FYRS: Adventure Narratives

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 5:00pm-6:00

Course Description

The First-Year Research Seminar is designed to build on the writing skills and strategies you learned in your First-Year Writing Seminar. Like your FYWS, this course will emphasize the writing process—brainstorming, drafting, incorporating feedback, and peer review. Your engagement with that process will be crucial to your success in this class and as a writer in general.

So how is the First-Year Research Seminar different from the First-Year Writing Seminar? In addition to further developing your writing skills, this class will develop your research skills. Research, like writing, is a rich and recursive process. In this course you will learn how to generate and refine research projects, find and vet different kinds of sources, and mobilize sources in various ways in your writing.

In this seminar we will explore the theme of adventure. In adventure narratives, men and women typically seek out, or are thrust into, unfamiliar spaces where they confront elemental forces. Some adventurers traverse dramatic natural environments—the Arctic and Antarctic Poles, Mt. Everest—while others explore spaces of dramatic cultural difference. We will explore how and why these spaces are represented as staging grounds for conflicts with principles of gender, power, and moral life. In your writing and research you will develop arguments about how these notions of adventure work, how they came in to being, how they have changed, and how they continue to influence central aspects of our culture.

Course Requirements

Essay Assignments

For this class you will complete four essay assignments and a final reflective assignment at the end of term. Each essay is designed to emphasize specific aspects of doing research, incorporating sources, and writing analytically. For each of the essays you will receive a detailed assignment sheet, but an overview of each essay follows.

Essay 1: In preparation for this essay we will read several theoretical essays describing themes central to the genre of adventure literature. Then, selecting one of these theories, you will examine the ways in which a particular work of adventure literature reflects and resists it. Readings for Essay 1 will include: Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild*, William Cronon’s “The Trouble with
“Wilderness” and excerpts from Sigmund Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, and Marianna Torgovnik’s *Gone Primitive*. This assignment will count for 15% of your grade.

**Essay 2:** In preparation for this essay we will read two adventure narratives and discuss their central themes. As a class we will research various aspects of the historical contexts of these works assembling a cluster of contextualizing sources around each of them. Then you will choose one contextualizing source to pair with one of the works and write an essay explaining how the story responds to its context as represented by the source you chose. You will also show how your argument challenges or amends a contemporary scholarly opinion on your topic. Readings for this essay will include H. Rider Haggard’s *She*, Virginia Hamilton’s “Keeping House in Borneo” and excerpts from Apsley Cherry-Garrard’s *The Worst Journey in the World*. This assignment will count for 20% of your grade.

**Essay 3:** In preparation for this essay we will read relatively contemporary literary works that re-imagine and rewrite earlier adventure narratives. We will examine both literary and historical contexts to examine how these works reflect upon the traditions they are updating and their place in contemporary culture. Readings for this essay will include Amin Maalouf’s *Leo Africanus* and Michael Ondaatje’s *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. This assignment will count for 20% of your grade.

**Essay 4:** Over the course of the semester you will be working in your “Research Journal” (see Course Schedule for details) to select a seed text that will form the basis of your own original research project. Using the strategies for project development and research you practiced in the previous three essays, you will write a research essay of your own containing a minimum of eight sources. This assignment will count for 25% of your grade.

**Reflective Assignment:** At the end of the term you will choose one of your essays to revise. Having completed your revision, you will annotate the essay explaining your writerly choices. Then you will attach a reflection (minimum of 500 words) about specific ways you have grown as a writer and researcher throughout the course. This assignment will count for 15% of your grade.

In addition to fulfilling the specific requirements of each assignment (prompt, length, etc…), each of your essays should fulfill the following objectives:

1) **Each essay will focus on your specific, concrete, and complex intellectual question or problem.** In this course, you will learn various ways of generating, presenting, and addressing intellectual questions and problems through research and analytic writing.

2) **Each essay will reflect your engagement with high-quality, relevant sources.** In this course you will learn how to find and vet sources. You will also strengthen your ability to incorporate sources into your writing and analysis in various ways.

