

## JOU 6309 Journalism as Literature-Section 7087-Rodgers-F14

*The universe is made of stories, not atoms.* – [Muriel Rukeyser](#)

### Class Mechanics

**Instructor:** [Dr. Ronald R. Rodgers](#)

**Meeting Time:** Tuesdays Periods 6-8 (12:50-3:50 p.m.)

**Classroom:** Weimer 1090

**Office:** 3058 Weimer Hall Office phone: 392-8847

**Office Hours:** I am available to you this semester – and beyond – to talk about this class, to talk about journalism and communications, to talk about your career, or to just talk. My office hours are listed on my schedule: [Link to my schedule](#). Or just stop by – my door is pretty much always open, and if I am in and I am free, we can talk.

**Email:** [rr194602@gmail.com](mailto:rr194602@gmail.com) I will respond as soon as possible within 24 hours Monday through Friday. And for those students who still believe email is old hat (like this cliché), read: [Email Is Still the Best Thing on the Internet](#)

**Email Policy:** The email should be as specific as possible and it should include your full name. You should also note that I check my email once in the morning and once in the evening Monday through Friday.

**Be Concise:** I should also note that I do not read emails of more than half a screen long. If you have that much to say, then let's have a face-to-face conversation.

### [More about moi if you are interested](#)

#### Some of My Favorite Sayings:

“Think for yourself. Ask questions. Read widely” – [Rui Chenggang](#)

Four kinds of persons: zeal without knowledge; knowledge without zeal; neither knowledge nor zeal; both zeal and knowledge. – Pascal, [Pensées](#)

[東 \(east\) 問 \(question\) 西 \(west\) 答 \(answer\)](#)

#### My Teaching Philosophy and One of My Favorite Jokes About Teaching

I believe it best to lean toward a method of teaching that aims for awareness rather than knowledge. This is not my invention. Others have recognized the distinction. One is the late writer [David Foster Wallace](#) who once said: “The real value of a real education ... has almost nothing to do with knowledge and everything to do with simple awareness.” To make his point, Wallace repeated an old joke:

*“There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, “Morning, boys, how’s the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, “What the hell is water?” ”*

## INTRODUCTION: What the hell is literary journalism?

“The difference between literature and journalism is that journalism is unreadable, and literature is not read.” – [Oscar Wilde](#) (1891)

This course lies at the crossroads of journalism and literature. During the next 15 weeks we will explore the journalistic, historical and critical tangents that make up the notion of literary journalism as we read and analyze some of the best reportage ever written. In the process of reading the works of many fine journalists, we will weigh how form and content work together to create great factual literature.

This course will look back as far as the 18th century at some of the literary antecedents to what Tom Wolfe – and others before and after him – have called the “New Journalism.” We will then read and analyze the works of many different literary journalists and commentators on literary journalism from the 19th century to our present day.

If nothing else, I hope this course will disabuse you of Mr. Wilde’s notion that journalism is unreadable. I know from my own experience – even as a former English Lit major – that these days I am more wont to read nonfiction than fiction. In fact, I know of one scholar who has noted that the [New York Review of Books](#) offers three reviews of nonfiction to every one review of fiction. Certainly, not all of that nonfiction would be classified as literary journalism, but this does show you that fact-based journalism is the 600-pound gorilla of genres.

What we are interested in here is content – namely the writing of nonfiction using the techniques of the fictionists – a radical – and, some would say, an ill-conceived departure from journalistic norms.

This course has a six-pronged approach. It is a smorgasbord of delectables – all, or any one of which, I hope, you will find tasty. We will explore:

1. Literary journalism’s historical antecedents – or should we say founders?
2. Literary journalism’s future in the age of the connected computer.
3. The criticism literary journalism has received from friend and foe alike.
4. The theory behind this genre.
5. The techniques that comprise and define this genre.
6. Ways of toppling the inverted pyramid in developing our own individual writing styles using the techniques of literary journalism.

Everything we do in this course – the readings, my minimal lecture, your maximal discussion, the analysis and the writing – are intended to give you a historical perspective of journalism in general and its importance in society – especially as an armature for democracy, and especially literary journalism’s ability to connect the multiple subjectivities in a multifarious society.

So, how will we do this? The answer is simple, the doing is difficult.

By reading and writing and reading and writing. For more, if you agree to accept this mission, read on.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR CLASS

### Tools

A package of 100 ruled index cards – 5” by 8” only: <http://bit.ly/HILcXP>

Bring a laptop or tablet to class, but keep it closed unless we need it for class activity. You might also want to check this out: [Want to remember lectures better? Take notes by hand](#)

### Required Texts:

1. [The Literature of Journalism: Text and Context](#) by R. Thomas Berner, Abbreviation: **LOJ**
2. [The Emperor by Ryszard Kapuściński, translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand](#): “People know the names of Napoleon and Churchill and Hitler, but not many are familiar with Kwame Nkrumah, Idi Amin and Haile Selassie. Unless it involves decorated New World discoverers, historians aren’t generally interested in history of the Third World. Too much of it is peppered with fictitious oral accounts and mythologies, governments change hands too frequently and too many constitutions written and rewritten. This book is so alive precisely for that reason – it is nothing more than oral accounts, weaved together so masterly to paint the portrait of an emperor, Haile Selassie. Very few writers can pull off a history book that is both funny and frightening at the same time.” – [A review by Mai Bui on Goodreads](#)
3. [Behind the Beautiful Forever: Life, death, and hope in a Mumbai undercity by Katherine Boo](#): “In her debut, Pulitzer Prize-winning New Yorker staff writer Boo creates an intimate, unforgettable portrait of India’s urban poor. Mumbai’s sparkling new airport and surrounding luxury hotels welcome visitors to the globalized, privatized, competitive India. Across the highway, on top of tons of garbage and next to a vast pool of sewage, lies the slum of Annawadi, one of many such places that house the millions of poor of Mumbai. For more than three years, Boo lived among and learned from the residents, observing their struggles and quarrels, listening to their dreams and despair, recording it all. She came away with a detailed portrait of individuals daring to aspire but too often denied a chance—their lives viewed as an embarrassment to the modernized wealthy.” – From a [review in Kirkus Review](#)
4. **Contemporary journalists discuss their work and careers:** [The New New Journalism: Conversations with America’s Best Nonfiction Writers on Their Craft](#) by Robert Boynton: Forty years after Tom Wolfe, Hunter S. Thompson, and Gay Talese launched the New Journalism movement, Robert S. Boynton sits down with nineteen practitioners of what he calls the New New Journalism to discuss their methods, writings and careers. [Summary of book](#) author by author.
5. **A book on writing nonfiction:** [Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers’ Guide from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University](#). The country’s most prominent journalists and nonfiction authors gather each year at Harvard’s Nieman Conference on Narrative Journalism. *Telling True Stories* presents their best advice – covering everything from finding a good topic, to structuring

narrative stories, to writing and selling your first book. More than fifty well-known writers offer their most powerful tips.

6. Other selected readings, to be handed out in class, by web links or through [Sakai](#). If you are unfamiliar with Sakai or have any questions, check out the [e-Learning FAQs](#). If you encounter a problem while using e-Learning, you should immediately contact the Help Desk for assistance.
7. Optional But Elucidating:
  - [100 books every journalist must read](#)

### Other Required Materials in the Cloud

- Set up a [WordPress](#) blog for JOU6309 using the [The Able Theme](#). Send me the url for your blog to me at [rr194602@gmail.com](mailto:rr194602@gmail.com). Your blog's name should be your last name followed by your first name. Be sure to activate the link. **I am sorry, but I take off points for failing to follow instructions – here and with other instructions.** Here is an excellent WordPress worksheet from Prof. Mindy McAdams on the basics of setting up a blog: [http://www.jtoolkit.com/bloggging/wp\\_tips.html](http://www.jtoolkit.com/bloggging/wp_tips.html)
  - Also, file a first post with (1) a bio, (2) some indication of your future plans career-wise, (3) your research interests as a grad student (4) a mugshot with this post. **Note: This first post will be graded just as I would later essay posts, so make the deadline at noon before next class.**
- Go to [my Twitter](#) (ronrodgers) and follow me. Look at it before each class. I tweet about journalism and media. Material from this will possibly be on the quiz at beginning of each class.
- Follow the Tumblr blog for this class – [Intersection](#). Material from this will possibly be on the quiz at beginning of each class.
- Log in to Sakai at <http://lss.at.ufl.edu> If you are unfamiliar with Sakai or have any questions, check out the [e-Learning FAQs](#). If you encounter a problem while using e-Learning, you should immediately contact the Help Desk to get assistance.

### HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

This course will be conducted as a reading seminar, one of many you will encounter as a graduate student. We are also going to run this class like a writing workshop. So you must first be here and then also be prepared to participate in the class discussion and writing workshops. Lack of preparation is reflected in your participation, and in my book, lack of preparation is nearly the same as being absent from class and will be graded in the same way. By the end of 15 weeks, I will have a pretty good handle on who participates and who does not. It is essential that you complete all the assigned readings for each class meeting. We may not discuss every reading in class, but you will be responsible for all the readings.

## **MORE ON SEMINAR DISCUSSIONS**

You are expected to participate in this class. That means you submit your essays with discussion question and your reading group responses each week, offer your ideas about the subject in class, allow other people to express their views, respect others' opinions and exchange ideas that will make us better readers and writers. Seminar discussions require a fine balance. On the one hand, you do not want to take over the conversation. On the other, you do not want to let others do all the talking. If you go on and on (and I am often guilty of this, too, as my passion for a subject will over-ride my self-editor), I will politely cut you off.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

This class is essentially an **active reading** of our required text. Follow this concentrated, focused, and annotative method in all your reading this semester. See: [Active Reading](#)

**Note: Participants in this seminar are expected to complete all reading assignments and screenings prior to class.**

Participants in this seminar will be encouraged to demonstrate their understanding of the course material through a variety of evaluative measures, including, but not limited to:

- Quizzes at the beginning and Take-aways at end of class.
- Contribution to class discussions
- Essays on their blogs and the quality of their responses to other items included with blog essays
- The leadership of discussions of a close reading of week's readings as assigned.
- Short writing assignments.
- Completion of a work of literary journalism.

