



## LNDN CWRT 3310

### Travel Writing

CAPA London

#### Course Description

This course is designed to offer you the opportunity to study and practice the art of travel writing. There will be a variety of readings, many of them focused on London and its environs, and most, but not all, from contemporary travel writers. And there will be weekly writing assignments, some designed to send you out into the city to find a story, some designed for you to draw upon your own independent travels.

You can think of this course as providing the occasion for you to stop, think, reflect and process all that you will be learning and experiencing as a traveler during your semester abroad. At the end of the semester you will have a collection of short essays and blog posts that will have captured places and moments in time, something you can share with family and friends. If technology allows, we may construct our own travel-writers' website.

#### Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course students will:

- a) Appreciate and practice the uses of nonfiction writing as a mode of representing the experience of travel, and their encounters with diverse spaces and cultures
- b) Analyze the historical functions and meanings of "travel" across time, including its varied meanings in relation to anthropology, tourism, exile, and migration
- c) Learn how to use informal writing – including field notes and blogging – to record observations and reflections, to communicate their responses to texts, and to pose questions for discussion.
- d) Understand the value of revision and editing as means of turning informal written drafts into polished pieces of prose for broader audiences
- e) Engage productively with the ethical practices of seminar-style collective inquiry: attentive listening, clear and concise speaking, respectful debate, and collaborative research.

#### Developmental Outcomes

Students should demonstrate: responsibility & accountability, independence & interdependence, goal orientation, self-confidence, resilience, appreciation of differences.

#### Requirements

There will be weekly reading and writing assignments which must be completed on-time for you to be successful in this course. You will also give one oral presentation to introduce the class to something interesting that you have found in London.

#### Readings

Each week you will have a reading assignment (around 25-30 pages). We'll be reading a series of published articles, blog posts, essays or book chapters that tell the story of travel. Some come from travel guides or magazines; some come from memoirs; some are examples of careful reporting, like the pieces from *The New York Times* and *Vanity Fair*. We will also use selections from our only required book: *Secret London: An Unusual Guide* by Rachel Howard and Bill Nash.

All will be appropriate models for your own written work. So I'd like you to read these pieces as a writer—asking, *how might I do*

something like that? The schedule of readings will be available at the initial class meeting. Each class will include a discussion of the readings – so come prepared.

Other than *Secret London*, our readings will be selected from the following “library” of available texts:

- Anon, “Urban Explorers”
- Decca Aitkenhead, “Lovely Girls, Very Cheap”
- John Borneman, “Sri Lanka: December 28, 2004”
- Bill Bryson, from *Notes from a Small Island*
- Emma Clarke, “Voice of the London Underground”
- Charles Dickens, “Night Walks”
- Miranda France, “Bad Times in Buenos Aires”
- Stephanie Elizondo Griest, “Beijing”
- Christopher Hitchens, “Londonistan”
- Pico Iyer, “Why We Travel”
- Kathleen Jamie, “Skylines”
- Geeta Kothari, “Trust the Zebra”
- Seth Kugel, from *New York Times* travel section
- Doris Lessing, “In Defense of the Underground”
- Robert McFarlane, “Nightwalking”
- Michael Meyer, “Through the Front Gate”
- Jan Morris, “The Stage-City: London 1978”
- Kristen Naca, “In Mexico City”
- V. S. Naipaul, from *Finding the Centre*
- Albino Ocheru-Okello, “Arrival”
- Walker Percy, “The Loss of the Creature”
- Ofhan Pamuk, “Huzun” from *Istanbul*
- Octavio Paz, “Bombay” from *In Light of India*
- Anna Quindlan, from *Imagined London*
- Jonathan Raban, from *Soft City*
- John Simpson, “Tiananmen Square”
- Rick Steves, from *Travel as a Political Act*
- Paul Theroux, “The Great Railway Bazaar”
- Virginia Woolf, from *Six Scenes of London Life*

## Assessment

Assessment Task	Grade %	Learning Outcomes	Due Date
Weekly Drafts	40%		weekly
First Revision	10%		Week 5
Second Revision	10%		Week 10
Third Revision	10%		Week 13
Class participation	15%		weekly
Independent reading/bookshelf entry	10%		Throughout the term
“My Secret London” presentation	5%		Throughout the term

Students must complete all required components for each course by the established deadlines. Failure to do so will result in a reduction of the course grade and may result in a grade of F for the course in question.

