

**ENGLISH 2342:**  
**SURVIVORS' TALES -**  
TRUE ADVENTURE – TRAVEL - MEMOIR - AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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**As we Travel into Unknown Lands,  
we Discover great Unexplored Spaces  
in our own Hearts.**

--from the mystic soldier Ernest Psichari  
in *Le Voyage du Centurion*  
(b.1883 Paris, d.1914 in battle at Rossignol)



***Course Description and Policies***

**Required Texts:**

Longo, Louise. Let Me Survive: A True Story of Tragic Loss of Life at Sea. Dobbs Ferry, New York: Sheridan House, 1996. ISBN 1574090062.

Min, Anchee. Red Azalea. New York: Berkley/Penguin, 1994. ISBN 0425147762.

Olson, Danel, Ed. Exotic Gothic: Forbidden Tales from Our Gothic World. Ashton, B.C.: the Ash-Tree Press, 2007. ISBN

Shah, Tahir. Trail of Feathers. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2001. ISBN 1559706775.

Willis, Clint, editor. Adrenaline 2001: The Year's Best Stories of Adventure and Survival. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2001. ISBN: 1560253347

**Audience:**

This course is designed for anyone interested in reading international memoirs, travel literature, or true survivors' stories, and possibly writing them.

**The Authors You Will Read:**

Here we will be citizens of the world, welcomed into the intimate lives and dreams of strangers from Afghanistan, America, Australia, China, Poland, Nepal, England, Zimbabwe, Canada, Australia, Morocco, Kenya, France, Japan, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Peru and South Africa, reporting trouble, adventures, and discoveries from all seven continents.

**Paper Requirements and Worth:**

Five writing experiences form the core of the course:

- 45% I-III. Three creative or analytic papers (750-1000 words each). The papers also have an oral component. (Creative Assn. 1 is worth 5%, and Assns. 2 and 3 are worth 20% each.)
- 25% IV. A Research Paper on a long narrative.
- 15% V. A Final Exam identifying terms, concepts, and book/author passages.
- 15% Frequent Quizzes and Miscellaneous.

**Survivors' Tales Asks:**

- Why do people go on journeys, often perilous or difficult ones, and what do they find there? What is the effect of the journey on loved ones: does a pure following of our desire always mean hurting someone?
- How do the published accounts trigger our own personal survivor stories, transforming our scattered memories into a compelling story?
- Which foreign land which has, however distant, the goal of your wandering? We'll make an itinerary for this voyage that will reveal what is sacred to you, a plan that may be the springboard for actual travel. *Indeed, former students of the course have used their finished itinerary for real, mailing me postcards from Ireland, Germany, Crete, Japan, and beyond.*
- With what cultural lens do we view and sometimes skew what is foreign?
- How does the voyager see the natives, and vice versa, and why so?
- How do travelers manage their fears while lost, hunted, freezing or burning, hungry or parched?
- What are any recurring behaviors or thought patterns under extreme stress, when the person is nearly convinced he or she will fail or die?
- Do we have to face a disaster before our true nature emerges?
- What would we do in a strange land facing the writer's same moral or ethical dilemmas? Do we read travel to become someone else for a time and forget who we are?
- Why do some people, on their way to enlightenment, treasure, or mystery-solving, survive all the ordeals, trauma, and regret, and others not? How far would we go to stay alive? How do people make sense or discover meaning out of a journey's loss? What separates a brilliant quest from a gigantic fool's errand?
- Was it worth getting there, and should some travelers have stayed put rather than left their old lives behind?
- How does journeying stretch a mind, making it unable to return to its old dimensions? What is it the traveler sees at sublime places, like Mount Everest so near the stars?
- Why do some holy roads and pilgrimage accounts tap the collective unconscious, stirring all readers?
- How does travel teach us what is deserves our highest love and attention; how the true search is for what we believe in?
- What is the line between fiction based on real events and true travel & adventure/memoir? Do they overlap? Why do or don't Oprah and the other experts have justified complaint over James Frey's [A Million Little Pieces](#) (2003), spawning [A Million Little Lies](#) and [Little Pieces of Feces](#) (both from 2006)? How can a novel be so "true," as in the case of British intelligence using Englishwoman Anne Bridge's [Frontier Passage](#) (1942) to mount a second front in Spain during WWII?