## **OTHER COURSE MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

**Accommodation for disabilities:** Please let me know immediately if you have any kind of problem or disability that would hinder your work in this course. I will do my best to help you. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) as early in the semester as possible. The center will provide documentation so appropriate accommodations can be made. The center is in [Reid Hall](#), 352-392-8565 (877-983-3326 Toll Free).

**Class attendance:** Class attendance is required. More than one unexcused absence will result in a minimum deduction of one-half letter grade from your overall grade. Arriving or leaving early will be considered an absence. Excused absences include documented medical excuses and religious observances (with advanced notice). Please contact me before class. University-approved absences must be documented (in advance, if for an approved university activity) according to official university policy. Obtaining written verification for an excused absence is your responsibility, as is arranging to complete any missed work.

**Late assignments:** No assignment can be late under any circumstances. Work turned in late will not be accepted unless you have a legitimate and documented excuse.

**Common courtesy: For heaven's sake, turn off your cell phone!** Please also observe other rules of common courtesy, such as not speaking to your classmates (or yourself) when others are making a presentation, not falling asleep in class, not scrolling the Web, etc.

**Be Good:** And I have to say this as part of our contract: You need to conduct yourself in a courteous manner both in and out of class when it comes to dealing with fellow students or your instructor. That means any rude, obstructive or aggressive behavior will not be tolerated, and manifestations of same will mean your ouster from the class. I have a zero-tolerance policy on this. Here is a link to the [UF Counseling and Wellness Center](#). The Center is located at [3190 Radio Road](#) and the phone number for Appointments & After-Hour Assistance is 352-392-1575.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:**

Begin by listening to this: [Who Makes Stuff Up, And Why They Do It](#)

For the communications professional, there hardly exists a graver crime than plagiarizing another writer's work. We acknowledge other people's work by "[standing on the shoulders of giants,](#)" as Newton put it. If you think this class, this university, this nation is "a culture of cut and paste," as two international students described to me their country, think again. In short, it is YOUR responsibility to make certain you understand what constitutes plagiarism and to ensure that you give proper credit any time you draw on someone else's writing.

- You are required to read both the UF [Academic Honesty](#) policy and the Journalism Department's [Academic Honesty](#) document, which was written by Prof. Dave Carlson. I will work under the assumption that you have done so.
- **Do not rely on what you think you've learned before.** Prof. Mindy McAdams has put together an excellent guide: <http://www.macloo.com/cheat/index.htm>.
- If you're still not certain you understand what's acceptable and what isn't, check out this oft-cited website: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>
- **If you have questions, ASK ME!** There's no penalty for asking questions, but the penalties for plagiarism are severe, including **dismissal from the program**.
- **Treat Internet sources like any other book, journal article or other print source.** Make CERTAIN you copy down citation information when you copy material from a website, EVEN if you're paraphrasing.
- **DO NOT turn in to me ANY work you previously have submitted to another instructor or that you plan to submit for any other class at UF or any other institution.** If you want to write on a topic you have worked on before, that might be acceptable IF you discuss it with me and get permission IN ADVANCE.

**CAVEAT:** Sometimes a class such as this will deal with controversial topics, so be warned that words that may be considered offensive or ideological may be spoken in the context of the subjects we are discussing. As a teacher, I have no political or social agenda, so do not try to answer in a way you believe might comport with what I want to hear or read. Feel free to advocate any position as long as you

remain respectful of others' opinions, and always be able to defend your point of view. There is nothing I dislike more than unevidenced assertions.

#### GRADING

**Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:**

Activity	Maximum Points
1. Story Proposal	100
2. Rough Draft of Story	100
3. Final Story	100
4. Short Writing Assignments (Averaged)	100
5. Class Participation	100
6. Leading Class Discussion	100
7. Quizzes & Take-Aways – 20 pts. total each	200
8. Blog Essays	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>

**Final grades will be based on these standard break-points:**

A	936+	C	736-770
A-	900-935	C-	700-735
B+	871-899	D+	671-699
B	836-870	D	636-670
B-	800-835	D-	600-635
C+	771-799	E	599 or lower

## Assignments

### Two Books' Due Dates

Finish reading by Class 5: [Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, death, and hope in a Mumbai undercity by Katherine Boo](#):

Finish reading by Class 11: [The Emperor by Ryszard Kapuściński, translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand](#):

## Assignments

**1. Proposal for a final work of literary journalism** – Story Proposal due as blog post slugged Story Proposal at noon Sunday before class Week 4. Bring in copies for class and be prepared to give a class presentation on your idea. Here is link explaining what I am looking for in proposal: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/2011/09/02/final-story-idea-proposal/>

**DUE: Post to your blog by noon Sunday before Week 4 class.**

You will have five to 10 minutes to discuss your proposal with class.

**2. A Rough Draft of a work of literary journalism** – This should be at least two-thirds completed by due date. For outlining your story, you might take a look at: [Gay Talese Outlines His Famous 1966 Profile "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" on a Shirt Board](#)

**DUE: Rough Drafts due before Monday of Week 12.** Small-group paper confabs to be scheduled Week 13 and/or Week 14. Post to your blog and send me on email attachment a Word document version of your rough draft. I may cancel one or two classes at the end of the semester so we can spend time together in these confabs. We will meet in groups. You will bring enough copies of your rough draft in so everyone in the confab has a copy. We will go over these together.

**Here is a good description of a rough draft:** "I work via slow accretions of often seemingly unrelated stuff. When I complete that unwieldy, puzzling first draft, I spread it out on the desk like a soothsayer viewing entrails, and try to find patterns. If asked, I might pretty up my process and call it bricolage or intellectual scrapbooking, but it really is merely the result of a magpie mind/brain, one that flits from one shiny thing to another. – Marie Myung-Ok Lee –

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/18/the-internet-a-welcome-distraction/?smid=tw-nytimes&r=0>

**3. Final draft of a work of literary journalism**

**DUE: By Sunday before last class at noon in email attachment. Both a Word document and PDF version.**

(NOTE: I want to avoid first-person work in this class unless you can make an argument for why it would be relevant.) Using the many principles and techniques of literary journalism ([see, for example](#)) you have learned through your readings, writing, discussions and analysis, you will write an at least 3,000-word



story in 12-point Times Roman double spaced with 1-inch margins. To make sure there is enough meat on the bone, I must approve all story ideas. For an objective-as-possible explanation of grading criteria see the Grading Guidelines link: [General Grading Criteria for Nonfiction](#)

- Though there are no limitations on the kind of story you write, you are required to have a minimum of four 'people' sources and three research sources.
- HOWEVER, I do not want to see a story with any kind of contaminated access. For example, you write a story about your mother the lawyer who defends child molesters and often wins. But it shows such a salacious side of the law you would not publish it if you could because it would be too embarrassing.
- Given the constraints of time and place, this needs to be a local topic.
- Double-space the story at 12 point Times Roman.
- At the end of the story, submit a source list, which should include complete contact information (phone and e-mail) for the people you interviewed, as well as bibliographic material for written sources used.
- **Story Proposal due before class Week 4 as a post to your blog.** Bring in a copy and be prepared to give a class presentation on your idea on Week 4.
- **The final story is Due Sunday before the last class at noon in email attachment.**
- Bring in a copy of your story to final class along with a query letter.
  - Re your nonfiction query letter to a publisher. There are a lot of templates out there about how to write such a letter. Here is a good explainer: [http://www.agentquery.com/writer\\_hq.aspx](http://www.agentquery.com/writer_hq.aspx) – follow this format for your letter.

**3.1 Doc student option** – If you are a doctoral student taking this class for advanced writing credit, let's discuss a research paper requirement after class.

**4. Short Writing Assignments** – Throughout the course, you will be given several short assignments in and out of class. Post to your blog by deadline (your blog will time stamp the post). Also, bring to class hard copies of your writing – enough for each member of class. We will briefly [workshop](#) these. Note: To understand how your writing will ultimately be graded, review: [General Grading Criteria for Nonfiction](#)

**DUE:** Marked on various assignments.

**5. Class Participation** – This is a graduate reading seminar, so student involvement is vital to the success of this course. You are expected to play an active part in shaping this course and keeping it focused on the broad objectives. Obviously, this means you are expected to attend class regularly, to be in the classroom by the time class begins, to contribute to identifying relevant readings and other resources, and to participate meaningfully in class discussions. In addition to being physically present in class, I expect you to be mentally present. That means you will NOT be texting, emailing or using your laptop or phone to Web-surf, work on assignments for another class or interact with any social networking site during class time. Unless there's a specific need for someone in the class to get online, leave your laptop

closed and your phones turned off during class. You might also want to check this out: [Want to remember lectures better? Take notes by hand](#)

**Here is part of how I also think about and evaluate your class participation re discussion:**

1. You add significant, insightful content to each class discussion. But you do not dominate the conversation.
2. You speak from time to time, but look for more opportunities to add to our discussions.
3. Your perspective is important and makes up a significant part of your grade. I'd like to hear more from you!

**6. Leading Class Discussion of Readings/Screenings** – Depending on the size of class, one or more students will be assigned each week to lead discussion of a close reading of that week's readings/screenings. You can draw on the assigned readings, previous lectures and/or discussion, from posts to [INTERSECTIONS](#), from Discussion Questions in the blog essays, or from videos or other visuals you know of that might be relevant.

- To aid your discussion, please provide each member of the class with a 1-2 page outline summarizing each of the readings limited to the examples of literary journalism and essays or articles about the theory and history of literary journalism assigned for that week. (Be sure to also post this to your blog.)
- With the examples of literary journalism, focus on the elements that make the story art that endures and not the ephemeral lining of a bird cage after reading. Express your honest reaction to and critique of the work. Try to understand and express the social and historical context of the work. If you like, you can bring in biographical information about the writers and historical information about the time in which each work was written.
- With the articles about the theory and history of literary journalism, focus on one or two main ideas and build on them in class discussion. You have already done much of this work in your weekly essays.
- The purpose of this exercise is **(1)** to focus your energy on thought in a close reading of the material, **(2)** make connections among the works and theories reflective of your critical thinking, and **(3)** to add more to the discussion than is covered in the reading on the face or in my own lectures – which are, essentially, just one point of view.
- You should also include discussion questions with your outline to help guide the conversation. And note, I expect conversation from the rest of the class and will note its absence.
- The readings about writing we can discuss separately given time.

