

TRAVEL WRITING IN AUSTRALIA PROGRAM 2016

Program Coordinator Dr. Sharon Clarke

JO528: Travel Writing: Journalism and Creative Non-Fiction Principal Lecturer: Professor Sue Williams

Consultation: Generally prior to, during or following classes email:
mail@suewilliams.com.au

Course Contact 40 hours

Plus required 8 day on the road research trip: □ “Small coastal town Australia”.

This will be a “writing and research” guided excursion to south coast NSW considering the small coastal town as destination and the geography, history, culture and people of such places. Students will be required to keep journals and collect information from interviews, publications, and their own experience in order to write travel articles and pieces, as well as writing a short blog every two days. Some inclusions on the tour: a visit to animal and wildlife sanctuary of Montague Island; the world-heritage breeding program of Mogo Zoo; and an exploration of the town of Eden - born out of whaling and now surviving through logging - never far from controversy. Guest Lecturers will be included for this course.

COURSE SYNOPSIS

This course is designed to introduce students to “small town coastal Australia” through the first hand experience of an on-the-road research excursion, both preceded and followed by weeks in the classroom, studying examples of the genre and producing written work based on the research trip. There will be a focus on journalistic writing beginning with pitching articles and stories to local, national and overseas newspapers and magazines. Early classes will also deal with writing journals as a research base. Where possible, relevant guest speakers will be invited to address

the class. On return from the long road trip, each student will deliver a presentation drawn from their research which will focus on one area or aspect of a small town they have visited.

Throughout the course, there will be an emphasis on producing written work centered on a sense of place and/or the journey either in the form of articles, extracts for a travel book or memoir, or other forms of factual accounts such as blogging.

There may be publication opportunities for student work considered of the highest merit. All assignments are drawn from research collected on the excursion.

FORMAT

For this course, formal lectures, group workshops and seminar presentations have been organised. Attendance at all sessions is compulsory. In workshops and in presentations, students will be encouraged to share their own “in progress” work and contribute to the “in progress” work of others. There will be a strong emphasis on developing an engaging and informative writing style which can adapt to the shifting requirements of different text-types and different readers within the genre of travel writing. All students will be expected to contribute to all workshop and seminar discussions both on-the-road and within the classroom. Therefore they will need to prepare for each session as directed. Each student will also be expected to undertake a seminar presentation which will be approximately 15 minutes in duration. This presentation should take the form of a prepared informed address chosen from the list marked "Presentation Topics". (Unless otherwise dictated by class numbers, there will be only one student presentation per topic.) The presentation will take the form of two verbal pitches based on written pitches which then can be revised according to feedback prior to submission. Each pitch should be based on the student's own research of a particular place, or theme built around places, from the road trip. Following the presentation, it is

expected that the presenter will generate some class discussion of the ideas which s/he has put forward. It is important that the verbal pitch is not simply read from the written form.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will need to meet the following requirements for the completion of this course. Failure to meet any of these requirements, therefore, will be viewed as a failure to meet the requirements specified for the completion of this course.

Attendance

Attendance at all workshop sessions on field trip, scheduled classes, guest lectures and seminar sessions is mandatory. Unexplained absence, or absence for an unsatisfactory reason, will be viewed as a failure to meet the requirements specified for the completion of this course. □

Participation in Classes □

That students participate in class, workshops and seminars is significant to the calculation of their grade in this element of the assessment outlined for this course. The degree to which they do so *proficiently* will determine the value of their score, just as in the other elements of course work evaluation. □

Written Assignments □

All written work must be submitted punctually, with formal cover sheet, through the office and on dates specified. Failure to submit written work will be viewed as a failure to meet the requirements specified for the completion of this course. The Program coordinator is required to adhere to Program policy that no written work will be accepted later than the specified time for submission, in fairness to those students whose work is submitted punctually. □

Plagiarism □

All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty against students on a Boston University program for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be "...expulsion from the program or the University or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean". □

Reading List

A reading list will be provided on the ground after arrival. Some readings to be included:

A Sunburnt Country -pub. in Australia as *DownUnder-* (Doubleday, 2000.) □ *Getting There: journeys of an accidental traveller* (New Holland Press, Sydney, 2001)

