accompany it with a one-page written response – not a description or analysis, but a creative work in which the writer responds emotionally, intellectually,

imaginatively, artistically to the souvenir, its implications, and/or the circumstances of its discovery. Responses should strive for originality, innovation, surprise, impact. Each student is required to write four (4) such pieces over the course of the semester – though of course you are encouraged to produce more than the minimum requirement.

METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING SCALE

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%: F
93-96%: A	83-86%: B	70-76%: C	
90-92%: A-	80-82%: B-	60-69%: D	

Final grades will be determined according to the following breakdown:

- Participation – 20% (includes 5% for Field Class Attendance)**
- Four Souvenirs – 15%**
- First Drafts of Travel Essay (6-8pp.) – 15%**
- First Drafts of Memoir (6-8pp., based on Field Class) – 15%**
- First Drafts of Lyric Essay (6-8pp.) – 15%**
- Expansion and Revision of One Essay (10-20pp.) – 20%**

ATTENDANCE/ENGAGEMENT IN THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Attendance in all Semester at Sea classes, including the Field Class, is mandatory. 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 in regard to this policy, individuals may appeal using established CSU procedures.

Please attend all classes, and come ready to discuss all readings and assignments. You are permitted two absences for any reason; each additional absence will result in a deduction of 5% from your final grade.

Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized 5% for each *calendar day* past the due date.

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."

RESERVE BOOKS FOR THE LIBRARY

None

FILM REQUEST

None

ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

AUTHOR: D'Agata, John

ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "We Might As Well Call It the Lyric Essay"

JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Seneca Review*

PUBLISHER: Hobart and William Smith Colleges

DATE: Fall, 2014

PAGES: 6-10

AUTHOR: Didion, Joan

ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Goodbye to All That"

JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*
PUBLISHER: Farrar, Straus and Giroux
DATE: 2008
PAGES: 225-

AUTHOR: Franzen, Jonathan
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: Introduction
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *The Best American Essays*
PUBLISHER: Mariner
DATE: 2016
PAGES: xv-

AUTHOR: Levy, Ariel
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Thanksgiving in Mongolia"
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *The New Yorker*
PUBLISHER: Condé Nast
DATE: Nov. 18, 2013
PAGES: n/a

AUTHOR: Lopate, Phillip
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character"
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *To Show and To Tell: The Craft of Literary Nonfiction*
PUBLISHER: Free Press
DATE: 2013
PAGES:

AUTHOR: Lopate, Phillip
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Facts Have Implications"
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *To Show and To Tell: The Craft of Literary Nonfiction*
PUBLISHER: Free Press
DATE: 2013
PAGES:

AUTHOR: Saunders, George
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "The New Mecca"
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *GQ*
PUBLISHER: Condé Nast
DATE: October 31, 2005
PAGES: n/a

AUTHOR: Stein, Gertrude
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: Chap. 1-2
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Paris, France*
PUBLISHER: Liveright
DATE: 1940
PAGES: 1-25

AUTHOR: Wallace, David Foster
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again"
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*
PUBLISHER: Back Bay
DATE: 1998
PAGES: 256-353

AUTHOR: Wallace, David Foster
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Derivative Sport in Tornado Alley"
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*
PUBLISHER: Back Bay
DATE: 1998
PAGES: 3-20

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

None