

School of English, Film, Theatre & Media Studies
Summer Trimester 2006-2007

ENGL 237: Journalism and Literature

**Nov 28-Dec 14, Jan 16-Feb 1, Tue, Wed, Thu 10am-noon,
[Hugh McKenzie Building, HM Lecture Theatre 1]**

- Course convenor:** Emeritus Professor Roger Robinson (VZ 913; 4636849;
Roger.Robinson@vuw.ac.nz)
- Lecturers:** Nigel Evans, Stephen Harris, Stephanie Pietkiewicz
(Stephanie@truestory.co.nz), Roger Robinson.
- Tutor:** Nigel Evans (Nigel.Evans@paradise.net.nz)
- Tutorial times:** To be arranged; five meetings, in all teaching weeks
except the first.
- Prerequisites:** 36 points at ENGL & SEFT 100. Applications from
others with special interest should be referred to Roger
Robinson.

Course Aims and Objectives:

Journalism and Literature is a 22-point paper at ENGL 200 level, and may be credited towards the major-subject requirements in English Literature. It will be of particular relevance to students with interests in professional writing, creative writing, contemporary literature, “issue-focused” literature, American literature, media studies, the English and American novel, life narrative, and travel writing, or those considering including the Honours paper “Journalism and Literature” in a BA (Hons) or MA course of study. Students majoring in such subjects as History, Law or Politics may also find it of relevance.

In a new approach to the study of literature, the paper explores the relation between “journalism” and “literature”, as they have been conventionally defined. Major texts of fictional and non-fictional narrative are studied, including examples of the novel, biography, and reportage, as well as two substantial selections of short texts, covering outstanding journalism and works of literature with strong journalistic connections (such as poems about major news events). Texts range from the 17th century to the present day, with the main focus on recent work and issues. *All are required reading.*

This is not a course in the skills or practice of journalism, but it is designed to benefit students (among others) interested in studying or working in journalism or other forms of professional writing. Its main purpose is to add a new dimension to literary studies for all students, in ways pertinent to other ENGL papers and other subjects.

The aims of the course are to:

- a) develop skills of attentive and critical reading through the study of language, form, techniques and ideas of the selected texts;
- b) develop understanding of the literary, cultural, philosophical, and theoretical issues raised through a discussion of the relationship between literature and journalism;
- c) develop skills in the oral and written processes of literary discussion, especially in critical analysis and evaluation, in the form of three written assignments.

Course Content:

Six main texts (including two selections of “Great Journalism”) are all required study, and all will be tested and assessed through the assignments.

In order of teaching, the texts are:

1. Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*;
2. “Great Journalism & Literature: Disasters, Wars, and Poetry” (a selection of short texts from the origins of journalism to 1945);
3. “Great Journalism: from Bombs to Blogs” (a selection of short texts in print and digital media from 1945 to 2006).
4. Tom Wolfe, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*;
5. E.L. Doctorow, *The Waterworks*;
6. Janet Malcolm, *The Silent Woman*.

The books should be purchased (cost is very modest for a literature course). The short texts will be supplied in lectures, probably free of charge. Alternative arrangements will be made if any books prove to be out of print or unavailable at Victoria Book Centre.

Lecturers: Roger Robinson (RR), Nigel Evans (NE), Stephen Harris (SH), Stephanie Pietkiewicz (SP)

Programme

Tue Nov 28	Introduction	RR, NE, SP
Wed Nov 29	<i>In Cold Blood</i>	SP
Thu Nov 30	“	SP
Tue Dec 5	<i>In Cold Blood</i>	SP
Wed Dec 6	Great Journalism 1645-1945	RR
Thu Dec 7	“	RR
Tue Dec 12	Great Journalism 1645-1945/1945-2006	RR/NE
Wed Dec 13	Great Journalism 1945-2006	NE/SP
Thu Dec 14	“ “	SP

Monday December 18 Assignment 1 due (*In Cold Blood*)

