



CW/LT 358 WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW: INTRODUCTION TO IMMERSION WRITING
IES Abroad Milan

DESCRIPTION:

Over twenty-two semi-weekly sessions plus presentations, this course will facilitate student engagement with a genre of writing that merges the boundaries between literary art and research nonfiction. Creative nonfiction is the writing of the real. Although it employs many of the same literary devices as fiction, creative nonfiction allows the writer to engage with moments and events from real life and to seek a new understanding of these experiences. In this module we will explore creative nonfiction (and some fiction) through immersion writing: an approach that encourages exploration of both the world around and the world within. A central facet of immersion writing is the use of the self as a tool of discovery to produce work that is revelatory but not solely about the self. As part of their study-abroad experience, students will experiment with approaches such as Travelogue, Journalism, and Memoir, with authenticity and inventiveness serving as keystones in the process.

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Students attend two weekly sessions lasting an hour and forty minutes each. The sessions are intended to encourage participative engagement with texts and to foster writing skills through in-class writing and workshop exercises. During Sessions 21 and 22, and if necessary also during Final Exam week (in lieu of an exam), students will present and read from their work to the rest of the class.

Guest speakers such as travel writers, journalists, and other creative nonfiction practitioners may complement and augment the students' experience of this course. There will be one field trip to an exhibition in Milan.

Students will receive a general introduction to some of the genres of creative nonfiction (and fiction). We will consider some of the key issues associated with each (see semi-weekly class schedule) and explore a variety of approaches to the written forms:

Travel Writing: Place, Self, and Experience

1. "Travelogue"

This sub-genre of travel writing includes the writer's perceptions, impressions, and comments on the travel experience in a way that engages the reader as an "armchair traveler."

2. "Journeys of (Self)Discovery" - Travel Writing as Personal Essay

This is a form of essay that explores how exposure to an unfamiliar environment and/or the experience of travel reveals new aspects of the self or brings new perspectives to familiar or unexplored questions.

Journalism: Experience, Assess, Critique

1. Review

All students will visit, experience, and write a critical assessment of an exhibition, festival, or other cultural event (this does not include theatre or film).

Or

2. Immersion Feature

Students will write an immersion feature piece on a topic that piques their interest. Students should select their own topics, which will be discussed in class in advance of the assignment due date.



Memoir or Personal Essay: Recall, Reflect, Write

1. Inspired by their time in Italy, students will write a personal narrative based on a significant life experience.
- Or
2. Inspired by their time in Italy, students will write a personal essay about a lived experience that illustrates a wider question or thesis.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- **Short Writing Assignments** – 40%
- **Portfolio Work** – 50%
- **Attendance and Participation** – 10%

Short Writing Assignments

Students submit **six** 500-word assignments in response to a specific prompt set by the course instructor. This work will be graded at regular intervals. All written work is submitted via Moodle.

Portfolio Work

Students submit a total of **three** portfolio pieces: one from the Travel Writing section (Travelogue) of the course and one each from Journalism (Review or Immersion Feature) and Memoir/Personal Essay. The word length for the Travelogue (12.5%) and Review or Immersion Feature (12.5%) is 1,000 - 1,200 words, increasing to 2,000 - 2,200 words for the Memoir/Personal Essay (25%).

Students will submit drafts of their portfolio pieces and will receive feedback from the course instructor. Students will also have the opportunity to have selected items of work read and discussed in class, allowing them to revise their portfolio pieces for final submission and grading at the end of the semester.

Please see assignment schedule for submission deadlines for all written work.

Reading

Students are required to study readings for discussion in class each week. Material will be distributed in class the preceding week and also made available on Moodle. As these readings form the basis for class discussion, good preparation is essential for effective class participation. Continuous evidence of lack of preparation will be reflected in the participation component of the Attendance and Participation grade.

Attendance and Participation

The ambition in including a participation component is to facilitate students learning from each other and to give them the opportunity to practice and develop listening, speaking, and persuasive skills.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Recognize that creative nonfiction encompasses a variety of genres and approaches
- Understand the potential of applying the tools of fiction to real life experiences and events (and vice versa)
- Write candidly and clearly about personal experience and their experience of the world around them
- Appreciate and articulate how immersion writing can serve as a means of responding to and making sense of a new culture
- Analyze and critique their own work and the work of others in a proactive context
- Remain mindful of the need to re-imagine aesthetic possibilities rather than merely revise texts
- Present their work in a professional manner

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

As a member of our class community, you are expected to be present and on time every day. Attending class has an impact on your learning and academic success. For this reason, the IES Abroad Milan attendance policy allows for the following number of absences, which are intended to be used for physical and mental health reasons:

THREE (3) absences in each Italian language course,

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TWO (2) absences in each Area Studies course,
ONE (1) absence in each seminar course or course meeting 1 day a week,
ZERO (0) absences in each course of individual music instruction.