- What are handy survival strategies if ever you're trapped in mountains, stuck in deserts, held hostage by guerillas/terrorists/or sex-maniacs, exposed to Ebola, jumped by injured leopards, shipwrecked, run over by rutting bull camels, imprisoned for 20 years by a Moroccan king, trailed by the FBI, shot by Nazis, solitarily confined by an Apartheid state, witness to a lynching, chatted up by a serial killer, fired on the battlefield, or investigating a double-murder with the perpetrator nearby?

### **General Department Goals for All Sophomore Literature Courses:**

Our response, critical, and research papers will uncover new principles in the literature, suggest relationships that were previously unrecognized, and challenge existing assumptions. Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

- Focus a topic and formulate a critical/analytical thesis appropriate for an academic audience that analyzes literature and/or nonfiction.
- Use appropriate print and on-line resources to find reference materials specific to particular disciplines.
- Use a variety of organizational strategies within a single paper to support a thesis.
- Write clear, correct, and appropriate sentences avoiding major grammatical and semantic problems that confuse readers.
- Analyze a text/argument according to purpose, audience, theme, and technique.
- Analyze texts logically in the context of writers' diverse backgrounds and values.
- Recognize the elements of appropriate literary genres.
- Synthesize and evaluate various interpretations of texts to complete an extended research project.
- Incorporate quotations and paraphrases in papers while avoiding plagiarism.
- Follow MLA guidelines in documenting sources.

### **Feedback:**

When you receive your graded papers, read my comments carefully. My reactions are the one chance I have to give you individualized instruction, and I will expect you to apply my suggestions in succeeding papers. Unannounced, frequent quizzes on the day's reading are meant to insure you read the essays with sensitivity.

For each writing experience I give an assignment sheet that offers background to the literature, problems to tackle, strategies on structuring your paper, and guidelines on how the paper is graded.

### **Attendance:**

1. If you miss \_\_\_ class periods, a withdrawal notice may be sent to the registrar, dropping you from the course.
2. If you wish to withdraw from the course and receive a 'W' grade, do so before the cutoff withdrawal date.
3. Class will begin promptly at the time stated. If you are ten minutes late or more, consider it an absence and do not disrupt the class.
4. Three tardies will equal one absence.
5. Give your undivided attention to this class while you are here. Do not read newspapers, write letters, study for other tests, or chat during class time.
6. Please don't leave the classroom once we've started.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act Statement:**

If you have a disability, I will assist you in any way I can to promote your success in the course. It is of course your decision to discuss the disability with me. I can best assist you if this information is made known early in the semester by way of private and confidential consultation. Please consult the Counseling Center for more detailed information about assistance.

### **Make-up Policy:**

1. Quizzes cannot be made-up, though I will drop your lowest quiz grade. If you come late to class while a quiz is being answered, I can't give you the quiz but I can let it be the one dropped quiz grade.
2. **Late papers/assignments (of any kind) will lose 10 points for each calendar day.** Late papers are any turned in after class has dismissed for the day.
3. Ten points are taken off papers when no copies of the rough draft are brought on the rough draft workshop day.

**Paper Format:**

Please type all out of class papers. Always double-space and leave one-inch margins on all four sides of the paper for my comments. Use your spell check program, and also check for grammar problems. Please staple together the pages of your paper before coming to class, and please do not enclose your paper in a plastic folder.

All in class work must be printed, not written in cursive. Skip every other line, leave a margin of one inch on the left and right, use blue or black ink, and write on one side of the paper only (no spiral notebook paper).

I will not accept any paper that does not meet the above specifications.

**Plagiarism and Collusion:**

Plagiarism is a grave offense. Any time you submit another student's paper as your own work, quote directly from or borrow the words and ideas of another writer without giving proper credit, you commit plagiarism. Any student who plagiarizes will receive an automatic 'F' on the paper and possibly in the course.

Collusion is a type of plagiarism. Do not buy papers, or allow anyone (family or friend) to write or edit your papers. The papers you write in this class should be entirely your own. If you use a tutorial service, you and your tutor must read and sign a statement detailing responsibilities of both student and tutor.