**7. Quizzes and Take-Aways** –

**Quizzes** – You can expect 10 quizzes on the readings for that class and previous screenings and lectures. This will occur at the beginning of class. **Use the front of a 5X8 index card and include your printed name along with your email address and the date.** If I can't read the name and/or the contents, that is a zero.

**30-Second Take-Away** – You will write a brief summary of the main point or points you took away from

that day's class. Read this: [The 30 second habit with a lifelong impact](#) Use the back of a 5X8 index card and include your printed name along with your email address and the date. If I can't read the name and/or the contents, that is a zero. Hand in at end of class. If your take-away is off point, from another universe, or nonsensical gobbledygook, it gets a zero.

## 8. Blog Essays –

**DUE: One due each at noon the day before next class. Post to your blog.** Please title your posts **Blog Essay Class 2 etc.** and sign each of your posts with your full name and email address.

Here is how your blog post should be arranged and titled with bold subheads before each class:

1. **Blog Essay:** This should begin with a brief outline of the assigned readings outlining the narrative in each or with articles about literary journalism noting the key elements and arguments. Then the outline is followed by an essay that is your explorations of the chapter and all readings or screenings for the week with anything you have read earlier both inside and outside class informing your essay. They should be 1,000 words at a minimum. This needs to reflect your deep thinking about the readings. Points off for being superficial; overly long, complex, and convoluted; or redundant to fill space. Sometimes you will need to do some research to respond fully on these essays. Here is a link to [library resources](#).
2. **My Questions to you:** I will also, at times, post some questions with the reading assignments about the readings that you need to briefly answer below your essay.
3. **Journalism Link:** item related journalism, literary journalism, the media or news. Add a short response. Activate the link please so that I can just click on it.
4. **Vocab:** Briefly – but fully – define terms listed for that week
5. **Discussion Question:** Also, at end of essay add a discussion/debate question derived from the readings assigned for the day. The questions should be original to you alone and manifest deep, critical thinking on your part. The DQ should be keyed to the readings and not overly broad and general. These are limited to 140 characters – just as if you were tweeting them. Points off for being either superficial, perfunctory, or overly long or complex or convoluted.

### How the Blog Essays work

**(READ THIS TO UNDERSTAND HOW THESE ARE GRADED):**

#### Blog Essay:

- Your blog essays are your way of struggling with the material.
- These are not essays in the sense that they begin with a thesis statement, etc.
  - They should not sound like a book report.
  - They should contain very little **description** of the readings.

- Instead they should reveal your struggle with the material as you interpret the authors' meanings, as you research and make note of terms and concepts you are not familiar with, and as you grind the concepts through the gears of your mind. How do these concepts link up to your own life?
- They should reflect your deep-thinking about the readings and your intellectual struggle with the material.
- You should write about what you do not understand, or about what you half-understand, or how the material might connect to material from previous weeks or from your experience in whatever form that takes.
- You can spend the entire essay on one point or start anew every other paragraph.
- It is best to write these on a Word document first and then paste to your blog. Save the Word doc as a record just in case.

**Grading:**

- I will read all the material, but I do not grade it weekly other than keeping track that the work is completed.
- I will give little feedback but will note if you are not on track — especially early in the semester.
- Your Essays are a big chunk of your end grade, but they only get that end grade. I will evaluate these in total at end of semester.
- You can come in and talk to me if you are concerned about where your grade is headed, but otherwise I normally give very little feedback unless I see a problem arising.

**Some of How I Evaluate the Essays and Responses:**

1. If you produce a sufficient quantity of prose on a weekly basis in the manner requested, it will be hard for you to get below the equivalent of a B-.
2. If, in addition to (1) above, you are engaged, you struggle, you open up and you deal with the difficult, it will be hard for you to get below the equivalent of a B.
3. If, in addition to (1) and (2) above, you demonstrate significant improvement from the beginning of the semester to its end, it will be hard for you to get below the equivalent of a B+.
4. If, in addition to (1), (2), and (3) above, you demonstrate intellectual imagination, it will be hard for you to get below the equivalent of an A-.
5. If you want an A, do all the above in the extreme.

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**Class Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

## Readings & Other Work Week by Week

### Class 1 – Aug 26

*“Fiction is a bridge to the truth that journalism can’t reach.” – [Hunter Thompson](#)*

The prologue titled What I Had Lived For in Bertrand Russell’s [Autobiography](#):

“Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. The three passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.”

“Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a hated burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.”

This is pretty much the reason for me to keep caring for the stories of human beings – no matter how different we are or how many stories I have already heard.”

### In Class

- **Class Introduction**
- **Letter assignment: Short intro and short story**
- **Syllabus**
- **Cohort Selection – use letters**
- **Discussion Leader Selection**
- **What is literary journalism?**
- **[The Elements of Literary Journalism](#)**
- **[Tolerance for Ambiguity](#)** (The ability to perceive ambiguity in information and behavior in a neutral and open way. High scores indicate an intolerance for ambiguity.)
- **Brief Lecture: Horizontal vs. Vertical:** “Journalism, you see, always moves along on a horizontal plane, telling a story, while fiction – good fiction – moves vertically, taking you deeper and deeper into character and events. By treating a real event with fictional techniques (something that cannot be done by a journalist until he learns to write good fiction).” – [Truman Capote](#)
- **RetroBites: Capote’s Non-Fiction (1966):** <http://bit.ly/13Xg3hY>
- **[Rick Bragg vs. Wire Service on the Piedmont Tornado](#)**
- **[Breaking News as Narrative That Uses Literary Elements](#)**
- **The ‘shaping presence’ vs. journalistic formulas:** From *The Literature of Journalism*: “All the authors in this collection shaped their stories rather than following a formula, and the reader can sense the “shaping presence” of the writer. The stories discussed here represent journalism at its best. They endure because they were good at the time they were published and remain

significant decades later.” The notion of the “**shaping presence**” comes from James N. Stull’s *Literary Selves: Autobiography and Contemporary American Nonfiction*, Greenwood Press, 1993: “Departing from previous discussions of literary nonfiction in terms of its being literature or journalism, this new study treats literary nonfiction as autobiography, examining a large body of work in terms of autobiographical theory. The collected works of six very different prominent literary journalists – John McPhee, Joe McGinnis, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Hunter S. Thompson, and Norman Mailer – are analyzed from literary, autobiographical, and cultural perspectives. Author James Stull explains how the complex, fully-rounded psychological and social self is crystalized in these works into a more encompassing statement of self-identification, which he calls a metaphor of self, a distinctive way an author presents a self and its world.”

- [Is There Anything You Did as a Writer Starting Out That You Now Regret?](#) The writers [Anna Holmes](#) and [Leslie Jamison](#) discuss mistakes they made when starting out.
- [Robert Boynton Talks About “The New, New Journalism”](#) (video 67 minutes)

## Class 2 – Sept. 2

“First of all,” he said, “if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you’ll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view –”

“Sir?”

– “Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

– To Kill a Mockingbird’s [Atticus Finch](#) to his daughter [Scout](#), which the writer [John Howard Griffin](#) literally did in reporting his book [Black Like Me](#)

### In Class:

#### Class Discussion – Leader(s):

#### Readings and Work for Class 2

**View:** [Rashomon](#) The nature of truth and subjective reality are probed in a series of flashbacks from four viewpoints to present the case history of a man’s murder and the rape of his wife by a bandit. The film has an unusual narrative structure that reflects the impossibility of obtaining the truth about an event when there are conflicting witness accounts. In English and other languages, Rashomon has become a byword for any situation in which the truth of an event is difficult to verify due to the conflicting accounts of different witnesses.

#### History

**Read:** [On the Periodical Essayists](#), from Lectures on the English Comic Writers by William Hazlitt. Above is link to book. Here is link to [PDF](#) you can print. Here Hazlitt, centuries ago, is exploring the [intersubjective](#) possibilities of what was a relatively new form of writing. You might have to forget the modern world and settle into this old style of writing which is difficult in its wanderings but delicious in its way with words.

**Read and apply the following to all literary journalism readings in this class:** [What is Close Reading?](#) & [How to Do a Close Reading](#)

**Literary Journalism Readings – Four pioneers and innovators:**

**Read:** Introduction to Literature of Journalism, p. 1-7

**Read:** [From The True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the Late Jonathan Wild](#), by Daniel [Defoe](#) – Check out [the original text](#) (1725). Here is [a link](#) to a Google Books collection of Defoe's work – the Wilde story begins on pg. 237 – and this has a link to a free e-book: <http://tinyurl.com/cym9ppr>

**Read:** [Watercress Girl](#), by Henry Mayhew.

**Read:** [The Great Tasmania's Cargo](#), by Charles Dickens

**Read:** From [The Life of Samuel Johnson](#), by James Boswell.

**Read:** [A Lecture on Johnson and Boswell](#) by Jorge Luis Borges

Think about how Boswell created a situation that he could then write about to reveal the character of Samuel Johnson. Then think about this comment from the contemporary writer [John McPhee](#) regarding a similar juxtaposition of characters at opposite ends of an ideological spectrum to create [frisson](#): "That became [Encounters with the Archdruid](#). It was an odd piece, a piece where the journalist creates the milieu—I invited Floyd Dominy to go with Dave Brower on a raft down the Colorado River. And *The New Yorker* is supporting all this. Instead of going out and covering something, I invited these people to go to these different places."

**Read:** This excerpt on [Boswell and the inadequacy of words](#). Do you see an irony here? This theme of the inadequacy of words to achieve a sense of reality is a theme that runs through this course.

**Begin Reading (finish by Class 5):** [Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, death, and hope in a Mumbai undercity](#) by Katherine Boo In your blog essay for Class 5 I want you to explore a bit on Boo's background and how she reported/researched this story. Be ready to talk about this in class. ([About Katherine Boo](#))

**On Writing**

**View:** [How the Tape Recorder Killed Journalism | Gay Talese | Big Think](#)

**Read:** [Some Notes on Story Craft](#)

**Read:** [Fifty Writing Tools: Quick List](#)

**Read:** [Seeing Is Believing – Show, Don't Tell](#)

**Optional but elucidating**

[The Mystery of Charles Dickens](#) – We can learn much about writing nonfiction from closely reading fiction. Here, Joyce Carol Oates explores the stylistic mastery of Charles Dickens in a review of a biography of the author.

