

School of English, Film, Theatre & Media Studies  
Summer Trimester 2007-2008

ENGL 237: Journalism and Literature



Nov 27-Dec 13, Jan 15-Jan 31, Tue, Wed, Thu 10am-noon, [Hugh McKenzie Building, HM Lecture Theatre 003]

## **A Day in the Life**

I read the news today, oh boy  
About a lucky man who made the grade  
And though the news was rather sad  
Well, I just had to laugh  
I saw the photograph  
He blew his mind out in a car  
He didn't notice that the lights had changed  
A crowd of people stood and stared  
They'd seen his face before  
Nobody was really sure if he was from the House of Lords

I saw a film today, oh boy  
The English Army had just won the war  
A crowd of people turned away  
But I just had to look  
Having read the book  
I love to turn you on...

Woke up, got out of bed  
Dragged a comb across my head  
Found my way downstairs and drank a cup  
And looking up, I noticed I was late  
Found my coat and grabbed my hat  
Made the bus in seconds flat  
Found my way upstairs and had a smoke  
Somebody spoke and I went into a dream  
Ahhhh Ahhhhh Ahhhh...

I read the news today, oh boy  
Four thousand holes in Blackburn, Lancashire  
And though the holes were rather small  
They had to count them all  
Now they know how many holes it takes to fill the Albert Hall  
I'd love to turn you on...

*'A Day in the Life'* The Beatles  
(from **Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band**, 1967)

- Course convenor:** Stephanie Pietkiewicz (VZ901; ph 463 6803; email: [stephanie@truestory.co.nz](mailto:stephanie@truestory.co.nz); office hours: 12-1.00pm Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, or by appointment, if outside of these times)
- Lecturers:** Nigel Evans, Stephanie Pietkiewicz, Emeritus Professor Roger Robinson.
- Tutors:** Nigel Evans ([nigel.evans@paradise.net.nz](mailto:nigel.evans@paradise.net.nz)) and Paul Hanson ([paul.hanson@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:paul.hanson@vuw.ac.nz))
- Tutorial times:** To be arranged; five meetings, in all teaching weeks except the first.
- Prerequisites:** 18 100-level ENGL or SEFT points, and 18 further ENGL, SEFT, FILM, MDIA or THEA points. Applications from others with special interest should be referred to Stephanie Pietkiewicz.

### **Course Aims and Objectives:**

Journalism and Literature is a 22-point course 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 course “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, this course explores definitions of literature and journalism, their distinctions and interrelations. It also offers original ways of close reading literary and journalistic texts within historical contexts. It seeks out the story behind the news or the novel in ways that improve our ability to decipher, analyse and interpret both.** Through this lens, major texts of fictional and non-fictional narrative are discussed, including examples of the novel, biography, reportage, and investigative narrative, as well as a selection of shorter texts, including good journalism and some poems based on topical news events. Texts range from the 17<sup>th</sup> century (in the selection of poems) to recent blogs, with the main focus on writing since 1965. Special themes are “writing from the eye of the storm”, “writing the city” and “writing life narrative.” *All are required reading.* In fact, close and critical reading is required *at all times* through all texts!

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 courses 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.

**By the end of this course students should have gained greater knowledge and competence in each of these areas. The assignments are designed specifically to test these skills and your understanding of the literary conventions and preoccupations of both journalism and literature.**

**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. “Great Journalism & Literature: Disasters, Wars, and Poetry” (a selection of short texts from the origins of journalism to 1962); 2. “Great Journalism: from the Bomb to the Blog” (a selection of short texts in print and digital media from 1945 to 2007). 3. Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*; 4. Tom Wolfe, *The Bonfire of the Vanities*; 5. Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*; 6. Janet Malcolm, *The Silent Woman*. The books should be purchased (the 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:** Stephanie Pietkiewicz (SP), Nigel Evans (NE), Roger Robinson (RR)

**Programme:**

Tue Nov 27	Introduction	SP, NE, RR
Wed Nov 28	Great Journalism 1645-1945	RR
Thu Nov 29	“	RR
Tue Dec 4	Great Journalism 1645-1945/1945-2007	RR/NE
Wed Dec 5	Great Journalism 1945-2007	NE/SP
Thu Dec 6	“	SP
Tue Dec 11	<i>In Cold Blood</i>	SP
Wed Dec 12	“	SP
Thu Dec 13	“	SP

**Monday December 17, 5pm: Assignment 1 due (Great Journalism)**

Christmas

**Monday Jan 14, 5pm: Assignment 2 due (*In Cold Blood*)**

Tue Jan 15	Literature & the City/ <i>Bonfire of the Vanities</i>	RR/NE
Wed Jan 16	<i>Bonfire of the Vanities</i>	NE
Thu Jan 17	“	NE
Tue Jan 22	<i>The Year of Magical Thinking</i>	SP
Wed Jan 23	“	SP
Thu Jan 24	Plath & Hughes	RR/SP
Tue Jan 29	<i>The Silent Woman</i>	SP
Wed Jan 30	“	SP
Thu Jan 31	“	SP
	Course conclusion & assignment 3	SP, NE, RR

**Thursday Feb 7<sup>th</sup>, 5pm: Assignment 3 due: NO EXTENSIONS**

**Assessment:**

Assessment is in-term, by **three** written assignments that will help develop skills and knowledge in the areas outlined under Course Aims and Objectives p. 3. Assignments are to be 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 the shorter “Great Journalism” texts (1500 words). Due Dec 17<sup>th</sup>. 30% of total;
2. An essay on *In Cold Blood* (1500 words). Due Jan 14<sup>th</sup>. 30% of total;
3. An essay (2000 words) on the remaining three texts. Due Feb 7<sup>th</sup>. 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 course 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 2008, **no extensions are possible beyond Feb 7<sup>th</sup>**. Students must plan ahead to provide for unexpected emergencies.

**Workload:**

The guideline for a 22-point course 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 courses);
- Contribute to oral class discussion as required;
- Complete three written assignments (5000 words total) at 200-level standard; and,
- Meet deadlines.

**Academic concerns and problems:**

Consult initially your tutor, and then the convenor and if appropriate the English Programme Director, Charles Ferrall. 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 463 6070, email: [disabilities@vuw.ac.nz](mailto: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. All Short Texts readings, administrative notices and assignments will be posted on Blackboard. *No lecture notes will be posted.* Because ENGL 237 is a condensed course focusing on the guided practice of close reading, face-to-face learning, with students attending and participating in lectures and tutorials, is the best mode of information transfer.

**Student input:**

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