Welcome! In this seminar, we will examine nonfiction narrative in its various forms: historiography, memoir, literary journalism, and documentary film, among others. In addition to close, critical discussions of these narratives, we will examine some of these techniques through a practice of analytical writing. At the end of the term, you will put together an independent research project on a topic related to nonfiction and documentary narrative that you yourself will choose, develop, investigate, and put to paper.

My individual role as your instructor is to provide guidance and, to the extent possible, expertise. But ultimately, this course will be about your ideas, your intellectual curiosity, and your responses to the readings and films we discuss.

Knowledge does not come out of a vacuum; it emerges out of a collective process of inquiry and exchange within scholarly, artistic, and political communities. Our course will reflect this process through a persistent emphasis on the exchange of ideas and the sharing of each student’s work through class presentations. Group discussion will serve as a forum where you, as students, can each learn from one another; clarify your own thoughts on the course materials; and engage in guided reflection on the aesthetic, rhetorical, and political elements of nonfiction narratives.

Ultimately, our course invites you to take the lead as you construct your own research project. This process will ideally help you to obtain some clarity about your own identity as a scholar, writer, and thinker—clarity that can inform your overall path at CAS and beyond.

THEMATIC DESCRIPTION

How do we tell the truth? We tend to take nonfiction for granted as kind of narrative that simply transmits the "facts." But what else is there to this picture? What ideas and preconceptions mediate the ways we read a work of history, or watch a documentary film?

In this course, students will examine a broad range of nonfiction and documentary genres, including but not limited to historiography, memoir, testimony, ethnography, and reportage. Major
assignments and class discussions will focus on identifying and analyzing the varying conceptions of truth and verifiability at the foundation of these different genres. Our coursework will also interrogate the ethics of narration, as well as the methods through which nonfiction writers combine the project of truth-telling with an aesthetic or poetic vision.

COURSE COMPONENTS

As you can probably glean from the above remarks, then, our collective work in this seminar will hinge upon a conscientious practice of communication with both your classmates and your instructor. What goes into a conscientious practice of communication?

Regular attendance. This class cannot be successful without your regular, physical presence. If compelling circumstances absolutely require you to miss a session, please send me an email before class and, where possible, provide documentation of your reasons for being absent (e.g. a doctor’s note, a note from your employer, etc.).

Consistent, active, and thoughtful contributions to class discussion. Our in-class group discussions will be the heart of this course. Accordingly, our course cannot be successful without your regular, thoughtful contributions; nor without your receptiveness to the ideas that your classmates and instructor bring to the table.

Remember, a central aspect of this course on nonfiction is to think about the ways in which knowledge is constructed through dialogue and exchange. When you miss class, you are missing out an exchange of ideas that will have a bearing on how you approach your own final research project.

Classroom decorum. As a matter of courtesy to the instructors and your fellow students, please arrive at class promptly, and, apart from emergencies, please remain in the classroom for the duration of the seminar. Please be sure to shut off your mobile phone at the beginning of class. Use of laptop computers is also prohibited, except for students who have been granted accommodations through the Moses Center.

Readings. Please come to each class having read all of the assigned texts and prepared to discuss that week’s readings critically (but note that sometimes, in lieu of reading, you may be expected to watch a film). Before class, identify key themes and ideas from the texts that you would like to bring up in discussion. It may help to jot down the page numbers of specific passages that you would like to talk about.

Dropping by during Office Hours. You can stop into office hours for a number of things: to go over the readings or any ideas discussed in class; to talk about your progress on an assignment; to clarify ideas that you have been struggling with; or just to chat. Time and location for my weekly office hours are listed on the first page of this syllabus.

Email. My email is juan.carlos@nyu.edu. Feel free to reach out with questions and ideas. More importantly, my primary means of sharing course-related information with you will be via email. I’ll be announcing any last-minute changes to the readings, assignments, and deadlines listed in this syllabus via email. It will be completely up to you to check your NYU email account regularly and keep up with any course-related communications.
Collegiality and mutual support. Some of the assignments in this course will require you to collaborate with your classmates. In the spirit of collaboration, I urge you to be open to establishing working, collegial relationships with your peers in the class. Some ways to do this include:

- Sharing sources, databases, and other research leads.
- Sharing materials, via the course website, that may be of interest to the group.
- Exchanging writing strategies and approaches to our course materials.
- Reaching out to fellow students for updates when you have missed a class session.
- Making room during class discussion for everyone to have a chance to speak.
- Making a genuine effort to listen and respond to your classmates’ contributions to discussion.