[Big Think Interview With Gay Talese](#)

[A Selected Historical Bibliography of Literary Journalism](#)

Literary Journalism Studies' [Selected Bibliography Of Scholarship And Criticism Examining Literary Journalism](#)

**Blog Essay:** For your blog essay incorporate the following along with anything else you want to add from your analysis of text: Is what Boswell is doing in the excerpt from *The Life of Samuel Johnson* journalism? Journalists are normally instructed to be aloof and objective. [Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle](#) and the [observer effect](#), which notes that measurements of certain systems cannot be made without affecting the systems, is somehow suspended for journalists, who are able to interact in environments without leaving any trace of themselves. Or at least that is the ideal. First, define journalistic objectivity as you understand it See this [link](#). Second, regarding this reading by Boswell, explore briefly [Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle](#) and the [observer effect](#) and how it applies to these readings, journalism's attempt to reflect objective reality, and anything else related to the doing of journalism in which journalists become part of a story to one degree or another – from a disrupter like Boswell to embedded immersion on one end to fly-on-the wall (or I-as-camera) reporting techniques on the other. Can you see how even a tape-recorder — or even a notebook — can affect objective reality?

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed from one of these readings, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

### **Class 3 – Sept. 9**

*“Journalism is literature in a hurry.” – [Matthew Arnold](#)*

*Arnold is credited with the first use of [“new journalism”](#) but as derogation and not approbation of the work of [W.T. Stead](#): “We have had opportunities of observing a new journalism which a clever and energetic man has lately invented. It has much to recommend it; it is full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, generous instincts; its one great fault is that it is feather-brained. It throws out assertions at a venture because it wishes them true; does not correct either them or itself, if they are false; and to get at the state of things as they truly are seems to feel no concern whatever.”*

#### **In Class:**

#### **Class Discussion – Leader(s):**

#### **Readings and Work for Class 3**

**750-word Story Due** A 750-word (maximum) sketch of a place that is in some way important to you – whether it is a place you like or loathe. Try to use words to paint a picture of its [quintessence](#). Observe and listen closely – but talk to no one. Immerse yourself in this place and take notes. Is something occurring that you can vividly duplicate in your writing? Is there a scene like that of a play or movie that you can capture with your words? I want this to sound like the voice of a writer cognizant of all senses – not the dry, objective reportorial voice we teach in basic news writing. Stretch yourself here. Take chances. Go for what the writer Joseph Mitchell called [“a wild exactitude.”](#) Bring copies of this to class **Week 3** – enough for all students.



## Literary Journalism Readings — Recreation of an Event

Read: [A Masterclass in Twitter storytelling: Man live-tweets story of emotional breakup](#)

*In reading the following, consider this quote from Stephen Crane: “I endeavoured to express myself in the simplest and most concise way. If I failed, the fault is not mine. I have been very careful not to let any theories or pet ideas of my own creep into my work. Preaching is fatal to art in literature. I try to give to readers a slice out of life; and, if there is any moral or lesson in it, I do not try to point it out. I let the reader find it for himself. The result is more satisfactory to both the reader and myself. As Emerson said: ‘There should be a long logic beneath the story, but it should be kept carefully out of sight.’ ” – [Some Letters of Stephen Crane](#)*

Read: [When Man Falls, a Crowd Gathers](#) by Stephen Crane ([About Crane and his sketch](#))

Read: [An Experiment in Misery](#) by Stephen Crane

Read: [Death of Rodriguez](#) by Richard Harding Davis

Read: From [The People of the Abyss](#) by Jack London (To give you some sense of the place see [Images of street life in London](#) and the book [Street Life in London](#))

### History reading:

Read: [W.T. Stead – The First New Journalist?](#)

### On Writing:

Read: Telling True Stories – 3-18

Read: [Tom French on Organizing Narrative PDF Version](#)

Read: New New Journalism

Ted Conover — 3

Richard Ben Cramer — 31

### Optional but elucidating

[Jack London Reference Archive](#)

If you want to read more of [The People of the Abyss](#)

[Wolf: The Lives of Jack London](#)

[Rdp. of Tornado Stories from the Nieman Storyboard](#) (Shows you how a literary flair can be added to breaking news)

Contingency of the present (at about 50 minutes): [Rick Bragg talks about his book, \*Somebody Told Me: The Newspaper Stories of Rick Bragg\*](#)

[Rick Bragg on Writing Nonfiction](#)

[Ralph Peters on Writing](#)

**Blog Essay:** Include in your blog post some discussion of the following: More than one scholar has argued that literary journalism can embrace “an understanding of the social or cultural Other.” Define “the Other” and the concept of “intersubjectivity.” This might take a little research outside of our readings. What are some techniques of literary journalism – and how might they work to connect subjectivities? How do you see this working in the literary journalism readings for this week?

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed from one of these readings, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

**FYI FOR WEEK 5: Short Writing Assignment – A Sketch – Due Week 5:** Observe a scene and write a slice-of-life sketch in exactly – or as much as possible – the style of Stephen Crane’s sublime [sketch](#) titled [When Man Falls, A Crowd Gathers](#). Really try to adhere to his stark, simple but powerful language. Two pages double-spaced. Post on your blog and slug it Sketch. Bring copies to class. **Begin this – due Week 5 before class.**

#### **Class 4 – Sept. 16**

*“Literature is the art of writing something that will be read twice; journalism what will be read once.” – [Cyril Connolly](#)*

**Story Proposal Due:** Story Proposal due as blog post slugged Story Proposal at noon before class Week 4. Bring in copies for class and be prepared to give a class presentation on your idea. Here is link explaining what I am looking for in proposal: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/2011/09/02/final-story-idea-proposal/>

#### **In Class:**

#### **Class Discussion – Leader(s):**

#### **Readings and Work for Week 4**

##### **Literary Journalism Readings — Recreation of Event**

**Read:** LOJ pp. 39-40 – from Hiroshima by John Hersey. Want to know more about the book and Hiroshima? Click [this link](#). (Wikipedia has a list of main characters with photos: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiroshima\\_\(book\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiroshima_(book)) **In the manner of LOJ, cull some of the critical response to this work of nonfiction and incorporate in your essay. One source for critical reviews is out own UF Library website. See [Hiroshima Reviews](#) for example. Another review source is [Google Books](#), which often has a link to reviews.**

**Read:** [From Specimen Days](#), by Walt Whitman (Powerful description of story by reporter who [was not there](#).) Here is link to entire book if you are interested: <http://www.bartleby.com/229/>

**Read:** LOJ p. 155 – from *The Onion Field* by Joseph Wambaugh

**Read:** LOJ p. 65 – from *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* by Gabriel García Márquez

#### **History reading:**

**Read:** [A Third Way to Tell the Story: American Literary Journalism at the Turn of the Century](#)

#### **On Writing:**

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 19-34

**Read:** New New Journalism

Leon Dash — 53

William Finnegan — 73

### **Optional but Elucidating**

[The Walt Whitman Archive](#)

[On Editing Whitman in the Digital Age](#): From essay: “Ironically, Whitman’s own notebooks, poems, and journalism challenged the claim that the war could not be written, and he succeeded as well as anyone in getting at the ‘marrow’ of the conflict. He felt that this inner meaning was most apparent in the hospitals where he served in Washington, DC as a self-styled ‘missionary to the wounded,’ an attentive visitor to tens of thousands of soldiers, northern and southern alike.”

**Blog Essay:** This week’s readings require a [close reading](#). (See also, [How to Do a Close Reading](#).) For example, Whitman, as you know, was a poet as well as a journalist. He has a strong grasp of the power of language and employs words and sentences as tools. How so? Part of your consideration should look at the use of plain style vs. eloquent – and especially word usage. What is the plain style vs. the eloquent style? This will require a little research, which you can easily do online.

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed from one of these readings, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

### **Class 5 – Sept. 23**

*“In journalism, if you get to be really hot stuff, that’s where you get to go—to the White House! And that’s too bad. Social issues are kind of worthy things that people graduate from.” –*

*Katherine Boo from On the craft of reporting poverty:*

<http://www.quericamag.com/interviews/reporting-poverty/>

**Finish reading by Class 5:** [Behind the Beautiful Forever: Life, death, and hope in a Mumbai undercity by Katherine Boo](#):

**In Class:**

**Class Discussion – Leader(s):**

**Identify the expressive personalities**

**Due this week: Short Writing Assignment – A Sketch:** Observe a scene and write a slice-of-life sketch in exactly – or as much as possible – the style of Stephen Crane’s sublime [sketch](#) titled [When Man Falls, A Crowd Gathers](#). Equivalent of two pages double-spaced. Post on your blog and slug it Sketch. Bring copies to class. Due this week.

**Readings and Work for Class**

**Literary Journalism Readings**

**Read:** [The Bronx Slave Market](#), by Marvel Cooke

**Read:** LOJ p. 175 – *A Welfare Mother* by Susan Sheehan

**Read:** [The Spike](#), by George Orwell **In the manner of LOJ, cull some of the critical response to this work of nonfiction and incorporate in your essay.**

**Read:** LOJ p. 9 – “Road to Wigan Pier” by George Orwell Also, especially look at Orwell’s use of vocabulary. We are going to go over this closely in class because deconstructing Orwell can tell us a lot about powerful writing.

**Finish Reading:** [Behind the Beautiful Forever: Life, death, and hope in a Mumbai undercity by Katherine Boo](#) In your blog essay for Class 5 I want you to explore a bit on Boo’s background and how she reported/researched this story. Also, In the manner of LOJ, cull some of the critical response to this work of nonfiction and incorporate in your essay. ([About Katherine Boo](#))

**History reading:**

**Read:** **The Interview of the “expressive individual” is the Key:** [Hutchins Hapgood, A New Form of Literature](#), Bookman 21 (1905): 424-427. This opens in Google Books. Just click on page.

**Read:** [Historical Perspective on the New Journalism](#) (Think about the reconsideration of the squishy notion of objectivity discussed here in relation to this week’s and other weeks’ readings.)

