

# Writing the Mediterranean: Spain



**A Travel Writing Course, with a Spring Break Trip  
to Barcelona, San Sebastián and Guernica, Spain!**

**Topics in Journalism and Emerging Media  
JRN 04:567:453**

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This Journalism and Media Studies course will introduce you to the basics of travel writing, and offer you an opportunity to practice them, during a magnificent nine-day spring break trip to Barcelona, San Sebastian and Guernica, Spain.

Apply at Rutgers Global, at <https://globaleducation.rutgers.edu>, or contact CGE program specialist Lloyd Pearson, at [lpearson@global.rutgers.edu](mailto:lpearson@global.rutgers.edu)

## Course Description

Draw inspiration from great Mediterranean journeys, and learn to write compelling journey stories of your own. We'll travel with Homer, Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn, George Orwell and other authors through one of the world's grandest regions, as we explore its legacy of war and exodus, cooking and eating, and romance and revenge.

We'll seek to identify common regional themes and challenges, while we read and write about journeying, war, immigration, politics, food and the arts.

At spring break, we'll visit Barcelona, to report on the 24/7 vibe, dazzling architecture and world-class cuisine of Spain's most dynamic city. And we'll explore the gorgeous Basque city of San Sebastián, a recent European Capital of Culture, with its passion for *pintxos*, surfing and revolt. We'll walk along the trail to Santiago de Compostela, the route of Medieval pilgrimage to the end of the world. Then we'll cap off our journey with a visit to Guernica, a town famously bombed by the Nazis during the Spanish Civil War, and immortalized by Pablo Picasso in his iconic painting Guernica.

## Publishing Your Work

Students are encouraged to publish their work, to submit it to the JMS undergraduate magazine *Kairos* <http://kairosmagazine.rutgers.edu/> and to include their favorite pieces in their professional portfolios.

Examples of stories developed in this class published in national magazines and online publications:

**The Legacy of Guernica**, by Matthew Liggio, in *Worldpress*  
<https://www.worldpress.org/Europe/4008.cfm>

**Pintxo Bars – Spain's Social Network**, by Nicholas Irving, in *Transitions Abroad*  
<https://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/articles/pinxto-bars-in-spain-slow-snacks-and-socializing.shtml>

**Travel Spain – Surfing in San Sebastian**, by Jessica Jenkins, in *Wave Journey*  
<https://wavejourney.com/activities/travel-spain-surfing-san-sebastian/>

## Prerequisites

Journalism major, and Writing for Media (04:567:200)

Students enrolled in the JMS “Global Media” specialization

<https://comminfo.rutgers.edu/news/jms-launches-new-specialization-global-media>  
receive priority consideration

## Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students will:

- \* Understand the main forms of travel writing;
- \* Know how to evoke a scene, capture dialogue and develop a narrative;
- \* Understand key themes that underlie nonfiction storytelling about modern Spain and the Mediterranean.

## Key Assignments

- \* Read and analyze great travel literature about the Mediterranean and Spain, to develop an understanding of themes and writing techniques
- \* Practice developing your voice, evoking a scene, capturing dialogue and telling a story
- \* Write a 1,000-word story about a (local) journey – **Due: Feb. 12**
- \* Write an 800-word reported story about a (local) travel destination – **Due: March 5**
- \* In Spain, report a 1,000-word journey or destination story about one facet of our trip. You’ll write and submit your piece after we return home. **Due: April 2**
- \* Optional assignment. To raise your course grade by a half to a full letter, create a 15-picture photo essay, or an audio slideshow or video of at least 90 seconds. **Due: April 16** (the last day of class)

## Grades

Local journey story	25%
Local travel destination story	25%
Class exercises, discussion of readings and other class participation	25%
Spain travel story	25%

Spain photo essay or video  
grade by a half to a full letter

raises the class

## Readings

Readings will focus on classic writing and literature about the Mediterranean and Spain, and will serve as models for your own work.