Every absence beyond this allowance will automatically result in a penalty of 2 percentage points off the final grade. SEVEN (7) absences will result in a failing grade in Italian language and Area Studies courses. FOUR (4) absences will result in a failing grade in seminar or 1-day-a-week courses. Failure to attend a scheduled exam, test, quiz, or presentation will automatically result in an F grade on that assessment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Code of Academic Integrity. All work submitted by a student for academic credit should constitute the student's own original work. Any work submitted for academic credit may be subject to review by a textual similarity detection service for the detection of plagiarism and AI usage.

CONTENT:

Week/Class	Content	Assignments
Week 1 <i>Session 1</i>	Exploring the Genre: Purpose and Practice: Part 1 - Introduction to the Course: Why Write? - Technology: When and How to Use It "All lives are intrinsically interesting"	"Why Write?," <i>What is Literature?</i>, Jean-Paul Sartre. New York: Routledge, 2001. "Peonies" and "Something to Do," <i>Intimations</i>, Zadie Smith. London: Penguin Books, 2020. "The Seductions of AI for the Writer's Mind," Meghan O'Rourke, <i>The New York Times</i>, July 18, 2025. "Don't Throw Your Dictionary Away," Alessandro Tersigni, <i>The New York Times</i>, July 20, 2025. Please bring to class a notebook that will be used only for this course. It should be at least 13x21cm, e.g., Moleskine's Classic Large Ruled Notebook (there are some in the Ubik store on the ground floor of Via Monterosa 91). Please also bring a pen or pencil.
<i>Session 2</i>	Exploring the Genre: Purpose and Practice: Part 2 Keeping a Journal	"On Keeping a Notebook," Joan Didion, <i>The Norton Book of Personal Essays</i>. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. "Diary: On Failing to Impress the Queen," Alan Bennett, <i>The London Review of Books</i>, 5 January 2023. - From <i>The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath</i>, New York: Vintage, 2000: "Friday night, February 21" through "...chilled cream" (pp. 334-338 on scan). - From <i>The Journals of John Cheever</i>, New York: Vintage Books, 2009: "I go to town; I go to the Italian Consulate and wait and wait" through "Perhaps I had less time for self-consciousness abroad" (pp. 67-88 on scan).

Week 2 <i>Session 1</i>	Introduction to Travelogue: Part 1 - Hulme's Criterion - The Narrator Versus the Author	"An Introduction to Immersion Writing," from <i>A Field Guide for Immersion Writing: Memoir, Journalism, and Travel</i>, Robin Hemley. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012. - Chapter 10, "Writing Travel," from <i>The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing</i>, Tim Youngs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Short Writing Assignment 1
<i>Session 2</i>	Introduction to Travelogue: Part 2 Approaches to Travelogue	- Introduction and "From Verona to Venice," <i>Italian Journey</i>, Goethe. New York: Penguin Classics, 1992. "Venice Preserved," from <i>Venice Observed</i>, Mary McCarthy. New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace and Co., 1963.
Week 3 <i>Session 1</i>	Perspectives: Part 1 - Notions of Belonging, Selfhood, and Home - Intersectionality	"Theories," <i>The Tourist Gaze</i> (3rd edition), John Urry and Jonas Larsen. London: Sage, 2011. "Suffering Like Mel Gibson," <i>Intimations</i>, Zadie Smith. London: Penguin Books, 2020. "My Home Is Where I Am," Igiaba Scego, <i>Words Without Borders</i>, July 13, 2021. Short Writing Assignment 2
<i>Session 2</i>	Perspectives: Part 2 - Race - Sexuality - Religion	- Introduction by Malini Johar Schueller plus "Preface," "Rome...," "Naples...," and "St. Januarius...," <i>A Colored Man Round the World</i>, David Dorr. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999 (original publication 1858). "A Common Assault," Alan Bennett, <i>The London Review of Books</i>, 4 November 2004. "Forza Italia," <i>The Sign of the Cross: Travels in Catholic Europe</i>, Colm Tóibín. London: Picador, 2010.
Week 4 <i>Session 1</i>	Travel as Quest or Inner Journey: Part 1 Humor and Satire	"The Personal Essay: A Form of Discovery," Joseph Epstein, <i>The Norton Book of Personal Essays</i>. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. "Italian Without a Master," Mark Twain, <i>The Norton Book of Personal Essays</i>. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997. "Chapter XVIII" ("...Toward dusk we drew near Milan..."), <i>The Innocents Abroad</i>, Mark Twain. Orinda, CA: SeaWolf Press, 2018. Short Writing Assignment 3
<i>Session 2</i>	Travel as Quest or Inner Journey: Part 2 Escaping, Discovering, and Evolving the Self	"Immersion Memoir," from <i>A Field Guide to Immersion Writing</i>, Robin Hemley. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012.

