### Class code
Veronika Bednářová

### Instructor Details
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Richtrův dům, Malé náměstí 11

### Class Details
**The Beat: Travel Writing**

Mondays and Wednesdays 9:00-10:20 am

Location to be confirmed.

### Prerequisites
None

“I was trying to write... and I found the greatest difficulty was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced...the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion and which would be as valid in a year or ten years or, with luck and if you stated it purely enough, always.”

**Ernest Hemingway**

The course focuses on combining the creative techniques of fiction with the rigor of journalistic travel writing to produce stories that move beyond the constraints of the news and feature story: stories that engage, resonate with readers, provide insight – stories which “produce the emotion”.

The course proceeds by the reading and analysis of important contemporary journalism and classic travel pieces: examination of the narrative; fictional and literary devices used in travel writing; examination of and practice with various information gathering strategies; humor; point of view; unique voice.

It focuses on the creative process from the first idea to the identification of sources, choice of appropriate style and form, revisions, editing and the presentation of short works. You will be encouraged to attempt a variety of forms to examine your own writing processes, to try methods used by professional writers (such as journal writing). You will also continually develop stories from your own travel experiences. The regular assignments will prepare you for the final project: a substantial travel narrative of your own.

At specific times during the semester, we will use the workshop process and class discussion to help you develop your pieces. Please note: you are expected to read and evaluate each others’ papers as part of this process.

### Lectures, workshops
- Making the world a better place – thanks to your writing.
- Presenting an accurate and compelling evocation and assessment of a place.
- Bringing that place at the writer’s experience to life so vividly that the reader is transported there.

### Desired Outcomes

- Making the world a better place – thanks to your writing.
- Presenting an accurate and compelling evocation and assessment of a place.
- Bringing that place at the writer’s experience to life so vividly that the reader is transported there.
- Understanding that it is the people we meet along the way that make for unique stories.

- Finding your own voice; using humor, dialog and other creative devices in nonfiction writing.

**Assessment Components**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation &amp; readings</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel journal and other special assignments</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short article I, food feature</td>
<td>10% (due February 19, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term article, travel feature</td>
<td>20% (due March 12, 2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short article II, profile of a person</td>
<td>10% (due April 17, 2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final travel reportage</td>
<td>25% (due May 19, 2014)</td>
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All written assignments will be (in great details) specified in class:

**Short article I** A 500-word food feature.

**Mid-term article** A 1000-word travel feature plus pictures on a given theme.

**Short article II** A 700-word profile of a Czech person.

**Final**: A 1500-word in-depth piece of travel magazine reportage.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

**Assessment Expectations**

**Grade A**: Exceptional level of creative and structured journalism writing, publishable (or published during the semester).

**Grade B**: Very good level or creative and structured written work, with some editing needed.

**Grade C**: Satisfactory and sufficiently clear and structured written work.

**Grade D**: Adequate level of written work but weakly creative, vague, unstructured.

**Grade F**: Unfinished, poorly structured, vague, unclear written work.

**Grade conversion**

- 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=below 65

**Attendance Policy**

Each unexcused absence will result in your final grade being reduced by 3%. Absences only for medical reasons will be excused. To obtain an excused absence, you are obliged to supply either a doctor’s note or corroboration of your illness by a member of the housing staff (either an RA or a Building Manager). Absences due to travel will not be excused.
Late Submission of Work

If late, without a valid reason, your grade will be lowered by 5% per day. Keeping to a deadline is absolutely crucial in the profession.

According to the Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook, plagiarism is defined as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work as though it were one’s own. More specifically plagiarism is to present as one’s own a sequence of words quoted without quotation marks from another writer, a paraphrased passage from another writer’s work; facts or ideas gathered, organized and reported by someone else, orally and/or in writing. Since plagiarism is a matter of fact, not of the student’s intention, it is crucial that acknowledgment of the sources be accurate and complete. Even where there is no conscious intention to deceive, the failure to make appropriate acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism.

The College of Arts and Science’s Academic Handbook defines plagiarism similarly and also specifies the following:

“presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written), writing a paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea without a reference to the source of the idea, or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both teachers have given their permission in advance).

Receiving help on a take-home examination or quiz is also cheating – and so is giving that help – unless expressly permitted by the teacher (as in collaborative projects). While all this looks like a lot to remember, all you need to do is give credit where it is due, take credit only for original ideas, and ask your teacher or advisor when in doubt.”

“Penalties for plagiarism range from failure for a paper, failure for the course or dismissal from the university.” (Liberal Studies Program Student Handbook)

Required Text(s)

Additional handouts will be given in class.