Course website. I will regularly upload content to our course website, including readings, assignment prompts, and writing resources. I will email you whenever there are any new updates to the course website. You are responsible for keeping up with these updates. Our course site can be found at https://wp.nyu.edu/truestory2018. Keep it in your bookmarks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note Regarding the NYUClasses Online Platform</th>
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<tr>
<td>Many of your courses at NYU will use the NYUClasses (Sakai) platform to share course content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our course will generally not be making use of NYUClasses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevertheless, there are a few written assignments that you will be required to submit via NYUClasses. I will provide detailed instructions on this when the time comes. You can access all your NYUClasses pages by logging into home.nyu.edu and clicking on the ‘Academics’ tab.</td>
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Proactively seeking writing assistance. Because our coursework is focused on readings and research, we will not be covering the nuts and bolts of academic writing with the same amount of detail. If you find yourself challenged and/or stumped by the requirements of academic writing, it will be up to you to seek out additional guidance in this regard. There are three options for seeking out individual writing help:

1) In preparation for your papers, I’m available to discuss ideas or drafts with you by appointment. Just email me or ask me after class. Or, you can drop in during office hours.
2) Make an appointment with the NYU Writing Center to help you improve a working draft. Be sure to do this as far in advance as possible (at least 10 days): https://nyu.mywconline.com/

Recording & transcription. While you are encouraged to take notes in class, you may not make audio or video recordings. Neither may you take or exchange class notes in return for remuneration. Exceptions may be granted only for students granted accommodations through the Moses Center.
GRADED COURSE COMPONENTS

You are expected to **read** all of the assigned readings; to **attend** all class meetings; and to **participate** actively in class discussion.

Once in the semester, you’ll be asked to give a ten-minute **seminar presentation** on a reading of your choice, or on your research project.

I will periodically assign short **reading responses** and research exercises (< 500 words).

Finally, you will produce **three papers** this semester. The first two will be short (600-900 words, and 1200-1500 words, respectively) analytical papers. The **final paper** will be a substantial work of independent research. An **annotated bibliography** and a 500-600 word **proposal** will help to prepare you for this task as we approach the end of the term.

To determine your final grade for the course, I will weigh each course component approximately as follows. Note that you’ll need to complete every assignment in order to receive a passing grade for the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading responses &amp; other writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers (10%, 15%)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final research paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final course grades.** Your final grade will be calculated thus:

- **A** = 94-100
- **A-** = 90-93
- **B+** = 87-89
- **B** = 84-86
- **B-** = 80-83
- **C+** = 77-79
- **C** = 74-76
- **C-** = 70-73
- **D+** = 67-69
- **D** = 65-66
- **F** = < 65

**Absence from class.** If you plan to miss any classes for religious observance this semester, please let me know their dates by the end of the first week of the term. You will not in any way be penalized for such absences, but I may require you to submit any work due for these classes in advance. If you need to miss class for any other reason, please email me ahead of time, where possible.
Absences, continued. Keep in mind that this is a weekly seminar and that your physical presence and participation in seminar is an essential component of the course as a whole. Excepting religious observance or serious illness, **missing more than one class** will negatively impact your grade.

**Late arrivals.** Students arriving more than 10 minutes late to a class will be marked for lateness. Frequent lateness will negatively impact your class participation grade.

**Late Assignments.** Written assignments submitted past the deadline will be penalized with a grade deduction of 2 percentage points. Essays submitted more than 24 hours past the deadline will be penalized with a further deduction of 2 percentage points, and an additional three percentage points will be deducted for each additional 24 hours that the assignment is late.

**Extensions on deadlines.** Short extensions on deadlines may be granted on a case-by-case basis at the instructor’s discretion. Requests for extensions must be made via email at least 48 hours before the deadline.

