**Advanced Expository Writing**

# Engl 381A, Autumn Quarter 2019

Department of English, University of Washington

9:30-11:20, Tuesdays and Thursdays in MEB 237

# Prof. Michelle Liu, msmliu@uw.edu, Padelford A-420

OFFICE HOURS: Tu Th 11:40-12:20 pm in Padelford A-420; also by appointment

DESCRIPTION: Marco Polo and Mark Twain are just a couple examples of travel writers who, through their rendition of place in persuasive prose, radically altered how readers pictured the world. Through descriptions of people encountered and landscapes traversed, travel writers familiarize the unknown in order to transform places into culturally significant landmarks in the imagination of their armchair readers. As a genre, travel writing is an excellent illustration of the immediate power of prose and lends itself well to the study of the effective use of words. In this class, we will analyze some signature pieces of this genre to help develop our own prose styles.

 While this class will focus on the practice of travel writing, the formal skills needed to produce good travel writing are applicable to any kind of expository prose. By quarter’s end, you should be able to dissect a text to discern the interconnection between an author’s purpose and the intended audience. You will also be practiced in consciously choosing how you communicate to targeted groups, in ways that avoid both linguistic and cultural clichés.

This course is designed as a workshop for you to practice writing, editing, and critical reading in equal measure, as all these skills are necessary in an effective writer. Expect not only to do a lot of writing yourself, but also to give thoughtful feedback on the work of your peers. Our concerted efforts as an active and engaged group will make this quarter worth it for all.

REQUIRED TEXT: available at the University Bookstore.

* Elizabeth Gilbert (ed.) and Jason Wilson (ed.). *The Best American Travel Writing* 2013. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.

Texts available electronically on our Canvas site: Click on the “Files” tab, and then look in the “Essays” folder. ***Please bring hard copies of the essays to class for discussion*, *or make sure you can electronically reference the text during class.***

* Banerji, Chitrita. “A Shared Plate”
* Maloney, Emily. “Power Trip”
* Potts, Rolf. “Tantric Sex for Dilettantes”
* Rinella, Steven. “Gettin' Jiggy”
* Solomon, Andrew. “My Dinner in Kabul”
* Solomon, Christopher. “Let’s Ski Korea”

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 15% writing exercise 1 15% writing exercise 225% final project | 25% peer critiques & responses10% reader responses10% Your BATW |

**You as writer**: We will be doing three different writing exercises in preparation for the final project. These writing exercises will ask you to stretch your writerly comfort zone. You will not necessarily be graded on the brilliance of the writing, but on how much you push yourself. The three writing exercises will be guided; the form of the final project (minimum 8 pages) will be your choice. When you turn in your final project, you’ll also turn in a self-critique of your own writing style. What are your strengths? In what ways would you like to grow?

We will do extensive peer editing of each writing exercise. Please prepare 2 copies of your written work and turn in an electronic copy on days we have peer editing.

**You as editor**: Do you have an idea about what you like and don’t like as an editor? If you don’t, or are foggy on the concept, you will be able to articulate what your editing style and persona is by quarter’s end. You’ll get a sense of your style and persona through peer edits.

**You as reader:** For the first 8 weeks, you will write reader responses for assigned essays in *The Best Travel Writing 2013* and those found under the “files” tab in Canvas. Many of these response papers will be on guided prompts posted on Canvas. All of the responses are geared towards helping you better articulate what interests you as a reader and why. You are allowed to skip 1 response with no effect on your grade. It is not necessary to spend an extraordinary amount of time on these assignments. What is necessary is that you give a concentrated effort in answering the prompt in a thoughtful way. One or two paragraphs is fine.

 At the end of the quarter, you’ll be putting together a collection of your favorite essays from the quarter (pick from *BATW*, files on Canvas, and peer-authored essays), along with a preface similar to the one written by Elizabeth Gilbert explaining why you housed these essays together.

**Late policy**: I am fine with giving extensions for the final versions of assignments. However, late drafts, revisions and editorial critiques on a classmate’s work throw off the rhythm of the peer workshops for everybody. Lateness on these kinds of writings will therefore dock your score on that assignment unit by 5%. I accept emailed papers only for the time stamp. If you submit electronically, bring me a hard copy at the next class meeting.