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-P Library)

N/A

Internet Research Guidelines

Pen and paper (Travel Writing Journal)

Additional Required Equipment

Introduction, Course Outline

“We travel, initially, to lose ourselves; and we travel, next, to find ourselves. We travel to open our hearts and eyes and learn more about the world than our newspapers will accommodate.”


Special assignment for the whole course: Start an “old-fashioned” travel journal (in can be a blog) and write at least one paragraph in it every day. Occasional class readings from your journal will be expected.

**Prague: This Is My City**
The NYU bubble, the language barrier, the beauty of our comfort zones. How to fight it. Explore, test, and be disappointed. Talk to the people. Basic skills needed for the course.

Required readings:


**Special Assignment 1**

Bring your travel journal with you. Write one short paragraph about a surprising phenomenon you observed since arriving in Prague. Is there a seed for a travel story? Class discussion.

**Session 3**

**Monday, Feb 10**

**The Art of Christopher Columbus: Discovering Place in the 21st century**

Differences between holiday traveling and traveling for work. What makes TW distinctive from other genres of journalism? Does travel have news? Basic travel genres. Skills needed: reporting, investigative journalism, and interviewing. Why destination is not yet a story.

● *Recommended Readings:*


**Special Assignment 2**

What is the Czech Republic hot news right now? Write three topics, which would be worth covering this week (think of travel writing flavor). Class discussion.

**Writing About Place:** Captivating Theme, Dramatic Scenes. Developing a Clear Narrative, Concrete Details. Travelogue. The angle. The hook.

The secrets of a good lead. The hardest part: what to leave out. Show instead of tell. Ways to put literary devices into practice: overly descriptive/minimally descriptive, every word matters, capturing the moment in space and time, discovering insight/judging, mobilizing the imagination (you have been there, the reader may not have been).

● *Recommended Readings:*
Session 5  
Monday, Feb 17  

Special Assignment 3: Write a short dramatic scene from the streets, stores or pubs of Prague.  
Point of View  

Pros and Cons of Narrating in First Person. Important task: try to define your unique point of view. Why is it crucial? How do you avoid making observations that have already been made? Cultural identity/stereotyping. Introducing Slavenka Drakulic, a noted Croatian writer and journalist.  

● Recommended Readings:  

Pizza in Warsaw, Torte in Prague, p. 11-20 (10 pages).  
Make-up and Other Crucial Questions, p. 21-32 (12 pages).  
A Communist Eye, or What Did I See in New York?, p. 113-122 (10 pages).  

Session 6  
Wednesday, Feb 19  

Watching REPORTER (2009). It is a feature documentary about Nicholas Kristof, the two-time Pulitzer Prize winning columnist for the New York Times, who almost single-handedly put the crisis in Darfur on the world map. See http://www.reporterfilm.com/synopsis.html  

SHORT ARTICLE 1 (FOOD FEATURES) DUE  

Session 7  
Friday, Feb 21, make up for Monday  

IMPORTANT GUEST LECTURE – MAKE UP CLASS  
STORIES by Jan Sibik, a World Press Photo Award winning photographer and reporter.  
See the books The Devil Within Us, My American Beauty (reserved in the library) and www.sibik.cz; prepare 2 questions for the guest speaker.  

INTRODUCTION TO HIS IPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP – TBA  

Session 8  
Monday, Feb 24  

On the Road I: Research Before You Go  

● Recommended Reading:  


Special Assignment 4  

Bring your travel journal with you. What do you know about “us” (the Czech people) so far? Class discussion and readings.
Session 9
Wednesday, Feb 26
Workshop of Short Articles I & Discussion of Midterm Topics / Group I
(reading of Short Articles required – approx. 30 pages)

Session 10
Monday, March 3
Workshop of Short Articles I & Discussion of Midterm Topics / Group II
(reading of Short Articles required – approx. 30 pages)

Session 11
Wednesday, March 5
On the Road II: Information Gathering Strategies
Research and reporting techniques. Books-Guidebooks-Personal contacts. Why “Around the world in 80 clicks” does not necessarily help in being a travel writer with a unique voice.
Further exploration of techniques of nonfiction: sense of mood, atmosphere, place, use of short sentences, direct speech, indirect speech, rhythm, story, sense of conflict or tension and release of tension in writing, moving between past and present tense.

● Recommended Readings:

Session 12
Monday, March 10
On the Road III – Interviewing
Who do we choose to talk to and why? How to ask. What questions to ask. How to suppress your bias. Translator?