**On Writing:**

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 35-64

**Read:** New New Journalism

Jonathan Harr — 103

Alex Kotlowitz — 127

**Optional but elucidating**

[VIDEO: KATHERINE BOO’S “BEHIND THE BEAUTIFUL FOREVERS”](#)

[Katherine Boo \(02/10/12\) | Charlie Rose](#)

[Katherine Boo on Behind the Beautiful Forever](#)

[“Behind the Beautiful Forever” highlights hope](#)

[Charlie Rose](#)[Charles Murray](#); [Robert Harris](#); [Katherine Boo](#) (at 38:04 of video)

[A picture of Sunil](#)

[More work by Katherine Boo](#)

**Blog Essay:** All of these readings also deal with what some call social reporting — or some call it social-justice reporting. How are they connected? What else have you read in class — or outside class — similar to these topics? What is social reporting and how does it manifest itself.? Do you see a place for objectivity in this kind of reporting? First, place these readings in the context of their times. Next, identify some of the [“expressive individual \(or personality\)”](#) in these works. Each of the readings might also be described as participatory journalism from the underworld or nether regions. Recall the following from earlier: “The author posits that literary journalism can embrace “an understanding of the social or cultural Other.” Incorporate these stories into your considerations and explorations of the Other and the rejection of the objectification of the news. Are these stories effective? What is your metric for effectiveness? Feel free to critique. Consider the above readings. Which of these strikes you

as the most effective in achieving its goals and why? Also, as journalists, formulate your thoughts on the ethics of undercover reporting. [Here are some notes on undercover reporting.](#)

**Also:** Each of the narrative nonfiction readings for Week 5 deals in some way with the notion of [cultural identity](#). Do you see how this notion of identity reveals itself to you in these readings. We have talked a little about how literary journalism works to reveal “The Other” and to connect the subjectivities of culturally different identities. Think about this for a second: “The Other” can be used to define our own identity by what we are not. This notion of identity is nothing new. For example, see Walt Whitman’s “**The Child That Went Forth**” a late nineteenth-century poem that speaks to the formation of identity. Read it here at: <http://whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1856/poems/25>

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed from one of these readings, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

**Also:** Be ready to discuss in class the ethics of undercover reporting in the contemporary world. Think about the ethics of doing so. Might it be OK under some circumstances? Or never? Here is a site devoted to the topic of journalistic deception: [Deception for Journalism’s Sake: A Database](#)

**Also:** How might the Hapgood article inform your discussion? Do you see how the writers’ efforts to use “the expressive individual (or personality)” to tell their stories is relevant for each of them? Keep in mind here that the interview was a relatively [new form](#) (1903 p. 47) of journalism – and here Hapgood is talking not about interviewing the rich and mighty. This is how the development of literary journalism itself tells a story of tearing down the hierarchy of the elites and the powerful and the coming to the fore of the [demos](#). Is this century-old advice still applicable – especially his dictum that “The expressive individual should not only be interesting in himself, but should also represent a class. If he be thoroughly identified with some social *milieu*, his story cannot be well told without involving that *milieu*. In the process of tracing his life, the ideals and habits of his class would be shown. A section of life would thus be portrayed and a human story told at the same time.”

## **Class 6 – Sept. 30**

*“Journalism allows its readers to witness history; fiction gives its readers an opportunity to live it.” – [John Hersey](#)*

**In Class:**

**Class Discussion – Leader(s):**

**Readings and Work for Class 6**

**Literary Journalism Readings**

**Read:** [So ... We Meet at Last, Mr. Bond](#), by Bob Greene **Learn more about Greene:** [The Sad Saga of Bob Greene](#) & [Bob Greene Was Fired From Chicago Tribune 10 Years ago](#)

**Read:** [It’s an Honor](#), by Jimmy Breslin (note what this and the Greene piece have in common and what

they don't) [Learn more about Breslin](#) See: [Jimmy Breslin, the gravedigger and 'the bleary day' they buried JFK](#)

**Read:** LOJ p. 215 – *The Right Stuff* by Tom Wolfe

**Read:** Chapter 6 The Bus from [The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test](#), by Tom Wolfe / [Learn more about Wolfe](#)

**Begin Reading (finish by Class 11):** [The Emperor by Ryszard Kapuściński, translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand](#) In the manner of LOJ, cull some of the critical response to this work of nonfiction and incorporate in your essay.

*Ryszard Kapuscinski, Poland's most acclaimed foreign correspondent, was born in 1932. After graduating in history from Warsaw University, he was sent to India, Pakistan and Afghanistan to report for Polish news, which began his lifelong fascination with the Third World. During his four decades reporting on Asia, Latin America and Africa, he befriended Che Guevara, Salvador Allende and Patrice Lumumba, witnessed twenty-seven coups and revolutions, and was sentenced to death four times. His last book, published by Penguin, was Travels with Herodotus (2006). His previous books Shah of Shahs (about the Iranian revolution), The Emperor (about the fall of Ethiopia's Haile Selassie), Imperium (about the fall of the Soviet Union) and The Soccer War (a compendium of reportage from the Third World) – have been translated into nineteen languages. He died in January 2007.*

### On Writing

**Where did Wolfe's off-the-wall style come from?** **Read:** [The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby: Introduction](#)

**Read:** [Annotation of Tom Wolfe's "Radical Chic"](#) - Scan this and concern yourself with the annotations.

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 65-73

**Read:** New New Journalism

Jon Krakauer — 154

Jane Kramer — 183

### Optional but elucidating

[Plain Writing Act of 2010](#)

[To Grok](#)

[Jerry Garcia & Ken Kesey on the Electric Kool-Aid Talk Show](#)

[Some other Information about Wolfe](#)

[Tom Wolfe Interview With the Guardian](#) (talks about Kool-Aid)

**Blog essay:** Here is the mantra for today: THE PERIOD IS YOUR FRIEND. The following is Jimmy Breslin [talking about](#) friend and fellow writer Steve Dunleavy: **“In a time of listless reporting, he climbed stairs. And he wrote simple declarative sentences that people could read, as opposed to these 52-word gems that moan, ‘I went to college! I went to graduate school college! Where do I put the period?’ ”** Take this quote – in which, essentially, he is talking about plain style – and think about the three writers we read this week – and any of those we have read before. Who among these do you think best exemplifies what Breslin is talking about and why? Give some examples and analyze them. Then, who least follows his description of powerful but plain writing and why. Give some examples and

analyze them. And even if these are not examples of plain style but border more on the eloquent, do they still work? Certainly, if you are going to discuss plain style, you need to define what it is. **See, for example:** [Essays of Elia](#) (1835) in which Charles Lamb describes the plain style in his critique of a famous actor of his time:

“He was totally destitute of trick and artifice. He seemed come upon the stage to do the poet’s message simply, and he did it with as genuine fidelity as the nuncios in Homer deliver the errands of the gods. He let the passion or the sentiment do its own work without prop or bolstering. He would have scorned to mountebank it; and betrayed none of that cleverness which is the bane of serious acting.”

**Also, consider journalists and their sources:** How do you think about this as a nonfiction writer.

See: [Janet Malcolm on Journalism’s Long Con](#): “Journalism is an enterprise of reassurance. We do not wring our hands and rend our clothes over the senseless crimes and disasters that give us our subject. We explain and blame. We are connoisseurs of certainty: “Hey, we got the killer. Don’t worry. You can go to the playground. Nothing is gonna happen.”

**From [The Journalist and the Murderer](#):** “Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible.” ... “He is a kind of confidence man, preying on people’s vanity, ignorance or loneliness, gaining their trust and betraying them without remorse. Like the credulous widow who wakes up one day to find the charming young man and all her savings gone, so the consenting subject of a piece of nonfiction learns—when the article or book appears—his hard lesson. Journalists justify their treachery in various ways according to their temperaments. The more pompous talk about freedom of speech and “the public’s right to know”; the least talented talk about Art; the seemliest murmur about earning a living.”

**Faulkner sums up this issue in an [interview](#) with *The Paris Review* from 1956:**

**INTERVIEWER:** The writer should be completely ruthless?

**FAULKNER:** The writer’s only responsibility is to his art. He will be completely ruthless if he is a good one. He has a dream. It anguishes him so much he must get rid of it. He has no peace until then. Everything goes by the board: honor, pride, decency, security, happiness, all, to get the book written. If a writer has to rob his mother, he will not hesitate; the ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ is worth any number of old ladies.”

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed from one of these readings, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

## Class 7 – Oct. 7

*“People may expect too much of journalism. Not only do they expect it to be entertaining, they expect it to be true.” – [Lewis H. Lapham](#)*

### In Class:

#### Class Discussion – Leader(s):

### Readings and Work for Class 7

#### Literary Journalism Readings

**Read:** [Up in the Old Hotel PDF](#) by Joseph Mitchell. This requires a [close reading](#). I would like you to pick a short passage from this story that you particularly enjoy and bring it to class. Be ready to explain why. Here is a [version online](#) if interested. Regarding Mitchell’s style, see [Ulysses by James Joyce](#) In the manner of LOJ, cull some of the critical response to [Up in the Old Hotel, and Other Stories](#) and incorporate in your essay.

**Mitchell is an icon of literary journalism. To get a better sense of the man, read these two short articles:**

1. [Joseph Mitchell’s True Facts](#)

2. [Fact v. Truth: The New Yorker’s Joseph Mitchell Didn’t Let the Former Get In the Way of the Latter](#) by Christopher Borrelli of the *Chicago Tribune*. Think especially about this assertion: “It’s not verbatim – of course, it’s not. Mitchell was a reporter before tape recorders. But its not fiction either. Mitchell wanted his stories to be ‘truthful rather than factual,’ he once wrote.”

**Also read:** [What Makes a Great City: E.B. White on the Poetics of New York](#): Here you can get a sense of the city Mitchell is writing about in these excerpts from another great New York writer — [E.B White](#).

#### History:

**Read:** [“Some Sort of Artistic Excitement”](#) by Ronald Weber. This is the introduction to an early edited collection of essays discussing the New Journalism titled [The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism Controversy](#). It is a brief but excellent explication of the concept of New Journalism and makes a solid argument for what it is (not just one thing) and how the genre – as with all literary and journalistic genres – addresses a need. Note, too, the use of the word “controversy” in the title.

#### On Writing:

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 74-96

**Read:** New New Journalism

William Langewiesche — 206

Adrian Nicole LeBlanc — 227

#### Optional but elucidating

[Up in the Old Hotel](#) (the book), by Joseph Mitchell – the collection from which the story comes.

**Blog Essay:** Pick a short passage that reflects what Mitchell called “a wild exactitude” ([See this LINK](#)) and close read it. Does Up in the Old Hotel come to a critical closure or is it inconclusive? / What is the



resonance – the literary resonance – of this story? What continues to reverberate and rattle around in your mind? Discuss the effect on you the reader. How is this different than traditional journalism? Also, discuss the veracity of Mitchell’s story. In discussing Mitchell, think about what Hersey had to say in his essay.

