

# COURSE SYLLABUS

## Travel Writing

**Course code:** JRN 230

**Semester and year:** Spring 2021

**Day and time:** Thursday 14:45-17:45

**Instructor:** Michael Kahn

**Instructor contact:** mdkahn@gmail.com

**Consultation hours:** By appointment

<b>Credits US/ECTS</b>	3/6	<b>Level</b>	Intermediate
<b>Length</b>	15 weeks	<b>Pre-requisite</b>	TOEFL iBT 71
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	HSC el, PS el, JC req/el, CEA

### 1. Course Description

This course is intended as an introduction to travel writing and aims to teach students how to find story ideas, identify places of interest and write about them in a way that is new and fresh. Most of the course will be spent in classroom, but there may also be a few field trips. Students will be required to submit one long-form writing assignments in lieu of a final exam, as well as frequent smaller writing assignments. The course will focus on the practical rather than the theoretical. Students will be required to bring laptops to class as many classes will feature in-class writing and feedback. Students will also learn how to 'pitch' travel stories to publications, and, ideally, to get their ideas published to generate valuable clips for their portfolios. This course is a hands-on workshop, where students learn the basics of what it entails to make it as a travel writer today and are expected to produce articles. A focus on good reporting and writing basics will underline the course and active participation is essential. Assigned readings will form the basis of class discussion.

### 2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- recognize the main qualities of good travel writing
- learn to acclimate themselves quickly in a new location and conduct useful reporting
- identify unique stories and angles that will find an audience in books, blogs and magazines
- pitch story ideas to editors and publications with the goal of seeing their work in a public forum
- write articles at a professional level

### 3. Reading Material

In addition to the assigned reading, students are expected to be fully familiar with the universe of professional travel writing, including newspapers, leading travel blogs,

magazines, news websites and travel books. Major travel magazines include: National Geographic Traveler, Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure or Wanderlust (UK).

#### 4. Teaching methodology

Students will receive information through lectures, readings, discussions, and from writing assignments. The class will be informal and interactive. If needed, films will be screened and guest speakers invited.

#### 5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Week 1	<b>Topic:</b> What is travel writing? <b>Description:</b> Who is a travel journalist? Who is the audience? <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Introductory writing sample.
Week 2	<b>Topic:</b> Elements of good writing. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> In-class writing
Week 3	<b>Topic:</b> Reporting Skills. Finding an angle. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Generate an angle for a local story
Week 4	<b>Topic:</b> Taking the Right Picture – Guest Lecture-Petr Josek, AP photographer <b>Description:</b> Photos for travel writing <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>
Week 5	<b>Topic:</b> Travel postcards. <b>Assignment:</b> Write a travel postcard
Week 6	<b>Topic:</b> Pitches – How to sell your stories <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Pitch letter
Week 7	Mid-term
Week 8	<b>No CLASS-MID-TERM BREAK</b>
Week 9	<b>Topic:</b> Keeping ideas fresh/generating stories.
Week 10	<b>Topic:</b> Food Writing <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Article pegged to food
Week 11	<b>Topic:</b> Life as a free-lancer-Seth Kugel, New York Times travel writer <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>
Week 12	<b>Topic:</b> Sapa Market tour <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b>
Week 13	<b>Topic:</b> Guidebooks-Mark Baker, Lonely Planet <b>Description:</b> Writing for guidebooks. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Final pitch ideas
Week 14	<b>Topic:</b> Final pitches due. <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Final paper
Week 15	<b>Assignment/Deadlines:</b> Final assignment due/Course wrap up

## 6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Attendance/ Participation	20	20%	Active participation in class discussion, comprehension of reading material and simulated editorial meetings	1,2
In-class writing assignments	10	10%	Ability to observe a new environment, describe it in writing and make a compelling blog	1,2
Writing Assignments (4)	40	40%	Ability to identify a newsworthy item and produce an article from idea to finished product	1,2
Midterm assignment	40	15%	Display narrative writing skills and ability to condense facts and information into a compelling story	1,2
Final assignment	40	15%	Display narrative writing skills and ability to condense facts and information into a compelling story package.	1,2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

## 7. Detailed description of the assignments

### **[Mid-Term Writing Assignment]**

#### **Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Finding and presenting a topic	25
Structuring the story logically	25
Writing clearly	25
Accuracy, details, adding color	25

### **[Final Writing Assignment]:**

#### **Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Percentage
Finding and presenting a topic	25
Structuring the story logically	25
Writing clearly	25
Accuracy, details, adding color	25

## 1. General Requirements and School Policies

## **General requirements**

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

## **Electronic communication and submission**

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams. Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question". All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

## **Attendance**

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, is expected and encouraged. However, the requirement that students miss not more than 35% of real-time classes is temporarily suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Absence excuse and make-up options**

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he can submit to the Dean of Students an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. These must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

**Late work:** *No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.*

## **Electronic devices**

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

**Eating** *is not allowed during classes.*

## **Cheating and disruptive behavior**

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the exam or assignment will be failed and the student will be expelled from the exam or class.

## **Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center**

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

At minimum, plagiarism from types 1 through 8 will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

### **Course accessibility and inclusion**

Students with disabilities are asked to contact the Dean of Students as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive. Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

## 8. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95 - 100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90 - 94	
B+	87 - 89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 - 86	
B-	80 - 82	
C+	77 - 79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 - 76	
C-	70 - 72	
D+	65 - 69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 - 64	
F	0 - 59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

**Prepared by and when:** Michael Kahn, November, 27, 2017

**Approved by and when:** Alzbeta Klatova, 1/2/2021