	• Intertextuality	• Introduction, Chapters 10-15, and Chapter 36 from <i>Eat, Pray, Love</i>, Elizabeth Gilbert. New York: Riverhead Books, 2006.
Week 5 <i>Session 1</i>	Journalism: Function and Practice • Journalism and its Components	• Excerpts from “Immersion Journalism,” <i>A Field Guide for Immersion Writing</i>, Robin Hemley. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012. • Selected immersion journalism. • Portfolio Piece 1: Travelogue
<i>Session 2</i>	Journalism: Reviews, Profiles, and Features • Immersion Journalism	• Excerpt on writing reviews from <i>Writing for Journalists</i>, Wynford Hicks with Sally Adams, Harriett Gilbert, Tim Holmes, and Jane Bentley (3rd edition). London: Routledge, 2016. • Selected contemporary review.
Week 6 <i>Session 1</i>	Field Trip to “Alpi, teatro di battaglie,” by Alessio Franconi, at the Palazzo Moriggia (Museo del Risorgimento): an exhibit of “photo reportage” on Alpine battles during the Second World War	• “Labirinto,” Lisa Halliday (introduction to photos of Latina, Italy, taken by Wiktoria Wojciechowska), <i>Granta 152: Summer 2020</i>.
<i>Session 2</i>	Field Trip Discussion and Related In-Class Writing Assignment (draft of Short Writing Assignment 4)	• Introduction, Preface, and selected entries in <i>War in Val d’Orcia: An Italian War Diary</i>, Iris Origo. New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 2017.
Week 7 <i>Session 1</i>	Memoir and Truthfulness: Part 1 • What’s “true”? • Facts and Factchecking	• “Checkpoints,” John McPhee, <i>The New Yorker</i>, February 1, 2009. • “What’s a Fact, Anyway?,” Fergus McIntosh, <i>The New Yorker</i>, January 11, 2025. • “Gay Talese’s ‘ethical mess’: Fact-checking lapse raises old questions about New Journalism,” Scott Timberg, <i>Salon</i>, July 2, 2016.
<i>Session 2</i>	Memoir and Truthfulness: Part 2 • Authenticity: What is it and how is it conveyed? • The Writer’s Pact with the Reader	• “The Autobiographical Pact,” <i>On Autobiography</i>, Philippe Lejeune. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989. • “Literary Hoaxes and the Ethics of Authorship: What Happens When We Find Out Writers Aren’t Who They Said They Were,” Louis Menand, <i>The New Yorker</i>, December 3, 2018. • Short Writing Assignment 4
Week 8 <i>Session 1</i>	Fact in Fiction: Part 1 • Hulme’s Criterion Revisited • Fictionalizing Fact	• “A More Perfect Truth,” Lisa Halliday (review of Claire Messud’s novel <i>This Strange Eventful History</i>), <i>The New York Review of Books</i>, May 15, 2025 issue.