3) **Each essay will demonstrate your strongest analytic skills.** In this course you will be required to investigate multiple interpretations and perspectives on the texts that you encounter. You will construct arguments that acknowledge and incorporate
a diversity of perspectives. You will learn to anticipate counter-arguments. You will write and research with a willingness to question and refine, even change, your initial position on your topic.

4) Each essay will be structured in a way that preserves the reader's interest and engagement with your argument. In this course, you will strengthen your organizational skills through paragraphing, sign-posting, and other strategies.

5) Each essay will be written with your readers in mind. You should imagine everything that you write for this class to be written for a community of readers that includes all NYU students and faculty. With these readers in mind, you must subscribe to conventions of grammar, style, tone, and formatting (including citation) in order to be understood and taken seriously. You must introduce texts and ideas that members of this community may not all be familiar with and avoid over-explaining things that everybody knows. You must motivate your readers to read your work energetically by presenting your central problem vividly, by bringing in interesting, complex, and relevant sources, and by producing sophisticated, original analyses.

Preparedness and Participation

Preparedness and participation count for 5% of your grade.

To receive full credit for preparedness, you must complete all reading, homework, writing, and in-class assignments thoroughly and punctually; you are also expected to come to class ready to participate actively in class activities and discussions, including peer review workshops. You are expected to arrive on time and with assignments completed and in hand, to bring the text(s) that we are working with, and, on peer review days, to have the required draft copies.

N.B. All in-class writing and homework are pass/fail, and most of these assignments will not receive instructor feedback. However, I will periodically check to see if you have completed these assignments to help me assess your grade for preparedness. Please do not be tempted not to complete these assignments. Oftentimes homework or in-class writing will form the basis of in-class activities, so you must complete and bring this work to class in order to be prepared for class. Furthermore, these assignments are designed to help you with your essay writing process; it is invariably the case that students who consistently complete these ungraded assignments perform significantly better than those that don’t on their graded assignments. If you would like feedback on in-class work or homework you are more than welcome to solicit that feedback from me in office hours.

Participation includes:
- raising and responding to questions about the text/topic under discussion,
- proposing interpretations and making connections between our assigned texts
- participating thoughtfully and energetically in peer review
- taking advantage of office hours as needed
Keep in mind that not all talking in class qualifies as participation, and some kinds of in-class talk are disruptive. Please avoid:

- Private or public conversations unrelated to the class
- Private conversations with a neighboring student about the topic under discussion; wait for an opportunity to share with the whole class
- Asking questions that apply only to your specific paper or situation
- Interrupting the instructor or another classmate; if you are having trouble finding space to comment, feel free to raise your hand and the instructor can help you get into the conversation

If you are unprepared for, absent from, uninvolved in, or disruptive to the class, your participation grade will be lowered accordingly.

 Attendance

Attendance in class is required. You may accumulate THREE absences per term without penalty. Each additional absence will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 1/3 (such as from a B to a B-). There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences, so save your two unpenalized absences for when you really need them. Missing more than five classes, regardless of excuse, can result in your failure of the course.

When you are absent it is your responsibility to find out what you missed (in class work, lessons, handouts, etc). Talk to a classmate you trust about what was covered. If you have questions after you talk to a classmate, feel free to stop by office hours and I can answer them. Typically, homework and essay assignments will be posted on Blackboard. In-class handouts will not; you may photocopy them from a classmate or ask me for a copy in the next class period.

You are expected to arrive to class on time. I will take roll at the very beginning of class. If you come in after I have finished, you will be counted late. If you are late to class, you will be counted as ½ absent. Absences accumulate to affect your grade as described above.

On peer review days, it is essential that you bring a draft of your essay in order to participate in the class. If you do not have a printed draft for peer review on a scheduled peer review day you will be counted absent.

I am strict about punctuality and attendance because this is a course in which you will depend on each other. Since you will frequently serve as each other’s critical readers, respectful participation in the classroom community is vital. Our class time is limited and we will take full advantage of it.

Readings

 Required Texts
The required texts are available from Shakespeare & Company at Broadway & West 4th
They are:

- *Leo Africanus* by Amin Maalouf, New (Amsterdam, 1986).
- *She* by H. Rider Haggard, (Oxford University Press, 1998).