● Recommended Readings:

Session 13
Wednesday, March 12
DVD: Michael Pallin Collection – Hemingway Adventures
Articles to help inspire your final travel reportage will be given out in class.

Session 14
Monday
People and Their Voices – Dialogue
Exploring an important creative fiction device. Describing people and places with dialogue. How do
you get good dialogue? How to let the situation play out

**Recommended Readings:**


**Special Assignment 5**

Write a dialog and let us to guess who talks to whom, why, what is the situation the (2) people are in. Where is the dramatic tension? How do we use it in journalism writing?

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**Session 15**

**Wednesday, March 19**

**Humor**

What is humor, irony, wit?

Exploring different types of humor: irony, the joke, the story, dialogue. Culture and humour. How to create an engaging tone. Balance between entertaining and informative writing.

**Recommended Readings:**


II. Bill Bryson: *Notes from a Small Island*, p. 142-151 (10 pages).


**Special Assignment 6**

Bring your travel journal with you. Choose a paragraph you find humorous. Where is the humor? Class discussion and readings.

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**Session 16**

**Monday, March 24**

Workshop of Midterm Articles GROUP I & Discussion of Final Topics

(reading of Midterms required – approx. 40 pages)

**Session 17**

**Wednesday, March 26**

Workshop of Midterm Articles GROUP II & Discussion of Final Topics

(reading of Midterms required – approx. 40 pages)

**A Cook’s Tour**

Experiencing cultural difference/similarities/humor/personal experience through food.

**Recommended Readings:**


Special Assignment 7

Write a short paragraph about your favorite Czech meal. It must - somehow creatively - include the recipe.

Deconstructing the Adventure Story. Travel Essay. Travelogue as a personal genre.

DVD Mark Cousins: "What Is This Film Called Love?"

“What is This Film Called Love” is a passionate, 77 minute poetic documentary about the nature of happiness. Filmed in Mexico over three days, for just £10, it begins as a film about the soviet director Sergei Eisenstein, and then, using his ideas, opens up to look at memory, landscape and the pleasures of walking. It is a personal film and aims to be very cinematic, using three visual dream sequences, and the music of PJ Harvey, Simon Fisher Turner, Johnny Cash and Bernard Hermann. The film draws from a range of filmmakers and writers – principally Chris Marker, but also Virginia Woolf, Frank O’Hara and others – but aims to touch on themes that are relevant to a wide range of people – where joy comes from, the emotions involved with travel and homecoming, and the nature of solitude.”

(http://whatisthisfilmcalledlove.co.uk/)

SPRING BREAK APRIL 7-11

OUTLINE FOR THE FINAL TRAVEL REPORTAGE DUE

A) What Makes Good Writing

Word usage and misusage, show instead of tell, credibility. Work routine.

● Recommended Readings:

I. Hunter Thompson: The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Deprived, p. 195-211 (17 pages).


B) Travel Writing Ethics and Standards

● Recommended Readings:


SHORT ARTICLES 2 (PROFILE) DUE

NO CLASS

Workshop of Short Articles II / GROUP I & Discussion of Final Reportages

(reading of Short Articles II required – approx. 30 pages)

Workshop of Short Articles II / GROUP II & Discussion of Final Reportages

(reading of Short Articles II required – approx. 30 pages)
### Session 25
**Wednesday, April 30**

The Future of Travel Writing

Updated handouts to be given in class

**Special Assignment 8 (to be written during the class)**

Based on your reading, write your take on the future of travel writing.

### Session 26
**Monday, May 5**

Writing Which Matters

Cultural identity. Social responsibility. World since 911. How is the crisis changing us? How to get “inside” the media world – is it an ivory tower? Concluding discussion of course.

- **Recommended Readings:**

- **Visit to a bohemian coffee shop near NYU.**

### Session 27
**Wednesday, May 7**

NO CLASS. Students to work on papers. 10-15-minute individual consultations (previously scheduled) are compulsory.

### Session 28
**Monday, May 12**

NO CLASS. Students to work on papers. 10-15-minute individual consultations (previously scheduled) are compulsory.

### Session 29
**Wednesday, May 14**

Editing of your final articles – last workshop of the course.

### Session 30
**Wednesday, May 21,**

**FINAL REPORTAGE DUE** (hard copy in Veronika Bednarova’s mailbox).

Deadline 11:00 am.

### Classroom Etiquette

Cell phones and laptops should not be used in class except for emergencies.

N/A

### Required Co-curricular Activities

NYU field trips will help you to find topics for your travel writing articles.