SCHEDULE: Shows the essays for discussion and activities that we’ll be doing for each date. Please note: if an essay title is not preceded by “Canvas,” it means that you will find the essay in *The Best American Travel Writing (BATW)*. Also note that the schedule issubject to change according to the needs of the class.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **WEEK 1** | **in class**  | **Reading Assignments** |
| Th Sept 26 | * Introduction: Why travel writing?
* Intro of assignment 1a
 | * Canvas: Andrew Solomon, “My Dinner in Kabul”
* Elizabeth Gilbert’s intro, pp. xiii-xix
 |
| **WEEK 2** |  |  |
| T Oct 1 | * Peer review of 1a draft
* Intro of persona experimentation prompt
 | * Canvas: Steven Rinella, “Gettin' Jiggy”
* Kevin Chroust, “The Bull Passes Through
 |
| Th Oct 3 | * Peer review of persona experiment 1
 | * Daniel Tyx, “The Year I Didn’t”
* Canvas: “Let’s Ski Korea”
 |
| **WEEK 3** |  |  |
| T Oct 8 | * Peer review 1a revised
* Peer review of persona experiment 2
 | * Colleen Kinder, “Blot Out”
* Canvas: Emily Maloney, “Power Trip”
 |
| Th Oct 10 | * Intro of assignment 1b
* DUE: persona experiment reflection
* DUE: 1a final
 | * Ian Frazier, “Farewell to Yarns”
* Sarah Topol, “Tea and Kidnapping”
 |
| **WEEK 4** |  |  |
| T Oct 15 | * Peer review of 1b draft
 |  |
| Th Oct 17 | * Comparison of your 1a revised v. 1b revised
* Peer review of 1a v. 1b
 | * Bring in your 1a draft
 |
| **WEEK 5** |  |  |
| T Oct 22 | * Prompt for assignment 2 introduced
* DUE: 1a final & 1b final + writer’s memo
 | * Canvas: Chitrita Banerji, “A Shared Plate”
* Grant Stoddard, “The Paid Piper”
 |
| Th Oct 24 | * Peer review of 2 draft
* In-class: getting to know a publication’s target audience
 | * Peter Lindberg, “Summerland”
* Lynn Yaeger, “Confessions of a Packing Minimalist”
 |
| **WEEK 6** |  |  |
| T Oct 29 | * No class
 |  |
| Th Oct 31 | * Peer review of 2 revised
* Prompt for FP + pitch letter introduced
 | * Dimiter Kenarov, “Bombing Sarajevo”
 |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **WEEK 7** |  |  |
| T Nov 5 | * In-class: structuring an editing critique
* Bring 1 copy of assignment 2 for ed critique exchange
 | * Sam Anderson, “The Pippiest Place on Earth”
 |
| Th Nov 7 | * DUE: ed crit
* Peer review pitch letter draft
 |  |
| **WEEK 8** |  |  |
| T Nov 12 | * DUE: assignment 2, ed crit received, + writer response
* Peer review pitch letter revised
* Introduction of BTAW According to You assignment
 | * Judy Copeland, “The Way I’ve Come”
* Review Elizabeth Gilbert’s “introduction”
 |
| Th Nov 14 | * Peer review final project kernel
* Discussion of research in relation to audience
 | * Marie Arana, “Dreaming of El Dorado”
 |
| **WEEK 9** | *wrap up second sequence* |  |
| T Nov 19 | * Peer review, “BATW according to You” draft
* FP rough peer review
 |  |
| Th Nov 21 | * Individual conferences in lieu of class
 |  |
| **WEEK 10** | *don’t forget to give course evaluations* |  |
| T Nov 26 | * No class
 |  |
| Th Nov 28 | * **No class: T-Day Break**
 |  |
| **WEEK 11** | *don’t forget to give course evaluations* |  |
| T Dec 3 | * DUE: “The Best American Travel Writing According to You”
* Peer review FP revised
 |  |
| Th Dec 5 | * Individual conferences in lieu of class
 |  |
| **FINALS**  |  |  |
| M Dec 9 |  | Final Project + re-writes due in my office, PDL A-420 at noon |