Welcome to the Outback (Melbourne: Penguin 2012) *Women of the Outback* (Melbourne: Penguin 2008) *And then the Darkness* (Sydney: ABC Books 2008) *Outback Heroines* (Melbourne: Penguin 2013)

The Girl Who Climbed Everest (forthcoming, Penguin) *The Writing Book – a workbook for fiction writers* *Travel Writing* □ *On Writing* (Hodder and Stoughton: London) 2000

Holy Cow (Broadway Books, a division of Random House)
Strange Country (Pan Macmillan, 2008)

ASSESSMENT

To complete the 'Assessment' component of the requirements for this course, it is necessary to perform the following tasks:

1) Workshop Sessions (5%) Classroom

Undertaken in the classroom, these sessions will encourage students to share work/ideas. In such an environment, students will

present their work for feedback considering the finer details of style, description, integrated local voices and general evocation of place as experience. There will be a high participatory expectation attached to these sessions.

2) PUFFS AND LIVE JOURNAL ENTRIES/BLOGGING

(10%) This comprises the ‘puffs’ by which you sum up travel stories/projects and present them in the most exciting, intriguing and accessible way, posting them on the specially designed live journal whilst on the road.

3) Oral presentation based on two draft ideas of written pitches

(2 X 5%= 10%) A guide to pitching will have been included in earlier lectures.

4) Written Pitch (2 X 5% = 10%) These will be in the form of one 100-word pitch, and one 50-word pitch□

5) Written pieces: 2,860-3,000 words (40% of overall grade) and research portfolio for each (25% of overall grade) = 65%
Both should be submitted through the library, and written pieces also emailed to mail@suewilliams.com.au . Each student will be allocated a town/region/attraction for one of their pieces. Drafts will be reviewed and critiqued as work progresses; this means you will be expected to produce drafts for classroom discussion each session.

The student must produce written work with a word count adding up to no more than 3,000 words, comprising the following. It is expected that the Research Portfolio will form the basis of these pieces. These must include:

- . a) a 1000-word piece suitable for a magazine or newspaper;
- . b) a 100-word piece as a short newspaper filler;
- . c) a 500-word newspaper story;

- . d) the first 400 words (only!) of a proposed 2000-word article for a magazine or journal;
- . e) an 800-word newspaper article;
- . f) and a shot-list of six to eight pictures and/or moving images that establish something special or significant about your hometown or favorite place, no more than 25 words per shot. This will be covered in the class on Writing Travel For Television.

6) Research Portfolio

You will be expected to keep a non-assessable journal while on the road trip; this will be for your own research and will be respected as a private document. Drawn from this, however, you will be required to compile a portfolio of your research and information-gathering specific to each of the pieces of work you submit, and this will be given in with each piece of work. This could include interviews recorded, visits to research facilities such as libraries, the town hall, information centers, your own notes on explorations of various areas, your ideas for finding out further information later, and the kind of on-line research you are undertaking. All of this could contribute to your “facts boxes” for articles.

Grading

A 94-100 A- 90-93 B+ 87-89 □ B 83-86 □ B- 80-82 C+ 77-79 □ C 73-76 □ C- 70-72 □ D 60-69 □ F below 60

**SOME SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR WRITTEN PIECES:
FEEL FREE TO DISCUSS ANY OTHER IDEAS WITH SUE.**

NOTE: WORK BASED ON OTHER IDEAS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN DISCUSSED WITH SUE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

1. The town of Eden began as a whaling town and now is a logging town. Discuss this shift of industry focus and the political implications. How did the town receive its name? What are the attitudes of the locals to the views of wider Australia about their town and its economic pursuits? (This should be developed into a feature article which looks at the town as both tourist destination and industrial center.)

2. “Both fiction and nonfiction demand the skills of shaping, choosing, composing a series of patterns that are or give the illusion of being completion...Fiction and autobiography are not so different” (Janet Frame, *NZ Listener*, 24 Sept 1988). Consider this statement in light of at least three pieces of factual writing you have read on this course.

3. Old photos and memorabilia of now almost forgotten US writer Zane Grey, as well as his name itself, remain important to the small fishing village of Bermagui. How does the imprint of this man and his passion for fishing still give this small Australian town its profile? Extensive reference to Grey’s writing should be included.(A feature article.)

