

English 157
American Literary Journalism
Winter 2016
Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30-3:20pm
Building 460, Room 301

Professor Adena Spingarn

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** Note: This course fulfills the Aesthetic and Interpretive Inquiry (AII) and Creative Expressions (CE) requirements.

Literary journalism merges the factual reporting of traditional journalism with the narrative techniques of fiction. This course will explore the development of this influential genre of writing in the United States, engaging with the form's most prominent subjects, themes, and techniques from the late 19th century (Crane, Hearn) to the New Journalism of the 1960s and 70s (Didion, Thompson, Capote) and beyond. We will investigate how journalism responded to the aesthetics of literary movements and the politics of a changing society as well as how writers navigated tensions between art and the documentary in contexts including urban life, poverty, war, crime, and social rebellion. In lieu of writing traditional literary papers, students will develop their skills as both critics and creators of literary journalism in frequent informal writing assignments and presentations throughout the quarter, culminating in an original work of literary journalism situated in the traditions explored in class.

REQUIRED TEXTS

James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (Mariner; ISBN: 978-0618127498)
Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (Vintage; ISBN: 978-0679745587)
Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, and Other Tales of New York* (Penguin; ISBN 978-0140437973)
Joan Didion, *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* (FSG; ISBN: 978-0374531386)
John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (Vintage; ISBN: 978-0679721031)
Joseph Mitchell, *Up in the Old Hotel* (Vintage; ISBN: 978-0679746317)
Hunter S. Thompson, *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga* (Ballantine; ISBN: 978-0345410085)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Monday, Jan. 4: Introduction

PART I. Early Efforts

Wednesday, Jan. 6

Stephen Crane: "On the Boardwalk" (1892), "The Men in the Storm" (1894) (handout)
"An Experiment in Misery" (1894), "An Experiment in Luxury" (1894) (in *Maggie*)
Lafcadio Hearn, "At the Gates of the Tropics" (1877) (handout)

* Weekly post 1 due Wed. Jan. 12 at 10pm – 500 words on: What is the difference between literature and journalism and why does it (or does it) matter? (Further instructions will be distributed in class.)

Monday, Jan. 11

Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893)

Wednesday, Jan. 13

Gerald Stanley Lee, “Journalism as a Basis for Literature,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (Feb. 1900)

H. W. Boynton, “The Literary Aspect of Journalism,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (June 1904)

PART II. Documentary Art

Monday, Jan. 18: NO CLASSES. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

* Begin *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

Wednesday, Jan. 20

James Agee (and Walker Evans), *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1939): ix-73, 101-49, 197-224

Monday, Jan. 25 [94 pgs]

First hour: library visit about resources for researching periodicals

Joseph Mitchell, from *Up in the Old Hotel*: “The Old House at Home” (1940), 3-22; “Professor Sea Gull” (1942), 52-70; “Old Mr. Flood” (1944), 375-389; “The Mohawks in High Steel” (1949), 267-290.

Wednesday, Jan. 27

Joseph Mitchell, from *Up in the Old Hotel*: “Joe Gould’s Secret” (1964), 623-716

* Imitations due Friday, January 29

Monday, Feb. 1

John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (1946), 1-90

Wednesday, Feb. 3

Lillian Ross, “How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?”/ Portrait of Hemingway, (*The New Yorker*, 1950) (handout)

John McPhee, “Draft No. 4,” *The New Yorker*, April 29, 2013 (handout)

PART III. The New Journalism

Monday, Feb. 8

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (1966) (first half: through p. 155)

Wednesday, Feb. 10

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood* (1966) (second half: through p. 343)

Monday, Feb. 15: NO CLASSES. President's Day.

*** Proposals for the final project due Wednesday, Feb. 17**

Wednesday, Feb. 17

Tom Wolfe, "The New Journalism" (1973) (handout)

Stephen Crane, "Opium's Varied Dreams" (1896), 853-858 (handout)

Joan Didion, from *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* (1968): "A Preface" (xiii-xvi); "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" (1966), 3-28.

Monday, Feb. 22

Hunter S. Thompson, *Hell's Angels* (first half)

Wednesday, Feb. 24

Hunter S. Thompson, *Hell's Angels* (second half)

Monday, Feb. 29

Joan Didion, from *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* (1968): "Where the Kissing Never Stops" (1966), 42-60; "Slouching Toward Bethlehem" (1967), 84-128

Selections from Tom Wolfe, "Radical Chic" & "Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers" (1970) (handout)

Wednesday, March 2

Hunter S. Thompson, "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved" (1970) (handout)

David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster" (handout)

*** Partial drafts of final assignment Sunday, March 6**

Monday, March 7

TBD

Note: The reading for the final week will be a work of contemporary literary journalism suggested and voted on by the class.

Wednesday, March 9

TBD

*** Final projects due Friday, March 18**