### **Required Book:**

The New Spaniards / John Hooper

### **Recommended Companion Books for Travel:**

Homage to Barcelona, by Colm Tóibín

The Basque History of the World, by Mark Kurlansky

A guidebook, such as Lonely Planet Spain, The Rough Guide to Spain or Let's Go Spain (or the app versions)

### **I will also provide a course pack of selected readings, drawn from:**

The Buried Mirror / Carlos Fuentes

Cultivating Loneliness / Robert Kaplan

Spain / Jan Morris

The Odyssey / Homer

The Pilgrimage: A Contemporary Quest for Ancient Wisdom (El Camino de Santiago) / Paulo Coelho

Innocents Abroad/ Mark Twain

Don Quixote / Cervantes

The Pillars of Hercules / Paul Theroux

The Longest Way Home / Andrew McCarthy

The Face of War / Martha Gellhorn

For Whom the Bell Tolls / Ernest Hemingway

Homage to Catalonia / George Orwell

Ghosts of Spain: Travels Through Spain and Its Silent Past/ Giles Tremlett

Piecing Together Guernica, by Gijs van Hensbergen

The Food of Spain / Claudia Roden

Homage to Barcelona / Colm Tóibín

Voices of the Old Sea /Norman Lewis

### **Approach**

The course will be divided into three segments:

- 1) Study of classic writing about Mediterranean and Spanish themes, and practice in travel writing techniques
- 2) Our reporting and writing trip to Spain
- 3) Post-trip writing, editing and (optional) photo, slideshow or video creation

## **Provisional Schedule**

### **Week 1 – JAN 15 SPAIN AND THE MEDITERRANEAN**

#### **Introduction and course overview Writing about places**

Discussion of excerpt from “The Buried Mirror,” by Carlos Fuentes  
Discussion of Robert Kaplan’s “Cultivating Loneliness”

In-class writing: Using your five senses to evoke a scene

### **Week 2 -- JAN 22 REGIONALISM**

#### **Separatism and *campanilismo* Barcelona, San Sebastián/Donostia and Guernica**

Please have read for today’s discussion:

“The New Spaniards,” Intro, Chapter 1, Chapters 16 through 20  
“Plural Spain,” (Jan Morris)  
“As Secession Talk Swells in Catalonia, Business Leaders Remain Wary of Costs”

In-class writing: Review of five senses exercise

### **Week 3 -- JAN 29 JOURNEYS**

#### **Writing about quest, yearning and exile The Mediterranean grand tour**

Please have read for today’s discussion:

Selections from: “The Odyssey” (Homer); The Pilgrimage (Coelho); Innocents Abroad (Twain); “Don Quixote” (Cervantes); the Pillars of Hercules (Theroux); The Longest Way Home (Andrew McCarthy)

In-class writing: Voice, first person and the lower-case “I”

**Assignment: Write a 1,000-word story about a journey, using the techniques we are learning about in class.**

**Due: Feb. 12**

#### **Week 4 -- FEB 5 WAR, Part I**

##### **Writing about conflict**

Please have read for today’s discussion:

Selections from: “The Face of War” (Gellhorn); For Whom the Bell Tolls (Hemingway); Homage to Catalonia (Orwell); Ghosts of Spain (Tremlet)

Capturing dialogue. Go out and chronicle a compelling exchange (yes, you are eavesdropping!)

#### **Week 5 -- FEB 12 WAR, Part II**

##### **Screening of the film “Land and Freedom” (109 minutes)**

“Land and Freedom” is set in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War, when volunteers from around the world traveled to Spain to fight what would turn out to be a losing battle against Fascism.

The official trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQXAU-P8Avo>

In-class: Short reflective essay comparing the film with the themes of last week’s reading.