## Writing

Each week you will write (or revise) a short travel piece, something appropriate (say) for a magazine or on-line blog. I expect the first drafts to be around 2 pages and the revisions to be longer (3-4 pages for a second draft). Towards the end of the semester, we will create an anthology – possibly in digital form – of your best work, representing a range of writing styles and places visited.

You should also come to class with “story ideas”—thoughts, notes, scenes, images, characters encountered, a piece of conversation—something that sticks with you and that can initiate a short essay. You’ll be drawing upon your previous week’s experience on the road or in the streets, parks, museums, cafés, tube stations, etc. You should think of your travels as field work. You should carry a small notebook or journal (electronic or paper)—a place to take notes, record details and, in the evening, a place to try out some initial sentences. (This can become a valuable tool once you are home and trying to remember names, dates, and places.)

During each class period, we’ll turn our attention to examples of your writing from the previous week. We’ll talk about these as “work in progress.” And you will have a chance to write in class – something brief and experimental. I’ll ask you to think of the classroom space as a workshop. Always, I’ll invite some students to read aloud. We’ll listen and respond. Ideally, the writing you do in class will provide the kernel for the short travel piece due the following week.

## “My Secret London” Presentations

Each week, students will give a brief presentation (5 minutes) on a hidden site or unusual event in London. This presentation should focus on something out of the way, something ferreted out by clever research or uncanny instinct, something we would have missed if left to our own devices. (Use *Secret London* as our model for these.) From these we’ll create a “tip sheet” for future London program students.

My advice is to follow some particular area of interest throughout the time you are in London, as though you were a “beat” reporter: the music scene, the art scene, sports, cinema, theater, politics, graffiti, restaurants, parks, architecture, fashion, whatever. Let this focus define your fieldwork and lead you to your subjects. (The report you prepare may certainly serve as the subject of your paper that week.) Your presentation should include a handout suitable for posting, something useful to the rest of us in the class.

I will arrange at least one park-or-museum field trip during class time, and we will have one “writing marathon” in the neighborhood around CAPA. And I will expect you to take advantage of CAPA’s excellent array of MyGlobalCity opportunities, for getting out and about. I will also be doing other self-chosen outings and inviting you along.

## Policies and Evaluation

The minimal requirements for this course are that you:

- complete the reading before class each week
- arrive at class on time to submit your papers and begin work
- complete the weekly assignments and the mid-term and final revision
- share your work and participate in class discussion
- prepare one brief class presentation during the semester
- submit one piece of writing to a final anthology.

These expectations must be met in order to pass the course. The class is conducted as a writing workshop. You have to be in class to participate. The writing assignments are weekly and sequential. You will need to inform me in advance if you cannot come to class.

A note on grading and weighting: I won’t letter-grade weekly drafts. Instead I will offer comments and suggestions, and I will certainly tell you if I find your work to be unsatisfactory. I will grade the three revisions. The elements of your performance in the course are weighted as follows: weekly drafts (40%), three revisions (30%), class participation (15%), independent reading / bookshelf entry (10%), “my secret London” presentation (5%).

- To receive an “A”: Your work will be consistently engaged, interesting and surprising. You will show progress from week to week. Your revisions will be substantial revisions, a major step forward. You will have completed all assignments on time, and your participation in discussion will help to lift and energize the class. I will want to share your writing with my friends. “Hey,” I’ll say. “You have to read this. It’s really interesting.”
- To receive a “B”: Your work will be often engaged, interesting and surprising. You will have completed all assignments on time, you will have completed all revisions, some of them will have been substantial revisions, and you will have participated regularly in

class discussion. You will show some progress, but not consistently each week.

• To receive a “C”: You will have completed all assignments and revisions; you will have participated in class discussion, but the work was routine and predictable, and the performance half-hearted. You will have shown little progress throughout the semester.

If you do not complete all assignments and attend class consistently, you will receive an F.