Additional readings and handouts for the course will be made available through Blackboard. These readings should be printed and brought to class, or if you have an electronic pdf reader (e.g. ipad), you may use that in class. Please do not use laptops in class for reading or note-taking.

Please familiarize yourself with *The Owl* [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/). It is an excellent reference for grammar, citation, and more.

**Grading**

I hope that your goal in this course will be to improve as a writer. If you do that, regardless of your grade, you should consider your performance successful. However, it’s important for you to know where your grades come from since they represent a standardized evaluation of your work.

- Essay #1 15%
- Essay #2 20%
- Essay #3 20%
- Essay #4 25%
- Reflective Assignment 15%
- Participation and Prep 5%

I use a GPA system to calculate grades; feel free to check your grade using the calculator [http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~immer/gradecalc.html](http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~immer/gradecalc.html). Any grade penalty for absences will be deducted from the final grade. Be aware that not all instructors calculate grades exactly the same way.

**Course Policies**

**I do not read late working drafts or homework assignments.** If you want feedback on late drafts or assignments, you may bring them to office hours to discuss. I will grade late final drafts when I receive them, but your grade will be lowered by 1/3 for every class day the essay is late.

**I will not read any work sent by email unless otherwise noted on the syllabus.** Occasionally, you will have questions that you want to ask over email. This is perfectly fine as long as the question does not require me to read your work. If you want me to look at work, please come to office hours. Also note, if you have questions about a missed class, do not email me. Please consult a fellow student, or come to office hours if time permits.
No laptops or other electronic devices. Laptops can be distracting in the classroom, so I request that you do not plan to write or take notes on laptops in class unless there are special circumstances.

Please make a point of coming to office hours. There is no better way to get individual feedback than coming to office hours. I would love to see you there!

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is passing off another person’s intellectual work (either her writing, thinking, or both) as your own. It can range from submitting an entire essay written by someone else to failing to attribute an idea to the source where you found it. In all its forms it is a serious offense to academic integrity. It is crucial to do your own original thinking and writing in this class and, where you incorporate sources, to be scrupulous about citing them.

NYU takes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty seriously: On a first offense, plagiarism that appears accidental will result in no credit for the assignment and no opportunity to revise. Any case of plagiarism that appears intentional will be reported to the administration.

Also, because this course is designed to teach you a process you can use to generate your writing and thinking autonomously, most forms of outside help are inappropriate. Exceptions include help from the Writing Center or from me in my office hours. If you are considering getting help from another source (a parent, friend, tutor) please check with me first. Receiving some forms of outside help can be considered violations of academic integrity.

Additional Assistance

The Gallatin Writing Center, located at 1 Washington Place, Room 423, is a free service for students. Specially trained peer consultants will work with you on any aspect of your writing at any point in the writing process. It is an excellent resource; I encourage you to take advantage of it. For instructions on making an appointment, go to http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/writingcenterappointments.html

Class Schedule
This calendar is subject to minor changes. Please consult the course schedule on Blackboard to ensure that you are aware of the proper course work.

Unit 1 Theoretical Perspectives
Heart of Darkness and Into the Wild

Week One, Class One 1/23: Introduction to Course
Defining Adventure.
Homework: Read Syllabus Read excerpt from Sigmund Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents.* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* part I. Freewrite for 10 min on how you see one of Freud’s ideas reflected and/or resisted in part I of *HD.* (Homework* 1).

*All written homework assignments should be 250-400 words. Use the space to develop clarity in your thinking about the reading. Please include a word count at the bottom of your response. Homework Assignments should be submitted into the Homework Forum on the Discussion Board that is assigned to you (homework forums are private; only the assigned student and I can access them). Please also print a hard copy of the assignment and bring it to class for your reference.*

**Week One, Class Two 1/25: Presenting and Theory Sources and Sources for Analysis**
Discuss Freud apply to Conrad. Revisit conventions for presenting sources.

Homework: Finish *Heart of Darkness.* Read excerpt from Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (posted on Bb).

**Week Two, Class One 1/30: Discuss Kant**

Homework: Read William Cronon’s “The Trouble with Wilderness” and Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild* to Chapter 5.

