

What makes literary journalism different from mere reporting? To what extent does being literary allow various types of artifice, such as fiction and impressionistic, first-person observation? What is the debt that being literary owes to being accurate and factual, if any?

This course will define and then examine literary journalism in all of its manifestations: narrative accounts, autobiographical rendering of events, polemic, cultural and arts criticism, travel writing, humor writing, food writing, interview and more. Our examples will be drawn from the greatest practitioners of the craft: George Orwell, Rebecca West, Mary McCarthy, Renata Adler, James Baldwin, Harold Rosenberg, Edmund Wilson, Susan Sontag, Janet Malcolm, Joan Didion, Robert Hughes, H. L. Mencken, Gay Talese, Pete Hamill, Tom Wolfe, Christopher Hitchens, et al.

Throughout the course, students will be asked to write essays in the various forms under discussion--the object of the course will be to make us better readers of literary journalism by learning how to practice it. For instance, you might be asked to write a positive review of a movie that you've just seen, and then to respond to it by writing a negative review of the same film, or to describe an event from your own life in the first-person, tenderly, and then in the third-person, skeptically and inquisitorially. There may be some special guest appearances, too.