**Grades:**

A = 90.0-100   B = 80.0-89.9   C = 70.0-79.9   D = 60.0-69.9   F = Below 60

**If your average falls between grades like, for example, 79.5 to 79.9, your engagement, preparedness, and the quality and amount of your class participation will determine your course grade, rather than an automatic rounding up.**

**Speakers:**

Whenever possible, I invite to class international survivors who have published accounts of their ordeals or works-in-progress. Keep a lookout for these past and future guests—

**Joyce Boatright**, Writing Professor and author of [Telling Your Story: A Basic Guide to Memoir Writing](#) and Blogger of [Restoring Your Life](#), (Journalist who received her first byline at age 15 and has published over five hundred articles about American lifestyle, education, and women's issues).

**Franklyn E. Dailey, Jr.**, author of [My Times With the Sisters ...](#), [The Triumph of Instrument Flight](#), and [Joining the War at Sea 1939-1945](#) (former USNR Captain and writer of WWII naval history, he witnessed sinkings in the Pacific and Atlantic, along with naval rescues of both friends and foes, and searched for lost Flight 19 over the Bermuda Triangle).

**Heino Erichsen**, author with Jean Nelson-Erichsen of [Reluctant Warrior](#) (former German WWII Afrika Korps soldier captured in Atlas Mountains and sent to Texas POW camp).

**Dr. Wei Li**, Writing Professor and Blogger of [My Zhiquing Stories](#) (Witness to Chinese Cultural Revolution).

**Farnoosh Moshiri**, English Professor and Novelist of [At the Wall of the Almighty](#), [The Bathhouse](#), and [Against Gravity](#) (Iranian endurer of brutal revolution and exile).

**Joni Rodgers**, author of Bald in the Land of Big Hair (Actress and survivor of non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma Cancer).

**Nithy Sevanthinathan**, author of "Exploring Africa: an Interactive Journey" (Cyclist of five continents and seventy-three countries between 1989-2000, including a Argentina-to-America trek and an S-curved cycling from Cairo-to-Cape town).

**Jim Willet**, author of Warden: Prison Life and Death from the Inside Out (Huntsville Guard during the longest hostage siege of civilians in U.S. history and Overseer of eighty-nine executions by the State of Texas).

**Jerry Woodfill**, author of Space Acts (Chief NASA Warning System Engineer for all Apollo missions, including the rescued Apollo 13).

# ♦ ENGLISH 2342 ♦

SURVIVORS' TALES: TRAVEL, TRUE ADVENTURE, MEMOIR, & AUTOBIOGRAPHY

*An International Studies Approved Syllabus*

FALL 2007

## August

- 27 Discuss expectations, questions, and papers—Receive Creative Assns. 1 and 2.
- 29 Discuss the journey of the Donner Party, their journal keeping, their later letters, their hopes, survivor guilt, the impossibility for others to understand, and why women outlive men.

## September

### 3 Holiday

- 5 View “Winter” in Ric Burns’ American Experience: The Donner Party;  
Have Read J. Ross Browne, A Dangerous Journey (a handout); Ask what it takes to survive, and whether you too would do *what needs to be done*.
  
- 10 Ryszard Kapuscinski, The Shadow of the Sun (in Adrenaline 2001 321-330);  
Explain Research Paper Topics
- 12 Jeffrey Tayler, Facing the Congo (in Adrenaline 2001 175-218);  
Tim Cahill, “Anybody Seen a Tiger Around Here?” (in Adrenaline 2001 220-234)
  
- 17 Special Guest: **Nithy Sevanthinathan**, author of “Exploring Africa: an Interactive Journey” (Cyclist of five continents and seventy-three countries between 1989-2000, including a Argentina-to-America trek and an S-curved route from Cairo-to-Cape town).
- 19 **Read aloud** written version of Creative Assignment 1 (the Giant Emerald).
  
- 24 Maj. Sullivan Ballou, “Letter to Sarah”; David Howarth, We Die Alone ;  
Tim O’Brien, “On the Rainy River”
- 26 Special Guest: **Heino Erichsen**, author with Jean Nelson-Erichsen of Reluctant Warrior (former German WWII Afrika Korps soldier captured in Atlas Mountains and sent to Texas POW camp).