**Also:** Identify and post below your essay as many elements of literary journalism that you can in the above works of literary journalism. See: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/the-elements/>

## **Class 8 – Oct. 14**

*“Rock journalism is people who can’t write interviewing people who can’t talk for people who can’t read.” – [Frank Zappa](#)*

**In Class:**

**Class Discussion – Leader(s):**

**Capote**

### **Readings and Work for Class 8**

#### **Literary Journalism Readings**

**Read:** [The Duke in His Domain by Truman Capote](#)

**Read:** [“Why’s this so good?” No. 1: Truman Capote keeps time with Marlon Brando](#)

**Read:** LOJ p. 119 – From *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote

**Read:** [Notes and links](#) on Capote you might find helpful. [More about Truman Capote](#)

**View:** Truman Capote clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14zSOAoV38Q>

**Read:** [The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel](#): In *Cold Blood* is remarkable for its objectivity—nowhere, despite his involvement, does the author intrude. In the following interview, Truman Capote presents his own views on the case, its principals, and in particular he discusses the new literary art form which he calls the nonfiction novel.

#### **On Writing:**

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 97-124

**Read:** New New Journalism

Michael Lewis — 248

Susan Orlean — 271

#### **History:**

**Read:** [The Legend on the License](#), John Hersey, Yale Review, October 1980, 1-25

**Read:** [The First Peril: Fabrication](#)

**Read:** [The Birth of ‘The New Journalism’; Eyewitness Report by Tom Wolfe: Participant Reveals Main Factors Leading to Demise of the Novel, Rise of New Style Covering Events](#), by Tom Wolfe

### Optional but elucidating

[Some Information about Capote](#)

[Capote Interview](#) with [George Plimpton](#)

[A Photo Gallery](#)

[Capote's co-conspirators](#)

[Capote classic "In Cold Blood" tainted by long lost files](#)

[In Cold Blood Florida murders: Will DNA tie Perry Smith and Dick Hickock to the Clint Walker killings?](#)

[The Self-Destructive Spiral of Truman Capote After Answered Prayers | Vanity Fair](#)

[Journalism as fiction, fiction as journalism. The Capote dictum](#)

[Plimpton! Starring \*George Plimpton\* as Himself – Full Film](#)

### Blog essay:

1. What is the key element of journalism as defined by Hersey?
2. What are the elements of literary journalism as Wolfe defines them in this seminal essay linked above?
3. How does Capote fit into all this? Where does he fit into Hersey's ideas about literary journalism and where does he violate Hersey's view?

Then place these articles by Hersey and Wolfe in the context of their times. How does the Wolfe piece hearken back to [On the Periodical Essayists](#), from *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, by William Hazlitt. Recall how Hazlitt was describing how literature was shifting in its mode to adapt to the times. Similarly, what was going on in the world that would effect a change of mode in journalism in the '50s and '60s. What does Wolfe say about this? Compare and contrast the Hersey and Wolfe essays on truth and journalism. And then how might they inform a discussion about journalistic truth when considering and comparing Hiroshima, *In Cold Blood*, and *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*.

**Also:** Identify and post below your essay as many elements of literary journalism that you can in the above works of literary journalism. See: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/the-elements/>

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed from one of these readings, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

### Class 9 – Oct. 21

*"Journalism is concerned with events, poetry with feelings. Journalism is concerned with the look of the world, poetry with the feel of the world."* – [Archibald MacLeish](#)

### In Class:

#### Class Discussion – Leader(s):

#### Readings and Work for Class 9

#### Literary Journalism Readings — It's All in the Details

**Read:** LOJ p. 77 – From *The Earl of Louisiana* by A. J. Liebling

**Read:** LOJ p. 51 – Reporting by Lillian Ross: Excerpts from Picture and Portrait of Hemingway.

**Read:** LOJ p. 107 – *A Mother in History* by Jean Stafford

**Read:** [“Frank Sinatra Has a Cold”](#) ran in April 1966 and became one of the most celebrated magazine stories ever published, a pioneering example of what came to be called New Journalism — a work of rigorously faithful fact enlivened with the kind of vivid storytelling that had previously been reserved for fiction. [Gay Talese Outlines His Famous 1966 Profile “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold” on a Shirt Board](#)

**Read:** [“Why’s this so good?” No. 39: Gay Talese diagnoses Frank Sinatra](#)

**On Writing:**

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 125-138

**Read:** [Annotation of Gay Talese’s “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold”](#)

**Read:** [Annotation of Lillian Ross’s Ernest Hemingway](#)

**Read:** New New Journalism

Richard Preston — 293

Ron Rosenbaum — 324

**Optional But Elucidating:** [The Documents A.J. Liebling Carried While Reporting Overseas During World War II](#)

[Orson Welles on Hemingway](#)

[Atticus Finch and the limits of Southern liberalism](#)

**Blog Essay:** What does it mean to say – in relation to these readings – that it is “all in the details?”

**Also:** Identify and post below your essay as many elements of literary journalism that you can in the above works of literary journalism. See: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/the-elements/>

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

**Class 10 – Oct. 28**

*“Journalism is popular, but it is popular mainly as fiction. Life is one world, and life seen in the newspapers another.” – [Gilbert Keith Chesterton](#)*

**In Class:**

**Class Discussion – Leader(s):**

**Readings and Work for Class 10**

**Literary Journalism Readings – Tales of the City**

**Read:** [Travels in London's Sewers](#) by [Rose George](#)

**Read:** [Drift by Morris Markey](#) (This requires a [close reading](#). (See also, [How to Do a Close Reading](#).) In Greek mythology, [Charon](#) is the ferryman of Hades who carries souls of the newly deceased across the rivers Styx and Acheron that divided the world of the living from the world of the dead. Morris Markey's literary journalism piece, "Drift," belongs to a genre referred to as "the procedural." Note in your essay how he uses [diction](#) and [syntax](#) to achieve an effect.

**Read:** From [Los Angeles Notebook by Joan Didion](#) This excerpt is the first section of several that make up this essay. It is about California's Santa Ana winds and is in her collection [Slouching Toward Bethlehem](#) – which is discussed a bit more fully in next week's assignments. In the manner of LOJ, cull some of the critical response to [Slouching Toward Bethlehem](#) and incorporate in your essay. **Also:** I would like you to print this reading and then annotate the text with notes explaining how Didion uses [diction](#) and [syntax](#) to achieve an effect. Bring to class and include your thoughts in your essay.

**Read:** [Elegy for the King and Queen](#) by Tom French: Thomas French and Stefanie Boyar, a Times staff reporter and photographer, have been chronicling life at Lowry Park for more than two years. Working on a larger project about the zoo, they were following Herman and Enshalla long before their deaths. Much of this story is based on that reporting. Many of the details, including the thwarted tiger courtship, were witnessed firsthand. Other scenes, including the two animals' deaths, are based on interviews with zoo officials including Lex Salisbury and David Murphy, current and former keepers and others who knew Herman and Enshalla. Tom French later turned this story into a book: [Zoo Story: Life in the Garden of Captives](#)

#### **On Writing:**

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 139-162

**Read:** New New Journalism

Eric Schlosser — 342

Gay Talese –361

**Blog Essay:** Incorporate your ideas regarding the use of [diction](#) and [syntax](#) to achieve an effect in the stories by Markey and Didion. .

**Also:** Identify the similarities in topic and the varieties of expression in these stories.

**Also:** Identify and post below your essay as many elements of literary journalism that you can in the above works of literary journalism. See: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/the-elements/>

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

**In Class:** [Thomas French on Colbert: Spending six years at a zoo made Thomas French start to see people's primal behavior underneath.](#)

## Class 11 – Nov. 4

*“A petty reason perhaps why novelists more and more try to keep a distance from journalists is that novelists are trying to write the truth and journalists are trying to write fiction.” – [Graham Greene](#)*

The College is launching a program funded by The Provost’s Office and the UF Division of Research to bring a Science Journalist in Residence on campus three times a year for lectures, workshops, etc.... The first one, [Jennie Erin Smith](#), reporter and author of the acclaimed 2012 book, “[Stolen World: A Tale of Reptiles, Smugglers and Skullduggery,](#)” will be here **Nov. 3-5**. She is scheduled to come to our class. Take a look at her writing in the link above to Google Books preview. I expect at least two questions about writing and the writing life from each of you.

**Finish reading by Class 11:** [The Emperor by Ryszard Kapuściński, translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand:](#)

**In Class:**

**Class Discussion – Leader(s):**

### Readings and Work for Class 11

*[“If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts he shall end in certainties.”](#) – Sir Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* ([an explication](#))*

### Literary Journalism Readings

**Read:** [Marrakech, by George Orwell](#)

**Read:** LOJ p. 143 – from *Slouching towards Bethlehem* by Joan Didion. The second excerpt here comes from the collection’s title essay. The first is from [John Wayne: A Love Song](#), and I would like you to read the entire story at this link. Note this is linked from a site called [Longform](#), which you might want to explore if you are interested in longform journalism in the digital age. Here is a pdf version if you would rather: [John Wayne: A Love Song](#)

**From preface to *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*:** *“This book is called *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* because for several years now certain lines from the Yeats poem which appears two pages back have reverberated in my inner ear as if they were surgically implanted there. The widening gyre, the falcon which does not hear the falconer, the gaze blank and pitiless as the sun; those have been my points of reference, the only images against which much of what I was seeing and feeling and thinking seemed to make any pattern.”*

[The Second Coming](#) by William Butler Yeats

- For some perspective, see: [The Cowboy and the Columnist, or Joan Didion ♥ John Wayne](#)
- Also see: [The Searcher](#)
- [About Joan Didion](#) / [More about Joan Didion](#)

**Read:** [Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream](#) by Joan Didion

[“Why’s this so good?” No. 57: Joan Didion on dreamers gone astray](#)

