

# ADVENTURE JOURNALISM

IN GILDED AGE: ESSAYS

## FROM THE ARCTIC TO THE ORIENT



Katrina Quinn, Mary Cronin, and Lee Jolliffe, editors

### FYS 013: Adventure Journalists

Class built from a book co-authored & edited by your instructor

From Marco Polo to Nellie Bly to Bear Grylls, adventure journalists have roamed the globe, sending back exotic reports, photos, and films. We'll read works from and about these adventure journalists. And we'll write and photograph our own urban adventure, as well as analyzing the works of others.

#### Course Description with Major Topics

The journey or adventure tale is among humanity's greatest archetypal tales, manifest throughout history in fictional and nonfictional works, taking on a variety of narrative forms. Epics such as Homer's *Odyssey* established the journey motif as well as the traveler-hero figure, embodied with the bravery, intelligence, and resourcefulness needed to wrestle with the natural world and its inhabitants.

This course launches with readings from early adventure writers Pliny the Younger, Marco Polo, Sir Richard F. Burton, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. We also read travel segments from Olaudah Equiano, kidnapped into slavery as a child, who bought his freedom in 1766.

Some readings come from the professor's guest edited *Journalism History* special issue and her edited book, *Adventure Journalists of the Gilded Age: [Essays] From the Arctic to the Orient*, with articles on the adventure reporting that took hold during the Gilded Age. Fueled by avid public readership, this reporting style flourished for two decades in the Yellow Press newspapers, before gradually becoming a staple of twentieth century media--in special-audience magazines, radio, films, and television. As explorers of the genre, we too will move forward in time, reading and viewing adventure reporting from the 1600s to the present day.

What differentiated adventure journalists in the Gilded Age from earlier travel writers was their sponsorship by news media and their placement in their own stories. They were sent out by newspaper publishers to provide day-by-day accounts of their journeys. Unlike the "objective" reporting we value most in our news, these writers placed themselves onstage as actors in the drama, writing in the first person. They sought out new, exotic, often dangerous locales specifically in order to send home tales of their own derring-do to an audience hungry for their stories. They brought skills of observation, investigative minds, a commitment to truth-telling, description and details, and a sense of news – what in this day's adventure was important, unique, or exciting.

They became the forerunners of a new genre, the adventure report with the reporter at the center. New technologies arrived at intervals over the next 120 years but these were quickly adopted as new ways of expressing the original concept: "Come on an adventure with me."

Major topics in this course will include:

- Introductions, Self-assessment, and Planning
- Precursors: Travel writers from Pliny the Younger to Mary Kingsley: writers whose works influenced the rising genre of adventure journalism
- Gilded Age Adventure Journalists: Founding of a Genre and an Empire: their lives, stories, and influence
- Carrying the Torch: Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Adventurers, *National Geographic*, and New Technologies (color photos & radio)
  - Radio ("Hear It Now")
  - Sensational journeys (Slocum, *Kontiki*, North Pole and Everest)
- Adventure in your Living Room: From "Wild Kingdom" to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
  - Enabling the reader/viewer: *Outside Magazine*
  - TV series and films (Bear Grylls, Jon Bowermaster)
  - Photographers (Reaching out to Dr. Jolliffe alums James Bridgeford II in South America, Erika Norteman's world travels as a nature photographer as Zoom class speakers).

### **How Does the Course Meet FYS Goals**

The course includes frequent reading of primary documents (travel reports, requiring information literacy to locate and acquire) and offers one critical framework with which to examine them (the Jolliffe rubric in "Introduction", *Journalism History*, Spring 2016). The rubric is arguably too narrow,<sup>1</sup> which provides you with opportunities in class and in your writing to consider how to use and to expand a critical framework.

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<sup>1</sup> I kept the rubric narrow for purposes of the *Adventure Journalists* book, because the genre in the 1880s did fit the rubric well. Notice that I ruled out war reporting for inclusion, as well as travel books meant to raise money for more travel by hobbyists. (And notice my snide description of the book authors.)

As the course progresses, additional critical systems will be discussed and applied (race and racial placements of “self” and “other” will play a large part in our examinations of all texts and photographic materials. We’ll also look at issues in framing biography (when writing about these reporters, when viewing films made about them) and specific logical dangers in applying historical methods with some teaching drawn from *Historian’s Fallacies*.

## **Learning Goals**

On the one hand, you’ll be learning about these reporters and the demands and milieus of their eras.

On the other hand, you’ll learn there are many frameworks in which to view their lives and works, and using several of those frameworks in papers to analyze particular adventurers (thus learning both information literacy and some versatility in applying more than one method of analysis).

You’ll learn and practice many “soft skills” that employers look for (per surveys of hiring managers), such as being collaborative, innovative, intellectually curious, technically savvy (not that you can DO everything, but that you see the many possibilities of tech), problem-solving, can work globally with a respect for difference, and of course, the oral and written communication skills we hope any FYS would teach.