4. From Herodotus to Chaucer, Daniel Defoe to Herman Melville to Bill Bryson, consider Travel Writing as the genre devoted to exciting ‘wonder’ and the desire in the reader to explore the furthest reaches of the natural world. □ Write a non-fiction story based on one place on your small-towns tour which would “excite” wonder and perhaps lead the reader to go and see for him/her-self.

5. Food is today a huge part of the tourism industry. Your tour takes in a number of gourmet wine and food regions. Consider trips tourists might be interested in taking to explore this aspect of

the country.

6. Twain's observations from 1895 concerning both the Australian landscape and the evolving 'national character' strike a remarkable chord of recognition in the local reader today. Analyse Twain's eclectic selection of "observations" in *The Wayward Tourist* (from *Following the Equator*) and 'write back' with your own observations of place and today's 'Australian' type/s.' (Twain searched out his statistics to quote, you should get your own updates to compare.) You could also look profitably at iconic institutions such as the drought, the bush and the Beach Culture to achieve a 'then and now' perspective.

7. Zane Grey captured the popular imagination and at the same time consolidated the agenda for future tourists Down Under with his 'big game' approach to "hunting down" deadly Australian marine life, in particular the shark. On the land the settlers knew were deadly snakes and spiders; now, in the sea, there were man-eaters.

In the macho-Hemingway tradition a 'threat in the outback'/'threat offshore' genre has developed. Consider Zane Grey as a precursor to such national 'types' as Crocodile Dundee and Steve Irwin. Speculate as to his influence on Australian writers and film-makers.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week 1

Sue Williams □ Introduction to Travel Writing Course;
Journalism/Creative NF Talk about writing travel in newspaper and magazines, and in books

Allocation of one town/region/attraction per person for research from the ones you are about to visit – to make a short 5-minute presentation. □ Newspapers/magazines both here and in your home town. Knowing your audience; how to write for different audiences

and genres, including geographic audiences - Australia v UK v US .

Writing Exercises: looking at finding focus and form in writing travel. Putting local voices into words; transcribing interviews and bringing the color of interviewees to stories. Writing about place and journey; how to make them live.

Talking about the Blog you'll be doing on the road.

Guest speaker: Mark Dapin, journalist, travel writer and author

The Feature Article v News Article – newspapers v magazines; fact-checking; editing; refining your style.

Preparation for the road trip – thinking about places and research in advance. The exercises for when you return. Good blogging while away. Layout of stories. Presentation on Your Town you've been allocated. □ Last class with Sue before road trip

ROADTRIP: leaves early am Fri (week 1) and returns early evening Sat 8 days later

Classes will then run Monday evenings and Wednesday evenings thereafter.

Week 3

Talking about the stories you may have from your trip. Looking at your blogs. □ Developing an idea into a Pitch; class practice pitches. □ Oral v written.

Pitch presentations, with class feedback from pitches to help refine and improve. □ Pitch presentations (*Assessment 3 in class*). Drafts of 100 and 500 word newspaper stories to be discussed (Assessment 5b and c) in class □ **Written pitches (Assessment 4)**

Week 4

Guest Speaker: Jimmy Thomson, Writing Travel For The Screen:

how to put over a sense of place and journey using pictures rather than words, from reality TV to screen drama. Working on shotlist.

What are puffs? Practising writing them for the stories you've pitched. □ Discussing the first 400 words of a proposed 2,000 word article in draft form (Assessment 5d).

Week 5

The Marketplace – looking at different markets/outlets for travel writing; re-using experiences for different stories; One Place, Ten Stories

Drafts of 1000 word newspaper story (Assessment 5a) to be brought along for discussion.

Week 6

Draft of final 800-word story (Assessment 5e) to be discussed in class

Critiquing others' work, constructive criticism and feedback on written pieces; overcoming any difficulties encountered; writing your way around problems

Time to finish off your course work and discuss any issues

All drafts indicate you should have worked on these pieces and the draft is in the refinement stage. You should use the class schedule as a guide to your production of the written work and include the portfolio for each story as is indicated in the outline of Assessment.