**Academic honesty.** Plagiarism in any course is not acceptable. A form of cheating and a kind of misconduct that has serious consequences, plagiarism can take several forms. It can be as simple as copying someone else’s work, using information or quotations without proper documentation, or submitting someone else’s work as your own. Not all plagiarism cases result from intentional dishonesty. Often you may mistakenly believe that you are doing “research” when you inappropriately use passages from a source. Because proper documentation of secondary sources is a common feature of academic work, make sure that you know what plagiarism is and that you take the proper steps to avoid it. See me if you have any questions about how to appropriately document a source or if you are unsure about what constitutes fair usage of someone else’s ideas. If you turn in plagiarized text, you may fail the plagiarized assignment and the course as a whole, and you may be expelled from New York University. Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the Core Curriculum’s Statement on Academic Integrity:

http://cas.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu-as/casCore/documents/AcademicIntegrity.pdf

Feel free to come see me if you are having trouble generating ideas for a paper or if a deadline will become a problem for you. Do not resort to plagiarizing in order to complete an assignment on time.
Many of our readings will be short stories, essays, and chronicles. These shorter readings will be made available as PDF files via NYUClasses. To the extent possible, I will provide print copies of these readings ahead of time.

I will also be placing copies of many of the class texts into the Course Reserves in Bobst Library, where you will be able to borrow them for 2-hour periods.

You should anticipate procuring a copy of the following texts. I strongly recommend that you use the print version of these texts (as opposed to the e-book). Print editions allow you to annotate the margins in a much more detailed manner.

♦


  
  ○ An earlier version of this book is available for free access, across several issues, in the digital archives of the *New Yorker* (access via NYU Libraries)
    
    - "Part I: The Last to See them Alive" (The New Yorker, Sep 25 1965);
    - "Part II: Persons Unknown" (The New Yorker, Oct 2, 1965);
    - "Part III: Answers” (The New Yorker, Oct 9 1965);


Some University-wide Resources to Keep in Mind

**Accommodations.** Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, and/or learning disability, or is deaf or hard of hearing should register with The Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities by calling (212)998-4980; by emailing mosescsd@nyu.edu; or by visiting the Center at 726 Broadway, on the third floor. See [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd) for more information.

**Bias Response Line.** The Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community may share experiences and concerns regarding instances of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that occur within our community. The BRL is located in the Office of Equal Opportunity and will be monitored by experienced administrators. NYU students, faculty, administrators, and staff may report incidents to the BRL by calling 212-998-2277 or emailing: bias.response@nyu.edu.

**Seeking help at the NYU Wellness Exchange.** Sometimes, academic work can overwhelm us physically, mentally, and/or emotionally. The Wellness Exchange refers to the University's extensive set of resources for addressing the student body's health- and mental health-related needs. You can reach the Wellness hotline at (212) 443-9999 (available 24 hours a day, seven days a week); their operators will put you in touch with a professional who can help to address day-to-day emotional challenges as well as other health-related concerns. These might include: medical issues, academic stress, depression, sexual assault, anxiety, alcohol and drug dependency, interpersonal relationship problems, sexually transmitted infections, eating disorders, etc.

You can also seek in-person counseling and guidance on the Washington Square campus during drop-in hours at the NYU Student Health Center, located on the fourth floor of 726 Broadway (between 8th St. and Waverly Place).
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Subject to Change. Advance notice will be given.

Please complete the readings listed here prior to the class session at which they are first discussed. For films, be sure the view the work in its entirety before that class. Be sure to bring the appropriate texts to class in print format.


M 2/5: CLR James, Chapters 6-10. Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.”


➢ Paper 1 due Friday, Feb. 16 by 5 p.m. via NYUClasses

Presidents’ Day. No class on Monday, Feb. 19


M 3/5: Annie Ernaux. A Man’s Place.

Spring Break. No class on Monday, March 12


M 3/26: Svetlana Alexievich, Voices from Chernobyl, selections.

➢ Paper 2 due Friday, March 30 by 5 p.m. via NYUClasses

M 4/2: Werner Herzog, Grizzly Man

M 4/9: Research proposal due in class. Ryszard Kapuściński, Shab of Shabs.


M 4/23: Joe Sacco. Excerpts from Journalism; and from Palestine. Robert Fisk, excerpts from Pity the Nation.

M 4/30: James Agee. Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, excerpts.


➢ FINAL PAPERS DUE on FRIDAY, MAY 18 by 6 P.M., via NYUClasses.

This document was last updated on November 7, 2017