Session 2	Fact in Fiction: Part 2 Conveying a Recognizable Place and Historical Moment in Fiction	- Chapters I-VI of <i>A Farewell to Arms</i>, Ernest Hemingway. London: Arrow Books, 2004. Portfolio Piece 2: Journalism Feature or Review
Week 9 Session 1	Hybrid Forms of Immersion Writing: Part 1 - Personal Narrative - Historiography	- Pages 3-36 of <i>The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative</i>, Vivian Gornick. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002. - Prologue to <i>Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere</i>, Jan Morris. London: Faber & Faber, 2009.
Session 2	Hybrid Forms of Immersion Writing: Part 2 Mixing Media	- Pages 49-137 of "All'estero," <i>Vertigo</i>, W.G. Sebald. New York: New Directions, 1999. Short Writing Assignment 5
Week 10 Session 1	"An Italian Education": Part 1 - The Expat Experience - Notions of Nationality - Dialogues Between Past and Present	- Excerpt from <i>An Italian Education</i>, Tim Parks, New York: Harper Perennial, 1996. - Excerpt from <i>Italian Ways: On and Off the Rails from Milan to Palermo</i>, Tim Parks. London: Vintage, 2014. - Excerpt from <i>The Hero's Way: Walking with Garibaldi from Rome to Ravenna</i>, Tim Parks. New York: Norton, 2021.
Session 2	"An Italian Education": Part 2 Guest Speaker Tim Parks	"Author's Note" and first four chapters of Part 1 of <i>Italian Life</i>, Tim Parks. London: Vintage, 2021. - Additional selected texts by Tim Parks. Short Writing Assignment 6
Week 11 Session 1	Presentations, Readings, and Discussions of Students' Portfolio Work	Portfolio Piece 3: Memoir or Essay
Session 2	Presentations, Readings, and Discussions of Students' Portfolio Work	Revised Portfolio Pieces will be due by midnight on Dec. 7th or Dec. 14th, depending on date of presentation.
Final Exam Week	TBD	

REQUIRED READINGS:

Scans/PDFs of required reading will be made available on Moodle.

- Cheever, John. *The Journals of John Cheever*. New York: Vintage Books, 2009.
- Dorr, David. *A Colored Man Round the World*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999 (original publication year 1858).
- Epstein, Joseph, editor. *The Norton Book of Personal Essays*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.
- Goethe, John Wolfgang von. *Italian Journey*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1992.
- Gornick, Vivian. *The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.

- Gilbert, Elizabeth. *Eat, Pray, Love*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2006.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms*. London: Arrow Books, 2004.
- Hemley, Robin. *A Field Guide for Immersion Writing: Memoir, Journalism, and Travel*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- Hicks, Wynford, with Sally Adams, Harriett Gilbert, Tim Holmes, and Jane Bentley. *Writing for Journalists* (3rd edition). London: Routledge, 2016.
- Lejeune, Philippe. *On Autobiography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- McCarthy, Mary. *Venice Observed*. New York: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace and Co., 1963.
- Morris, Jan. *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*. London: Faber & Faber, 2009.
- Origo, Iris. *War in Val d'Orcia: An Italian War Diary*. New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 2017.
- Parks, Tim. *An Italian Education: The Further Adventures of an Expatriate in Verona*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1996.
- Parks, Tim. *The Hero's Way: Walking With Garibaldi from Rome to Ravenna*. New York: Norton, 2021.
- Parks, Tim. *Italian Life*. London: Vintage, 2021.
- Parks, Tim. *Italian Ways: On and Off the Rails from Milan to Palermo*. London: Vintage, 2014.
- Plath, Sylvia. *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*. New York: Vintage, 2000.
- Sarte, Jean-Paul. *What is Literature?* New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Sebald, W.G. *Vertigo*. New York: New Directions, 1999.
- Smith, Zadie. *Intimations*. London: Penguin Books, 2020.
- Tóibín, Colm. *The Sign of the Cross: Travels in Catholic Europe*. London: Picador, 2010.
- Twain, Mark. *The Innocents Abroad*. Orinda, CA: SeaWolf Press, 2018.
- Youngs, Tim. *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Urry, John, and Jonas Larsen. *The Tourist Gaze* (3rd edition). London: Sage, 2011.

Plus newspaper and magazine articles to be supplied by the lecturer.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Bowen, Elizabeth. *A Time in Rome*. New York: Random House, 2003.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *A Moveable Feast*. London: Arrow, 2025.
- Lawrence, D.H. *D.H. Lawrence and Italy*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2008.
- Leavitt, David, and Mark Mitchell. *Italian Pleasures*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. *Steering the Craft: A 21st-Century Guide to Sailing the Sea of Story*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2015.
- Orwell, George. *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Boston: Mariner Books Classics, 2010.
- Pinsky, Ellen, and Michael Slevin, Editors. *Driven to Write: 45 Writers on the Motives and Mysteries of their Craft*. London: Routledge, 2025.
- Taylor, Benjamin. *Naples Declared: A Walk Around the Bay*. New York: Penguin, 2012.

Additional recommended reading to be determined in class and on a student-by-student basis.