**Journey story due (please post on Blackboard)**

#### **Week 6 -- FEB 19 OUTSIDERS**

##### **Obsessions and stereotypes Destination stories for newspapers and magazines**

Readings: Bring in a travel story about Spain that you like –or hate – and be prepared to critique it in class

Elements of the magazine, newspaper or online travel story

In-class writing: Review of dialogue assignment

**Assignment: Report and write an 800-word destination story of your own, using some of the techniques you are learning in class. Due: March 5**

**Week 7 -- FEB 26 THE ARTS**

**Evoking a place through its art and architecture**

Please have read for today's discussion:

Piecing Together Guernica, by Gijs van Hensbergen  
Gaudi article, TBA

In class writing: anecdotes and narrative; showing vs. telling

**Week 8 -- MAR 5 FOOD**

**How a poor region developed the world's best cuisine**

Please have read for today's discussion:

Excerpts from The Food of Spain (Roden); National Geographic Traveler; AFAR magazine; the blogs Culinary Backstreets and Lobstersquad

Assignment due today: Write a 250-word report about a Catalan or Basque dish, and be prepared to discuss it in class. Please also include one captioned, credited photo.

**Destination story due (please post on Sakai)**

**Week 9 - MAR 12 THE INFLUENCE OF THE SEA**

Please have read for today's discussion: Selection from "Voices of the Old Sea"

In class: Final prep for trip; review plans Spain travel writing assignments

**Week 10**

**AND WE'RE OFF!**

## Spring break trip to Barcelona, San Sebastián, the Road to Santiago di Campostela and Guernica

March 14 - March 22

Each student will report and write at least one pre-assigned travel story, and will have the option of developing an extra-credit visual piece

<b>Week 11 - MAR 26</b>	<b>Day of Rest and Recovery-- No Class</b>
<b>Week 12 – APRIL 2</b> writing workshop	Spain stories due. Please bring your work to class for a writing workshop
<b>Week 13 –APRIL 9</b>	One-on-one editing sessions with professor
<b>Week 14 – APRIL 16</b> submissions due.	Final revisions on stories due. Optional photo and video submissions due.

## Policies

### Attendance

A death in the immediate family or a severe illness (doctor's note required) are the only excuses accepted for absences. Missing more than two classes lowers your final grade by one letter.

### Deadlines

Missing deadline is a grave offense in journalism; a closely-researched, beautifully-written story is of no value if it lands on the editor's desk as the publication is going to print. Accordingly, late assignments will not be accepted. Please complete deadline assignments to the best of your ability within the assigned time frame. This is difficult at first, but gets easier with practice.

### Grading

A= Excellence; the work is publishable with only minor changes.

A-/B+ = Well-written with appropriate use of facts. The article may have a "hole" or need some additional material, but it is free of factual errors and has no more than one or two grammar or punctuation errors.

B = Generally good work. The writing is solid, but the lead needs more work. More factual detail is usually needed.

B-/C+ = Awkward phrasing, syntax, grammar, and punctuation have derailed the piece, distracting from the strengths. More reporting may be needed.

C = Average. Several organizational, writing and/or reporting problems. Contains factual errors or insufficient factual information. Many spelling, grammar and punctuation errors.

C-/D+ = Generally indicates careless work: Factual errors, grammar and punctuation mistakes; word usage problems. Needs more research.

D/D- = Poor work. Many things have gone wrong. Please meet with me.

F= Please meet with me to discuss your work, and to set up a plan for improvement.

### **Academic Misconduct**

Disruptive classroom behavior, cheating, and plagiarism can jeopardize your standing in this class. Plagiarism, the use of work (ideas, words, images, tables, code, mathematical formulas) other than your own without appropriate attribution, will result in an automatic “F” for the course, and possibly further disciplinary action. Do your own work. Ignorance of the rules is not justification for plagiarism. Make sure you understand how to attribute work for printed and online sources.

### **Submitting Assignments**

Please post all completed assignments to the class **Sakai** site. I will return your work, with comments and grades, on the same interface. **Please do not email me assignments.**

### **If You Have Special Needs**

Please contact me privately to discuss your needs if you believe you require course accommodations based on the impact of a disability or medical condition, or if you have emergency medical information to share. You must provide me with a copy of your accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, so I can make appropriate arrangements.

**I look forward to working, and traveling, with you!**