*“What is it in a culture, a landscape, a time and place, that makes people do the things they do? The first essay in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* is a perfect example. “Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream” was originally published in *The Saturday Evening Post* with the chilling title “How Can I tell Them There’s Nothing Left”. It tells the story of a murder trial in the San Bernardino Valley. A young housewife gets in a car accident with her husband who burns up in the car while she screams for help, to no avail. She is arrested a day or so later for murder. It comes out she had been having an affair. She is convicted of murder. She is pregnant at the time, and delivers her baby while in prison. Didion starts the whole thing with a contemplation of the San Bernardino Valley, delving into the history of the place, and why people move there, and what it is about the landscape, the air, the wind, the heat, that may impact the culture of the area. She provides context for where we will be going. It is, yes, a Didion context. She makes broad statements, out of her own knowledge of California, and to Didion – a cigar is rarely just a cigar. Everything comes from somewhere, every small element has an impact on other elements. She sees something in this particular murder trial which is, on the face of it, rather banal. A dime a dozen. To her, though, it is a California story, through and through.”*

From: <http://www.sheilaomalley.com/?p=53846>

### **Didion and The Parable**

*“This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.”* ([Mathew 13:13](#))

A **parable** is a succinct story, in prose or verse, which illustrates one or more instructive principles, or lessons, or (sometimes) a normative principle. It differs from a fable in that fables use animals, plants, inanimate objects, and forces of nature as characters, while parables generally feature human characters. It is a type of analogy. A **parable** is a short tale that illustrates universal truth, one of the simplest of narratives. It sketches a setting, describes an action, and shows the results. It often involves a character facing a moral dilemma, or making a questionable decision and then suffering the consequences. Though the meaning of a parable is often not explicitly stated, the meaning is not usually intended to be hidden or secret but on the contrary quite straightforward and obvious. – [Wikipedia](#)

**Finish Reading:** [The Emperor](#) by Ryszard Kapuściński, translated by William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand In the manner of LOJ, cull some of the critical response to *The Emperor* and incorporate in your essay.

### **On Writing**

**Read:** [On Keeping a Notebook](#) by Joan Didion Do you keep a notebook? If so, would you bring in and talk about it. You don’t have to share it except to discuss it.

**Read:** New New Journalism

Lawrence Wright — 434

**Read:** [Three-Dot Journalism](#)

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 163-177

### Optional but elucidating

George Orwell's "[Politics and the English Language](#)," pdf (1946)

[Why I Write: George Orwell](#)

[Why I Write: Joan Didion](#)

[Why I Write: Joan Didion on Ego, Grammar & the Impetus to Create](#)

[Sons of Katie Elder](#)

**Blog Essay:** Is Marrakech in any way similar to the movie Rashomon we discussed earlier in the semester? What of any other writings for this week or the Boo book? Note, The Emperor is about another place in Africa. Discuss the distinction between discursive writing and narrative writing. This may require some research on your part. In doing so, consider this quote from one of our writers, Stephen Crane:

"I endeavoured to express myself in the simplest and most concise way. If I failed, the fault is not mine. I have been very careful not to let any theories or pet ideas of my own creep into my work. Preaching is fatal to art in literature. I try to give to readers a slice out of life; and, if there is any moral or lesson in it, I do not try to point it out. I let the reader find it for himself. The result is more satisfactory to both the reader and myself. As Emerson said: 'There should be a long logic beneath the story, but it should be kept carefully out of sight.'" – [Some Letters of Stephen Crane](#)

**Also:** Regarding this week's readings and [Los Angeles Notebook by Joan Didion](#) from last week, are Didion and Orwell and Kapuscinski up to the same thing? Explain. Regarding the above, consider the concept of [negative capability](#) – a theory of the poet John Keats describing the capacity for accepting uncertainty and the unresolved. See this Storify collection of discussions about [negative capability](#). Consider too, this quote from Sir Francis Bacon, English author, courtier, & philosopher (1561 – 1626):

**"If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts; but if he will be content to begin with doubts he shall end in certainties."**

**Also:** Identify and post below your essay as many elements of literary journalism that you can in the above works of literary journalism. See: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/the-elements/>

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

**In Class:**

[Tumblr post](#) on high- and low-concept cultures.

[A Rising Voice in Washington: Get out of Afghanistan](#) by John Woodrow Cox (If Times' link does not work, click on this [LINK](#).)

This story From Tampa Bay Times is peppered with telling details. Not just details, but details that enrich the story and amplify my understanding.

Look at the cutline of the photo—the name of the dog.

The other big point I take from this is the power of the last line.

“There’s something really wrong,” he said, “with what’s happening in Afghanistan now.”

Matthew Sitton was the 2,056th American soldier killed there. In the two months since, 50 more have died.

This closing line does more than convey information, it sends a message.

If the line had been further up in the narrative and the closing had been:

“The Sittons believe God took their 26-year-old son for a reason. That reason, they don’t know yet.”

The feel of the story would have been wildly different. **The big lessons:**

There is a difference between a “detail” and a “telling detail.” Details give me information but “telling details” help me to understand not just know. The way you end the story can send a powerful signal about how the author/editor feels about the subject. Be careful that you do not send unintended signals in the final line. Think of how you end a phone call. The last line spoken can be the one that sticks with you longest. – [Al Thompkins of Poynter](#)

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**This would normally be Class 12 – Nov. 11 – But No Class: Veterans Day**

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## **Class 12 – Nov. 18**

*“If a person is not talented enough to be a novelist, not smart enough to be a lawyer, and his hands are too shaky to perform operations, he becomes a journalist.” – [Norman Mailer](#)*

**DUE:** Rough Drafts due before Monday of Week 12. Small-group paper confabs to be scheduled Week 13 and/or Week 14. Post to your blog and send me on email attachment a Word document version of your rough draft. I may cancel one or two classes at the end of the semester so we can spend time together in these confabs. We will meet in groups. You will bring enough copies of your rough draft in so everyone in the confab has a copy. We will go over these together.

## **Individual Meetings Scheduled This Week**

**In Class:**

**Class Discussion – Leader(s):**

## **Readings and Work for Class 13**

**Literary Journalism Readings — On War and Disasters:**

**Read:** LOJ p. 203– From Dispatches by Michael Herr

**Read:** LOJ p. 185 – Friendly Fire by C. D. B. Bryan

**Read:** [Tienanmen Square, by John Simpson](#)



### **On Non-Fiction vs. the Fictional**

**Read:** [The Reporter Amends Reality from Ryszard Kapuściński: A Life.](#)

**Read:** [The Lies of Ryszard Kapuściński](#)

### **On Writing:**

**Read:** [How You Get That Story: Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and the Literature of the Vietnam War](#)

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 178-196

**Read:** New New Journalism

Calvin Trillin — 379

Lawrence Weschler — 404

**On Rewriting:** [Draft No. 4: Replacing the Words in Boxes](#) by John McPhee. Apply this to your own work.

**Optional but elucidating (war writing):** [1914: Into the Fire](#): Excerpted from Béla Zombory-Moldován's recently discovered memoir of World War I, *The Burning of the World*, which will be published for the first time, in a translation by Peter Zombory-Moldován, by [NYRB Classics](#) in August.

**Blog Essay:** How does the chaotic kind of writing work in [Dispatches](#) work? Is it somewhat similar to the staccato style of Whitman's story we read earlier about the battle? Also, given our discussion this semester about subjectivity vs. objectivity, the attempts to engage subjectivity, literary resonance re closure – can you see some of that at work here?

**Also:** With all we have discussed around the topic this semester, react to *The Reporter Amends Reality* and [The Lies of Ryszard Kapuściński](#). Do you hear some of the criticism of Hersey in these critiques. Think about this. How do you feel about these criticisms?

**Also:** Identify and post below your essay as many elements of literary journalism that you can in the above works of literary journalism. See: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/the-elements/>

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

### **Class 13 – Nov. 25**

*The best use of a journal is to print the largest practical amount of important truth, – truth which tends to make mankind wiser, and thus happier.” – [Horace Greeley](#)*

### **Individual Meetings Scheduled This Week**

**In Class:**

**Class Discussion – Leader(s):**

## Readings and Work for Class 14 — Confronting the “inadequacy of words” in stories about war and about “the other” within a nether wasteland

Also, recall The prologue titled What I Had Lived For in Bertrand Russell’s [Autobiography](#) while reading these stories:

### Literary Journalism Readings

**Read:** [The Things That Carried Him](#) and check out [Inside the Things That Carried Him](#) and [A Radio Interview With Chris Jones](#), who followed a soldier’s body from Baghdad to its final resting place in the soldier’s hometown of Scottsburg, Ind. Jones discusses the long journey in “The Things That Carried Him,” a detailed article in *Esquire* magazine about the transfer of remains.

**Read:** LOJ p. 231– *The Soul of a New Machine* by Tracy Kidder

**Read:** LOJ p. 245– *The Great China Earthquake* by Qian Gang

**Read:** LOJ p. 23– From Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, by James Agee

**Read:** [Words cannot embody; they can only describe](#). From an essay on “[Repetition](#)” – Agee on writing and truth and the inadequacy of Words

**Read:** [Let Us Now Praise James Agee](#): From essay: “When Library of America published a collection of Pauline Kael’s film writing last year, many of Kael’s admirers fondly recalled her as the first writer to elevate film criticism to literature. But that distinction actually belongs to an earlier LOJ author, James Agee.”

**Read:** [Regulars Get No Glory](#) by Stephen Crane — a short news article in the Los Angeles Herald, on July 31, 1898. The article begins in the lower right of page. Here is a PDF of [Regulars Get No Glory](#) that should be easier to read.

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If I could do it, I’d do no writing at all here. It would be photographs; the rest would be fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and iron, phials of odors, plates of food, and of excrement. Booksellers would consider it quite a novelty; critics would murmur, yes, but is it art; and I could trust a majority of you to use it as you would a parlor game.

A piece of the body torn out by the roots might be more to the point.

As it is, though, I’ll do what little I can in writing. Only it will be very little. I’m not capable of it; and if I were, you would not go near it at all. For if you did, you would hardly bear to live.

– From the preamble, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

### On Writing:

**Read:** Telling True Stories – 197-226

### Optional but elucidating

[About Let Us Now Praise Famous Men](#)

[Hersey on Agee](#)

[Defense Chief Lifts Ban on Pictures of Coffins](#)

[Plain Writing Act of 2010](#)

[ECCLESIASTICUS 44:1 Let us now praise famous me . . .](#)

[Walker Evans' Images](#)

[Words cannot embody; they can only describe.](#)

[John Updike on James Agee](#)

[Praising James Agee](#)

[Dispatches From the Dust Bowl](#): “True, Agee’s writing is anything but reportage. Through long sequences of exact and exacting detail he approaches, penetrates with all his senses, the few things that the families own and use. He tastes not just the eggs fried “dense as steaks” and the dough biscuits, but the cheap metals of the fork prongs; he smells the “sweet stuffy fetor of corn on the breath”; he perceives a pain beyond pathos in a bridal hat, now a “broken, half-moist chunk” in a mildewed drawer.”