## October

- 1 Share ORAL VERSION OF “100 Days, \$10000” essay + SUBMIT WRITTEN VERSION
- 3 Share ORAL VERSION OF “100 Days, \$10000” essay + SUBMIT WRITTEN VERSION
  
- 8 Share ORAL VERSION OF “100 Days, \$10000” essay + SUBMIT WRITTEN VERSION
- 10 Tom Clynes, “Dangerous Medicine” (in Adrenaline 2001 47-76); Dr. Kenneth Kamler,  
Doctor on Everest (Adrenaline 2001 in 99-114); I’ll distribute Creative Assignment 3

## October

15 Tahir Shah, Trail of Feathers (1-130)

17 Tahir Shah, Trail of Feathers (131-253)

22 Malika Oufkir, Stolen Lives (in Adrenaline 2001 137-158); Josie Dew, “Bulgarian Struggle”

24 Special Guest: **Franklyn E. Dailey, Jr.**, author of My Times With the Sisters ..., The Triumph of Instrument Flight, and Joining the War at Sea 1939-1945 (former USNR Captain and writer of WWII naval history, he witnessed sinkings in the Pacific and Atlantic, along with naval rescues of both friends and foes, and searched for lost Flight 19 over the Bermuda Triangle).

29 Frank W. Abagnale, Catch Me if You Can

31 *Playing* **To Tell the Truth**: The class day before I will give everyone a brief life tale from a different Adventurer. Study and memorize details from this Survivor’s life and ordeals and become this person—**telling no one in the class your new role!** Only you have this particular handout and only you are this Adventurer, though you will join two other guests today who also claim to be him or her. The rest of the class will search for who really was the survivor, investigating who is really telling the truth. The 3 guests stand at center stage while an affidavit, reciting the story of the true claimant is read aloud; our guests are seated, and the panelists take turns questioning them. The two imposters are free to lie, but the real claimant is sworn to tell the truth. At the questioning’s conclusion, each panelist votes separately, and the identity of the claimant is revealed (“Will the real \_\_\_ name of Survivor here \_\_\_ please stand up?). A guest gets extra credit (10 points) for each time a panelist voted for him or her. A panelist will receive 10 extra credit quiz points if he/she correctly identifies the true Survivor. The game tries to exercise panelists’ ability to ask penetrating and revealing questions and use logic; the real survivor tries to remember what he/she read, and the two ‘imposter’ guests are challenged to recall what it takes to be and sound like a Survivor, imagining and faking the skills, stories, personality, and argot of safari hunters, Antarctic explorers, poisonous serpent handlers, Amazonian kayakers, women traveling solo across continents, and more!

## November

5 Anchee Min, Red Azalea (1-172)

7 Anchee Min, Red Azalea (175-336)

12 Special Guest: **Dr. Wei Li**, English Professor and Blogger of My Zhiqing Stories (Witness to Chinese Cultural Revolution).

14 Joyce Carol Oates, from Beasts (Exotic Gothic ... or EG 269-281);

Thomas Ligotti, “Purity” (EG 238-249); Dr. Burley Packwood, “A Past Life”

19 Douglas Unger, “Tide Pool” (EG 157-169); Greg Child, Fear of Falling (Adrenaline 2001 115-136);  
Anthony Brennan, “A Zambian Nightmare”

21 Louise Longo, Let Me Survive

26 SUBMIT RESEARCH PAPER

Brian Hodge, “Extinctions in Paradise” (EG 136-148);

Farnoosh Moshiri from Against Gravity (EG149-156);

Mark Ross, Dangerous Beauty: Life and Death in Africa—True Stories from a Safari Guide

28 Dr. Ilsa J. Bick, “Bones” (EG 125-135);

Hugh Miller, “Vendetta”; John Wood, “How I Killed Off My Ex-Wife”

3 Peter Crowther, “Rustle” (EG 80-93); Barbara Roden, “The Wide Wide Sea” (EG 282-297);

Stanley Rhine, “The Skeleton in the Closet”

5 SUBMIT CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT 3

David Wellington, “Twilight in the Green Zone” (EG 46-60); Thomas Tessier, “In the Desert of Deserts” (EG 18- 25)

*Take Final Exam to explain terms and ideas & identify authors and works on ... from 1-2:50 in our usual room.*