**Week Two, Class Two 2/1: Assignment Planning/Brainstorming**

Homework: Finish *Into the Wild.* Complete Essay 1 “Planning Assignment” (see handouts section on Bb).

**Week Three, Class One 2/6: Finish Discussion of Texts**

Homework: Write first draft of Essay 1 (see description of “first draft” on assignment sheet).

**Week Three, Class Two 2/8: Developing Analysis Using the Lens**
Raising questions. Model from Torgovnik.

Homework: Revise Draft of Essay 1.

**Unit 2 Historical Context**
*She* and *The Worst Journey in the World*

**Week Four, Class One 2/13: Transitions**
second draft of essay 1 due

Homework: *She* by Rider Haggard, Chapter 1 (“Introduction”)–Chapter 9.
Week Four, Class Two 2/15: Developing Historical Context

Homework: Revise Essay 1 (final revision). *She*, Chapter 10-end.

Week Five, Class One 2/22: Research Day (bring laptops)
   final draft of essay 1 due

Homework: Homework: Annotated Bibliography Entries and Prepare to Present

Week Six, Class One 2/27: Research Presentations
   Research Journal #1 Due*
Homework: Excerpts Apsley Cherry-Gerrard’s *The Worst Journey in the World.*

*Research Journals will each have their own prompt. They will be open on the Discussion Board. Your post will be visible to the whole class. Feel free to post to the Research Journal before the due date.

Week Six, Class Two 2/29: Research Day (bring laptops)

Homework: Annotated Bibliography Entries and Prepare to Present

Week Seven, Class One 3/5: Research Presentations

Homework: Write Exploratory Draft of Essay 2

Week Seven, Class Two 3/7: Peer Review (focus on sources)


SPRING BREAK

Week Eight, Class One 3/19: Discuss *Leo Africanus*
   formal draft of essay 2 due

Homework: Source Material for Leo Africanus

Week Eight, Class Two 3/21: Analysis using source Material
   Research Journal #2 Due

Homework: Final revision of Essay 2. Begin Michael Ondaatje *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*

Week Nine, Class One 3/26: Analysis using Source Materials
   final draft essay 2 due
Homework: Finish Ondaatje

**Week Nine, Class Two 3/28:** Use of Source Material in Ondaatje

Homework: Exploratory Draft of Essay 3

**Week Ten, Class One 4/2:** Peer Review (research focus)
exploratory draft of essay 3 due
Homework: Write formal draft of Essay 3

**Week Ten, Class Two 4/4:** Prep for Research Proposal
Research Journal #3 Due
formal draft of essay 3 due (comments delivered electronically by noon Saturday)

**Week Eleven, Class One 4/9:** Writing Workshop TBD
preliminary research proposal due
Homework: Final revision of Essay 3

**Week Eleven, Class Two 4/11:** Vetting Research Questions
final draft of essay 3 due

Homework: Refining Questions and Presenting Initial Sources

**Week Twelve*, Class One 4/16:** Vetting Sources
Workshop on determining the credibility, persuasiveness, and relevance of your sources

Homework: Finalize proposal

**Week Twelve, Class Two 4/18:** Workshoping Proposals
Workshop to determine aspects of your project that require further research in addition to the research performed for the mini-proposal

Homework: Thoroughly (re-)read your sources and write exploratory draft of Essay 4.

*This is a good week to plan to visit office hours so that you can discuss your topic with me before you write your second formal draft.*

**Week Thirteen, Class One 4/23:** Peer Review
Peer review of Essay 4 exploratory draft (groups of 3). Focus on selection and use of sources.

**Week Thirteen, Class Two 4/25:** Introductions and Prep for Presentations
second draft of essay 4 due
Workshop on vivid introductions

Homework: Revise introduction
Week Fourteen, Class One 4/30: Research Abstract Presentations

Week Fourteen Class Two 5/2: Research Abstract Presentations & Course Review

Homework: Final Revision of Essay 4. Select essay for reflective assignment and write reflective letter to peer reviewer.

Week Fifteen, Class One 5/7: Peer Review
final draft of essay 4 due

Reflective Assignment Due 5pm on Thursday 5/10