## Weekly Schedule

<b>Introductions</b> Key concepts: “Travel” “Writing” Neighborhood walk	<b>Meeting 1</b>
Readings on “arrival” Draft 1 due (arrival narrative)	<b>Meeting 2</b>
Readings on “city walking” Student presentations 1, 2, 3 Draft 2 due (neighborhood observations)	<b>Meeting 3</b>
Readings on “the idea of London” Student presentations 4, 5, 6 Draft 3 due (exploring the city)	<b>Meeting 4</b>
Readings on “London and the world” Student presentations 7, 8, 9 Revision of draft 1, 2, or 3	<b>Meeting 5</b>
Readings on “people and places” Student presentations 10, 11, 12 Draft 4 due (my beat)	<b>Meeting 6</b>
Readings on “elsewhere” Student presentations 10, 11, 12 Visit: Victoria and Albert Museum Draft 5 due (travel b/log)	<b>Meeting 7</b>
Reading on “witnessing” Student presentations 13, 14, 15 Draft 6 due (set piece on place)	<b>Meeting 8</b>
Readings on “language / humor” Student presentations 16, 17, 18 Revision of draft 4, 5, or 6	<b>Meeting 9</b>
Readings on “why we travel” Writing marathon Draft 7 due (travel story)	<b>Meeting 10</b>
Reading on “writing: home and away” Student presentations 19, 20, 21 Draft 8 due (reflections)	<b>Meeting 11</b>
Independent reading Student presentations 22, 23, 24 Third revision (for web-posting)	<b>Meeting 12</b>

## Attendance, Participation & Student Responsibilities

**Attendance:** CAPA has a mandatory attendance policy. Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Each unauthorized absence from class will result in a 3 percent reduction of the final grade (for example: an A- [92] will become a B+ [89]). More than two unauthorized absences is considered a pattern of repeated absences and will result in failure of the course and possible dismissal from the program.

**Missing classes for medical reasons:** Students are granted one sick day per course. If a student needs to miss additional class time for medical reasons, for a family emergency or for a religious holiday, the student must contact [LondonAdvising@capa.org](mailto:LondonAdvising@capa.org) and provide evidence of the reason for his/her absence, otherwise the student will receive a grade reduction. In case of serious illness, students should see a doctor on the day of the absence and bring back a medical statement to CAPA staff. It is the responsibility of the student to contact his/her instructor and make up any missed assignments.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. Participation is a vital part of your grade: students are expected to participate orally in seminars and in online forums and discussions in a critical and evaluative manner; to interact with the faculty and fellow students with respect and tolerance; and to actively engage in discussion. Derogatory or inflammatory comments about the cultures, perspectives or attitudes of others in the class will not be tolerated.

**Academic Integrity:** A high level of responsibility and academic honesty is expected. Because the value of an academic course depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student, it is imperative that a student demonstrates a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work and class behavior. Plagiarism, self-plagiarism and cheating can result in dismissal from the program.

Self-plagiarism, copying an assignment entirely or partially to submit to a different class in an attempt to receive credit twice for one piece of work is unacceptable and considered cheating by duplication. Students risk receiving an "O" for any assignments in which they have duplicated their own work.

All substantial writing assignments (typically anything worth 20% or more of the final course grade) will be run through the plagiarism checking software Turnitin when submitted via CANVAS. See CAPA's Academic Standards and Policies for more information and resources on plagiarism.

**Use of electronic equipment in class:** All devices such as laptops, i-pods, i-pads, netbooks, notebooks and tablets, smartphones, cell phones, etc. are **NOT** allowed unless you have express permission from the faculty or you have been instructed to do so. If you require an accommodation to use any type of electronic equipment, inform the Associate Director of Academic Affairs at the beginning of Term.

**Use of Electronic Translators:** In Language courses students are **NOT** allowed to use electronic translators for writing texts in the target language: those submitting compositions and texts of whatever kind translated in such a fashion will receive a final F grade for the course.

**Late Submission:** Late submission of papers, projects, journal entries, pieces of homework and portfolios is only permitted with prior approval. A request must be made to the relevant Faculty member no later than two days prior to the due date. Late submission without prior approval will result in a full alpha grade penalty. In either case, work cannot be submitted after feedback has been provided to the rest of the class on the relevant assessment or one week after the due date whichever comes first, after which point a grade of F will be given for the assessment.

**Behaviour during Examinations:** During examinations, you must do your own work. Unless specifically instructed by the lecturer or instructor, talking during an exam is not permitted, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any failure to abide by examination rules will result in failure of the exam, and may lead to failure of the course and disciplinary action.