

# NYU Madrid

## LITCW-UH 1503

### Letters From Afar: Travel Writing Abroad

#### Instructor Information

- Name: Dr. Soledad Gálvez
- Office hours: W 11:00am – 12:00pm and by appointment
- Email address: sg135@nyu.edu

#### Course Description

Travel is a form of knowledge. "The traveler," wrote the British travel writer Robert Byron, "can know the world, in fact, only when he sees, hears, and smells it." This course offers students a unique opportunity to further expand and deepen the knowledge they will gain from their semester in Madrid, by making them venture beyond the campus and engage with the everyday people and proceedings of the city. From their observations, reporting, interviews and research about what they have encountered, students will compose a feature-length narrative in the form of a classic "Letter From...." piece in *The New Yorker* magazine.

Taught in English. Writing assignments can be completed in English or in Spanish.

- 2 credits
- Co-requisite or prerequisite: *N/A*
- Class meeting days and times: W 9:30-10:50am

#### Desired Outcomes

##### Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- In this course, students will be learning how to both see and listen. You may go into a given situation armed with an expectation or a preconception, and then be totally disarmed by what you see and hear. That experience is what you give back to readers in the form of story. Narrative. This course will help students hone the art of composing the narratives of which great travel writing, indeed, all great writing, is comprised.
- Read and analyze the "Letter From ..." format with an eye towards form, structure, point of view, and voice;

- Acquire and develop the basic skill of on-the-ground reporting, interviewing, note-taking, and research, all the elements required for the writing of a feature-length travel story;
- Engage with local communities as part of your research process;
- Learn how to critique, and receive feedback, constructively.

## **Methodologies**

As we will see and be discussing in our selected readings over the course of the semester, the travel stories you will be writing are not general, impressionistic overviews. Not collections of random observations. You will certainly be encouraged to compile as many of those as you can over the course of your stay abroad for possible use in the pieces you do write. But the key to such pieces—those, for example, of Elif Batuman, Jane Kramer, Katherine Boo, Ian Frazier, Jon Lee Anderson, and many more—is that they focus on one particular storyline stemming from the place you are in: a story about an immigrant business owner in Cuatro Caminos, the profile of a Madrileña housing activist fighting home evictions in Lavapiés, a story about skate in Madrid, the challenges of an emerging artisan bakery in Malasaña. Specific stories that in all their particulars reveal to us the larger realities of Madrid, the place you have travelled to. You will find your subject hopefully within the first four to five weeks of the semester and then commence reporting and researching and writing over the rest of the semester.

## **Assessment Components**

### **Class Participation**

Active participation in every session: class discussions and peer reviews.

### **Presentation: Critique of One Assigned Reading**

An analysis of the composition of one assigned reading (“Letter from...”). Guidelines will be discussed and handed out on the first day of classes.

### **Writing Assignments**

Three short writing assignments designed to allow you to build up your “Letter from Madrid.”

Please submit all assignments in double space using Times New Roman 12 font, and clearly identifiable title pages with your name, class name and number, and the title of the piece. Also, please number your pages. All written assignments must be submitted via email as attachments in .doc/.docx format (no .pdf).

### **Completed “Letter from Madrid”**

Length: approximately 4000 words, using Times New Roman 12 font.

## Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

<b>Assignments/Activities</b>	<b>% of Final Grade</b>
Class participation	10%
Three writing assignments	45%
Presentation: Critique of assigned reading	10%
Completed "Letter From Madrid"	35%

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component will result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

## Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>A</b>	4.0	100 – 93
<b>A-</b>	3.7	92 – 90
<b>B+</b>	3.3	89 – 87
<b>B</b>	3.0	86 – 83
<b>B-</b>	2.7	82 – 80
<b>C+</b>	2.3	79 – 77
<b>C</b>	2.0	76 – 73
<b>C-</b>	1.7	72 – 70
<b>D+</b>	1.3	69 – 67
<b>D</b>	1.0	66 – 60
<b>F</b>	0.0	59 – 0