Finally, you’ll test out what it means to be an adventure reporter by exploring an unusual venue in the virtual world and reporting on it as a group project. Learning goal includes teamwork and camaraderie, as well as [online] event planning and performance.

## **Assignments and Course Plan Day-by-Day**

These are in a separate file called “Modules for Adventure Journalists.” Consider adding the due dates to your master calendar, because there are quite a few, given the readings, short writing assignments, and projects.

## **About the Instructor**

This is the bio of me that appears in a recent book: Dr. Jolliffe is a Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication and is editor and co-author of the upcoming book *Adventure Journalists of the Gilded Age: Essays on Reporting From the Arctic to the Orient*, upcoming from McFarland late this fall, with Katrina Quinn and Mary Cronin. She has written over 80 academic articles and book chapters for *American Periodicals*, *Journalism Quarterly*, *Journalism Educator*, *Journal of Popular Culture*, *Journalism History*, and other journals. She has also won numerous teaching awards. She served for 10 years on the Magazine Division Executive Board for the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. Dr. Jolliffe came to academia after heading up Battelle Institute’s Editorial Department, where she helped generate over \$950 million in grant awards and oversaw 55 people and a multi-million-dollar budget.

## **Office Hours**

I’d love to meet with you, but by the safest method possible. Reach out to me at 515-577-2030 with a text and I will phone you back on Facetime or Skype or Zoom (your choice), any time from 10 am to 8 pm, Mon-Sat. (The truth is, I’ll meet with you nearly any time you need advising. Text me your name and which of my classes you’re in and I’ll get back with you as soon as I’m able to.) Be warned that I don’t pick up any phone calls from unknown numbers. Our meetings will always start with a text you send.

## Course Grade and Policies

Grading is based on a total of points earned for attendance, in-class quizzes, eager participation in projects, a portfolio of work by your teams that highlights what you contributed (that is, a , . Rubrics are provided with each assignment, and you will receive available points for each assignment based on how creative and well-executed your work is.

Your final grade will be lowered for frequent absence not due to illness or other extenuating circumstance. This includes absence from planned team meetings. Extended illnesses or other situations that result in extended absences cannot be made up because discussion and team project work with others is so key to this course. Dropping the class would be your best option in that circumstance.

### Grading:

97-100	A+
94-96	A
93-90	A-
89-87	B+
86-84	B
83-80	B-
79-77	C+
76-74	C
73-70	C-
69-67	D+
66-64	D
63-60	D-
Below 60	Failing

**Academic dishonesty:** See the Drake SJMC website and review the SJMC plagiarism policy. Plagiarism is stealing another person’s work – including creative work and visual presentation – and passing it off as your own. I will not tolerate plagiarism. In the real world, plagiarism and its accompanying sin, fabrication, are grounds for dismissal from a job. If you are academically dishonest in any way in my classes, you will fail the class and I will recommend you be expelled from the Journalism School if that is your home school. (I am reputedly a “softie” in many ways, but here you’ll find I am rock-solid. No cheating!)

**Incompletes:** “Incomplete” final grades are available only for emergencies and only if a student is averaging at least a “B” grade. Also, simply turning in assignments is not sufficient to complete the course. If you must be gone more than a week, you would miss a large portion and take an incomplete. I generally require students who need an incomplete due to illness to attend the class the following semester.

The “mercy” incomplete: Should you attend class regularly and do all your work up to the final, then somehow not follow directions about how to turn in your final project, you may find you’ve been assigned a “mercy” incomplete, while I await your printed final project.

**Attendance:** See the Drake SJMC website to review the SJMC attendance policy. Class attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will lower your grade. Absences may be excused if you are sick or have a family emergency, though.

**Do text or email me in advance of the class you’ll miss, so that I can save materials and notes especially for you.**

In-class work missed during unexcused absences receives an “F” and may not be made up. This usually consists of quick quizzes on the week’s readings and viewings.

**Extra credit:** You'll have enough demands on your time doing quality work on the required assignments and readings. **I do make note, though, when I see one student helping another, when anyone goes the extra mile to get work done or make life smoother for everyone.**

**Accommodation:** If you have a disability and will require academic accommodations in this course, I would be happy to discuss your needs. Accommodations are coordinated through Student Disability Services. Please contact Michelle Laughlin, Student Disability Services coordinator, at 281-1835 or [michelle.laughlin@drake.edu](mailto:michelle.laughlin@drake.edu).

## **Other Resources for You**

First Year Seminar Web Page: <http://www.drake.edu/ds/fysstudentpage.html> for links to advice on writing, issues of academic integrity, and general information on the program.

The Writing Workshop web page will help you schedule an appointment to meet with a tutor and discuss assignments: <http://www.drake.edu/artsci/english/workshop.html> The Writing Workshop itself is located in Cowles Library and generally has hours Sunday through Thursday, including evenings. Watch for the specific schedule for this term when it is published, usually 2 or so weeks after the beginning of classes. Sign-up is via the online site. It is a free service provided by the English Department.