



Travel Writing: the South of France

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: WRIT 3270

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 45

Instructor: Sarah Chandler, MFA

Course Description

Travel Writing: the South of France is a travel writing course that dissolves the boundaries of traditional travel writing, inviting students to explore traditional and emerging genres—literature, art, film, reportage, podcasts, blogs and social media—to examine how one of Europe’s most celebrated regions is represented in the popular imagination. Who has created the enchanting fantasy of the South of France, and how has it been packaged and marketed to the world? As our globalized age brings an unprecedented number of tourists, what are the ethical challenges for those who create stories and “content” about this complex region? As we explore Montpellier and surrounding cities on foot and by train, we will interact with local culture makers—from chefs and winemakers to artists and tourism professionals—to immerse ourselves in the region’s unique ecology, gastronomy and arts. By keeping a daily travel journal, learning from professional writers and journalists, and collaborating on a multimodal place-based project, students will hone their narrative voices while gaining the skills necessary to confidently write about travel, landscape, food and culture.

Course Objectives

- A focus on experiential learning, including site visits and field trips, will allow students to gain insight into France’s rich cultural and ecological heritage.
- Students will read and write across the diverse travel writing genre.

- Students will practice critical thinking, research, speaking and writing skills through analyzing, composing and presenting multimodal texts.
- By examining how the region is portrayed through media, students will enhance their rhetorical awareness and digital literacy.
- Through peer writing workshops and project-based work, students will experience collaboration and community building.
- Guest lectures will afford students the chance to learn how local writers, cultural and civic figures create and communicate narratives about the region.
- By connecting with professionals in the media, cultural and tourism sectors, students will gain career awareness.

Methodology

Course Cadence

Class seminars meet 3-4 mornings and afternoons per week, with some afternoons and weekends and national holidays free for individual study and exploration of the city and the nearby beaches and coastal areas. Some weeks we will also meet on an additional day for a group excursion: either within Montpellier, or another city, village, or natural landscape in the surrounding regions of Provence and the Languedoc.

Conferences

Students will have one individual instructor conference to help you prepare your final project. I will also be available for additional conferencing and conversation through in-person office hours whenever you want to talk about any aspect of your work and the course.

- Interactive lectures and discussions of course texts and site visits will furnish cultural and historical context on the region.
- Walking, culinary and art tours will promote experiential learning and cultural immersion.
- Students will complete weekly journal entries and site visit reflections.
- Guest lectures, field trips and site visits will allow students to engage with professionals working to protect and area's rich cultural and ecological heritage.
- By writing place-based narratives in the form of blog posts and other digital stories, students will learn how a living place is represented in the digital world.
- Peer writing workshops will build collaborative skills and foster a sense of community.
- As a culmination of course practices, students will create a public-facing multimodal travel narrative.

Required Reading / Materials

- Buford, Bill. "Baking Bread in Lyon." *The New Yorker*, 6 April 2020.
- Collins, Lauren. *When in France*. Penguin, 2017.
- Druckerman, Pamela. "Forget the Emily in Paris fantasy tour, it's not a patch on the life I live here." *The Guardian*, 24 September 2023.
- Druckerman, Pamela. "Sunday chicken and 'consensual' wine: A non-exhaustive guide to life in France." *Le Monde*, 16 August 2023.
- Elkin, Lauren. *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2017.
- "Emily in Paris." *Emily in Paris*, created by Darren Star, season 1, episode 1, Darren Star Productions, 2020.
- Hewitt, Nicholas. *Wicked City: The Many Cultures of Marseille*. C. Hurst and Co., 2019.
- "Marseille." *Parts Unknown*, created by Anthony Bourdain, season 3, episode 47, Zero Point Zero Productions, 2015.
- Mayle, Peter. *A Year in Provence*. Vintage, 1991.
- Pitts, Jonny. *Afropean: Notes from Black Europe*. Penguin, 2019.
- *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The Studio of the South*. The Art Institute of Chicago, 2001.
- Sedaris, David. *Me Talk Pretty One Day*. Little, Brown and Company, 2000.
- White, Edmund. *The Flaneur: A Stroll through The Paradoxes of Paris*. Bloomsbury, 2015

Supplemental Materials

- *Bonjour Tristesse*. Directed by Otto Preminger, CinemaScope, 1958.
- Miles, Jonathan. *The Once Upon A Time World : The Dark and Sparkling Story of the French Riviera*. Pegasus Books, 2023.
- *To Catch a Thief*. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, Paramount Pictures, 1955.

Grading

Grading Rubric

| Letter Grade | Score or Percentage | Description |
|--------------|---------------------|--|
| A | 93–100 | Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. |
| A- | 90–92 | Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. |
| B+ | 87–89 | |
| B | 83–86 | |
| B- | 80–82 | Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect. |
| C+ | 77–79 | |
| C | 73–76 | |
| C- | 70–72 | Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements. |
| D+ | 67–69 | |
| D | 60–66 | |
| F | 0–59 | Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I. |

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

| Assignments | Percentage of Grade |
|---|---------------------|
| Daily Travel Journal and Weekly Writing Assignments | 40% |
| Reading Responses | 10% |
| Peer Feedback and Writer's Workshop Participation | 10% |
| Class Presentation | 10% |
| Final Multimodal Project | 30% |
| Final Grade | 100% |

Assessment Details

Every week, students will read and discuss texts across the travel writing genre, as well keep a travel journal and write short narrative pieces. In collaborative writing workshops, students will also read and give feedback on one another's work. The course culminates in a final, revised narrative multimodal project aligned to student interest: a blog, online essay with photographs at open access publication such as *Medium*, or a podcast.

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).