# Course Schedule

## Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading
Session 1, August 28th	<p>Introduction to the course.</p> <p>Discussion of essential aspects of travel writing and possible ways of seizing upon the subject you will be writing about.</p> <p>Discussion of early ideas for stories.</p>	Selection from "Letter From..." in <i>The New Yorker</i>
Session 2, September 4th	Discussion of assigned reading and of individual progress in respective story hunts.	Selections from "Letter From..." in <i>The New Yorker</i>
Session 3, September 11th	Discussion of readings and of story hunt progress and problems.	Selections from "Letter From..." in <i>The New Yorker</i>
Session 4, September 18th	Discussion of readings and of nailing down your choice of subject.	Selections from "Letter From..." in <i>The New Yorker</i>
Session 5, September 25th	Discussion of reading and finalizing your choice of subject and of early progress and problems with story reporting and research.	Selections from "Letter From..." in <i>The New Yorker</i>
Session 6, October 2nd	Discussion of readings and the terrors of beginnings and how to overcome them.	Selections from "Letter From..." in <i>The New Yorker</i>
Session 7, October 9th	Discussion of readings and of early story development. The terrors of beginnings and how to overcome them.	Selections from "Letter From..." in <i>The New Yorker</i>
Session 8, October 16th	Discussion of readings. <b>Early draft of your story openings due.</b>	

Week/Date	Topic	Reading
		Selections from “Letter From...” in <i>The New Yorker</i>
Session 9, October 23rd	Discussion of readings and of student story openings and the mapping of a piece’s general narrative arc.	Selections from “Letter From...” in <i>The New Yorker</i>
<b>October 30th</b>	<b>Fall Break Begins: No Class</b>	
Session 10, November 6th	Discussion of readings and workshop of first drafts.	Selections from “Letter From...” in <i>The New Yorker</i>
Session 11, November 13th	Discussion of readings and continued workshop and revision of story drafts. <b>(Revisions due next class)</b>	Revisions
Session 12, November 20th	Discussion and workshop of story revisions.	Revisions
Session 13, November 27th	Discussion and workshop of story revisions.	Revisions
Session 14, December 4 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Finished drafts due</b>	

## Required Co-curricular Activities

TBA

## Course Materials

### Required Materials in NYU Classes

Selections from “Letter From...” in *The New Yorker*

### Resources

- Access your course materials: [NYU Classes](https://nyu.edu/its/classes) (nyu.edu/its/classes)

- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](http://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing:** [NYU Writing Center](http://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** [IT Help Desk](http://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

## Course Policies

### Attendance Policy

Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in harsher penalties including failure.

Unexcused absences affect students' grades: In classes meeting once a week, a 2% deduction from the student's final course grade occurs on the occasion of each unexcused absence.

Absences are excused only for illness, religious observance, and emergencies.

**Illness:** For a single absence, students may be required to provide a doctor's note, at the discretion of the Assistant Directors of Academics. In the case of two consecutive absences, students must provide a doctor's note. Exams, quizzes, and presentations will not be made up without a doctor's note.

**Religious Observance:** Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their instructor and the Academic Office in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose. If exams, quizzes, and presentations are scheduled on a holiday a student will observe, the Assistant Directors, in coordination with the instructor, will reschedule them.

**Please note: if you are unable to attend class, you are required to email your professors directly and notify them.**

### Late Submission of Work

Students are required to have readings and/or written assignments ready for the class when they are due.

## Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

*At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community.*

**Plagiarism:** *presenting others' work without adequate acknowledgement of its source, as though it were one's own. Plagiarism is a form of fraud. We all stand on the shoulders of others, and we must give credit to the creators of the works that we incorporate into products that we call our own. Some examples of plagiarism:*

- *a sequence of words incorporated without quotation marks*
- *an unacknowledged passage paraphrased from another's work*
- *the use of ideas, sound recordings, computer data or images created by others as though it were one's own*
- *submitting evaluations of group members' work for an assigned group project which misrepresent the work that was performed by another group member*
- *altering or forging academic documents, including but not limited to admissions materials, academic records, grade reports, add/drop forms, course registration forms, etc.*
- *using language translation software.*

*For further information, students are encouraged to check [NYU Policies and Guidelines on Academic Integrity](https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html) (about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html)*

## Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. For more information, see [Study Away and Disability](https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-with-disabilities/study-away.html) (nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-with-disabilities/study-away.html)