**Blog Essay:** Regarding Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, discuss Stephen Crane’s reference to [“a unit in the interesting sum of men slain”](#) from a story titled [Regulars Get No Glory](#) about American soldiers fighting in Cuba. How is Agee – writing about “the other” within a nether wasteland within the boundaries of America – attempting to answer that critique of journalism? Recall last week’s [How You Get That Story: Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle and the Literature of the Vietnam War](#). Also, draw in the other writers from this week and in past weeks in reference to this notion about [“a unit in the interesting sum of men slain.”](#)

**Also,** do you see something of this in [The Things That Carried Him](#)? Explain.

Recall Boswell and his concern about the “inadequacy of words.” How might the way Jones organized the story or how O’Brien, Herr, Agee and even Whitman use language also be applicable? Part of your consideration should look at the use of plain style vs. eloquent. Which do you find more effective and why?

**Also:** Identify and post below your essay as many elements of literary journalism that you can in the above works of literary journalism. See: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/the-elements/>

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

**Class 14 – Nov. 25 (No class meeting this week to make time for Individual Meetings. But still do the assigned work below.)**

**November 26-29: Thanksgiving break**

*"I read the newspaper avidly. It is my one form of continuous fiction."* – [Aneurin Bevan](#)

**Readings and Work for Class 14**

**Literary Journalism Readings — Gonzo**

**Read:** [What's Gonzo about Gonzo Journalism?](#)

**Read:** [Derivation of Gonzo](#)

**Read:** LOJ p. 133 – *Hell's Angels* by Hunter Thompson For more if you are interested, see: [Excerpts from Hells Angels](#)

**Read:** [Hunter S. Thompson, The Art of Journalism No. 1](#) Here is [interview with HST in PDF version](#) that is easier to read.

**Intellectual Gonzo?**

**Read:** [Last Secrets of Skull and Bones by Ron Rosenbaum](#)

**Read:** [The Great Ivy League Nude Posture Photo Scandal](#) by Ron Rosenbaum

**Read:** The short passage on Rosenbaum as an ["investigator of investigations"](#)

**On Writing:**

**Read:** [John McPhee, The Art of Nonfiction No. 3: http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5997/the-art-of-nonfiction-no-3-john-mcphoe](#)

**From the Interview**

**John McPhee**

"In [A Sense of Where You Are](#), McPhee describes Bradley playing basketball "according to the foundation pattern of the game." Despite possessing an amazingly accurate shot, the athlete distinguished himself primarily through attention to footwork, passing, and strategy. In a sense, McPhee writes the same way. He rarely draws attention to himself, but his sense of structure, detail, and language is so refined that his presence is felt on every page."

**Writing Begets Writing**

"The fundamental thing is that writing teaches writing. And you always get this question from people, and they say some version of the idea that writing can't be taught. And the thing is, yeah, you can't throw a firecracker on the ground and up comes a writer. But you can teach writing in the same way that you can coach swimming. When I was a swimming instructor at Keewaydin, all the kids I taught could already swim. Every single one of them was a swimmer. But as they moved through the water they had different levels of efficiency. You can talk to them about breathing and their rhythm and their arms and legs."

## Structure

“Structure is not a template. It’s not a cookie cutter. It’s something that arises organically from the material once you have it.”

“With nonfiction, you’ve got your material, and what you’re trying to do is tell it as a story in a way that doesn’t violate fact, but at the same time is structured and presented in a way that makes it interesting to read.”

## Outline & Organization

“Once I’ve written the lead, I read the notes and then I read them again. I read them until they’re coming out my ears. Ideas occur, but what I’m doing, basically, is looking for logical ways in which to subdivide the material. I’m looking for things that fit together, things that relate. For each of these components, I create a code—it’s like an airport code. If a topic is upstate New York, I’ll write UNY or something in the margin. When I get done, the mass of notes has some tiny code beside each note. And I write each code on an index card.” [Evernote](#)

“It goes back to Olive McKee at Princeton High School, and the structural outline that we had to have before doing any piece of writing. It came up again when I worked at *Time*. My first cover story just floored me. It was five thousand words, and I really struggled with the mass of material. I was pretty unhappy. It was just a mess—a mess of paper, I didn’t know where anything was. So I went back to Olive McKee and the outline, sorting through this matrix of material, separating it into components and dealing with one component at a time.”

## On Quotes

“With *Coming into the Country*, there was a whole section about the upper Yukon River, and Yolanda said, That’s not of a piece with the rest of this stuff, there’s something wrong there. I was irritated because I was tired, and it was toward the end of this composition. It had taken me several years. But she was dead right. What I was doing was letting other people’s language, their quotations, do my writing for me. I was just heaving in hunks of dialogue from my notes, and it was easier to do that than write. So I went back and did the whole section over again, leaning far less on the quotes.”

## McPhee on New Journalism

“Well, something was happening in the Sunday magazine of *The New York Herald Tribune*. It’s often described as some kind of revolution, but I never really understood that. Nonfiction writing didn’t begin in 1960. Going back, there were so many nonfiction writers—what about Liebling? Walter Lord, James Agee, Alva Johnston, Joseph Mitchell—these are people who had prepared the way, and, more than that, had written many better things than these so-called New Journalists would ever do. Henry David Thoreau, for all that, was a New Journalist of his time, as were Dorothy Day, Ida Tarbell, Willa Cather between the ages of twenty and forty at *McClure’s Magazine*, John Lloyd Stephens, Richard Henry Dana Jr., and on back to Thomas Browne, Robert Burton, Francis Bacon, James Boswell, and Daniel Defoe. You get the point.”

## Optional but elucidating

[Read 11 Free Articles by Hunter S. Thompson That Span His Gonzo Journalist Career \(1965-2005\)](#)

[Johnny Depp Reads an Infamous Scene from Hunter S. Thompson's Hell's Angels](#)  
[All Things Hunter S. Thompson](#)  
[The Book \*Hell's Angels\* online](#)  
[Excerpts from Bill McKeen's Interview with Sonny Barger](#)

### **On Sheldon, Eugenics, and Somatypes**

[Creating the Master Race](#) (video)  
[Nude Photos of Coeds Arouse Protest](#) (note the defense of science here)  
[About William Sheldon](#)  
[What Manner of Morph Are You?](#) (Life Magazine, June 25, 1951)  
[Posing for Posture](#)

**Blog Essay (Print and bring to next class):** So, after reading these examples of gonzo journalism how would you define gonzo journalism? What are some elements of gonzo – and give examples to support your assertions? Also, how are these writers similar and different as purported gonzo journalists? Take a quick scan of Matt Taibbi's [The Great American Bubble Machine](#). Would you define his work as gonzo journalism? Why or why not?

**Also,** would you allow the university upon entering as a freshman to take pictures of you in the nude? Why or why not? Do you see how this is a shift in culture re the context of times and a coming to the fore of the demos?

**Also:** Identify and post below your essay as many elements of literary journalism that you can in the above works of literary journalism. See: <http://litjournalism.wordpress.com/the-elements/>

**Also:** Select a passage or more you thoroughly enjoyed, paste below your essay and explain why you like it. What is going on in the writing that you find works well?

### **Class 15 – Dec. 2**

*Truth is not only stranger than fiction, it is more interesting.* – [William Randolph Hearst](#)

**In Class:**

#### **Class Discussion**

**Read & Discuss excerpts from your stories: Bring in a copy of your story to final class along with a query letter.**

#### **Readings and Work for Class 15**

**Read:** [Voices of a Nation](http://theamericanscholar.org/voices-of-a-nation/) (<http://theamericanscholar.org/voices-of-a-nation/>)

**Read:** [Literary Journalism: Newspapers' Last, Best Hope](#)

**Read:** [Seeing by Annie Dillard](#)

**Read:** [Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek](#)

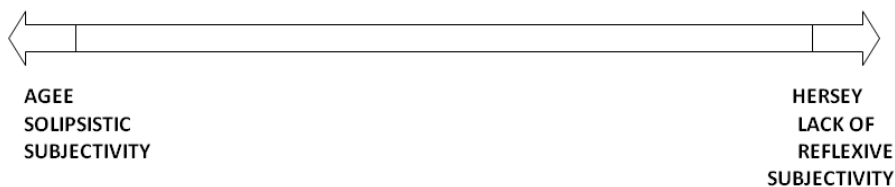
**Excerpt:**

“‘Truth,’ Crane noted, was being true to one’s own point of view. ‘I have tried to observe closely, and to set down what I have seen in the simplest and most concise way.’ Sincerity now meant devotion to craft. It also stood for integrity of vision – the ability to take what one sees and shape it into an expressive, formal whole. When [Henry James](#) advised [Edith Wharton](#) to ‘do New York,’ he was not talking about [Zolaesque](#) or photographic realism; rather he was telling her to write what she knew as boldly, as capaciously, as creatively as she could.”

**Bring Gonzo definition to class.**

**Final Blog Essay: (Print and bring to class):**

1. Analyze how a story is told in [Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek](#)
2. Discuss the [Voices of a Nation](#) & [Literary Journalism: Newspapers’ Last, Best Hope](#) essays in relation to Crane’s quote and the discussion the first day about the writer’s “shaping presence” vs. journalistic formulas, and the video of a panel of literary journalists from the first week and what they had to say about the craft.
3. In addition, include a brief discussion of the following: You have now read an excerpt from Hersey’s *Hiroshima* and an excerpt from Agee’s “Let Us Now Praise Famous Men” and many other works besides. One author on the history of literary journalism has written that these two works are examples of two end poles on a spectrum – a continuum. See [Page 14 of IAJLS Newsletter](#). What do you understand he means by this? I believe this is probably the best way of defining the fuzzy term “literary journalism.” Aside from Hersey and Agee, where would you place at least five other writers of literary journalism on this continuum? Create your own continuum and add to your blog post and bring a copy to class to share. **Note:** Boynton [talks a bit about a spectrum](#) in his book.



4. A final summing up of class in whatever form you want it to take. Be honest.