Christmas

Monday Jan 15, 5pm: Assignment 2 due (Great Journalism)

Tue Jan 16 Literature & the City/ *Bonfire of the Vanities* RR/NE

Wed Jan 17	<i>Bonfire of the Vanities</i>	NE
Thu Jan 18	“	NE
Tue Jan 23	<i>The Waterworks</i>	SH
Wed Jan 24	“	SH
Thu Jan 25	Plath & Hughes	RR/SP
Tue Jan 30	<i>The Silent Woman</i>	SP
Wed Jan 31	“	SP
Thu Feb 1	“	SP
	Course conclusion & assignment 3	SP, NE, RR

Thursday Feb 8th, 5pm: Assignment 3 due: NO EXTENSIONS

Assessment

Assessment is in-term, by **three** written assignments, delivered in hard copy (not email except by special approval). Details of topics are provided in the Assignment handout(s), to be distributed.

1. An essay on *In Cold Blood* (1500 words). Due Dec 18th. 30% of total;
2. An essay on the shorter “Great Journalism” texts (1500 words). Due Jan 15th, 30% of total;
3. An essay (2000 words) on the remaining three texts. Due on Feb 8th. 40%.

The total word requirement is as specified for 200-level courses with no final exam.

Due dates:

The 3/3 schedule is tight, and this is a paper concerned in part with the requirements of journalism. Due dates must therefore be adhered to as deadlines (which means that if your article is late, it’s dead). In case of unpredictable personal circumstances such as illness, requests for extensions should be made to your tutor. Late work submitted without an extension will be accepted only if the tight marking schedule permits, and the grade awarded may be lowered by one step every two days. Since grades must be submitted to the Faculty in good time for the First Trimester 2006, **no extensions are possible beyond Feb 8th**. Students must plan ahead to provide for unexpected emergencies.

Workload:

The guideline for a 22-point paper is at least 15 hours a week for a conventional 12-week course. Since ENGL 237 is accelerated to 6 weeks, workloads must be adjusted accordingly, by spreading your reading over non-teaching weeks. To study only in the six teaching weeks will not be enough.

Mandatory Course Requirements:

- Fully read and carefully study the six major texts (including the two selections of short texts);
- Attend at least 70% of lectures and tutorials (special allowance may be made if there are lecture clashes with other papers);
- Contribute to oral class discussion as required;

- Complete three written assignments (5000 words total) at 200-level standard;
- Meet deadlines.

Academic concerns and problems:

Consult initially your tutor, and then the convenor and if appropriate the Head of School, Robert Easting. See also *Calendar* re. “Mandatory Course Requirements,” “Student Contract,” and “Academic Grievance Policy.”

Plagiarism:

Students are reminded of the School’s and the University’s policy on plagiarism. Assignments in English are designed to develop and assess your own ability to read literary or other texts, think about them closely and in context, and express your responses. *Material downloaded from the Internet is not permitted within assignments unless fully acknowledged in the same way as published material.* Plagiarism from whatever source, including the Internet, may cause failure in the course without further notice, or a lower grade if the submission of replacement work is approved.

Students with disabilities at Victoria:

Victoria makes every effort to enable students with disabilities to study without disadvantage, including the policy that reasonable accommodation will be made with respect to assessment procedures. For further assistance, contact Disability Support Services, 1st Floor Reception, Robert Stout Building, ph 4636070, email: disabilities@vuw.ac.nz.

General University Requirements:

It is students’ responsibility to be familiar with the University’s requirements regarding course of study regulations, assessment, academic grievance procedures, etc. These are contained in the statutes in the *Calendar*, and on the University website. The University also requires that all members of its community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University’s life in an atmosphere of safety and respect.

Additional information: SEFT/English notice board, Hugh McKenzie foyer, alongside HM 206.

Student input:

Students’ responses and suggestions are welcomed. Comments from previous classes have been taken into account in this year’s offering.