English 364 WI: Non-Fiction Prose—Life Writing and British Expository Prose
Craig Howes

I. Course Description

Great Britain has often claimed pre-eminence in the literary genres of biography, autobiography, and intellectual and journalistic prose, and London has been the setting for a remarkable number of the most evocative and critical texts ever written on urban cultural life. In this Study Abroad version of English 364 WI: Non-fiction Prose, students will be introduced to these genres, and those of the essay, the interview, and other prose forms that describe life in London from a range of historical, class, and gender perspectives.

We'll start with Peter Ackroyd's London: A Biography, a great introduction to the history of the city written by one of its most noted novelists, biographers, and critics. (I will encourage students to read this very substantial book before we arrive in England.) With this historical and geographical map in hand, the course will then proceed historically, starting with the late seventeenth century diaries of Samuel Pepys, whose accounts of London life during the Plague and the Great Fire are compelling portraits of life in the city during the Restoration. In the eighteenth century, Dr. Samuel Johnson is certainly a candidate for the title of England's greatest biographer, greatest subject for a biography, and most famous citizen of London, and his work especially on Richard Savage offers a warts-and-all account of the city in the mid-1700s. James Boswell in his Life of Samuel Johnson not only gives us a remarkably detailed portrait of London intellectual life, but his private journals provide a glimpse into a far wider range of urban experience.

Nineteenth century English autobiographical and expository prose offers some astounding insights into the capitol city of a country swiftly becoming a world power. Thomas de Quincey's Confessions of An English Opium Eater, Henry Mayhew's London Labour and London Poor, and Frederick Engels', The Condition of the Working Classes in England are classics of prose as cultural critique, while Pierce Egan's Life in London is a comic and satiric sketch of high life and the underworld.

In the twentieth century an entire intellectual community produced landmark autobiographical, biographical, and intellectual prose. Leon Edel's Bloomsbury: A House of Lions will provide an overview of this group of artists and writers, followed by close study of Lytton Strachey's Eminent Victorians and Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own, and selections from her letters.

As Regina Gagnier has noted out in Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain 1832-1920, a huge number of women, working class men, and other marginalized populations in Britain also began finding ways to document their lives. We will draw from some of these narratives to study modes of autobiography; Juliette Atkinson's Victorian
Biography Reconsidered provides excellent commentary on the general impulse to preserve usually unrecorded or unacknowledged experience.

Attention to matters of class and social justice also motivate Carolyn Kay Steedman's autobiography Landscape for a Good Woman, and Alexander Masters's Stuart: A Life Backwards a remarkable biography/memoir that is also formally innovative. I will also be providing selections from very recent lifewriting texts, to capture a sense of the cultural and racial diversity of London today as an international city.

A number of field trips will take us to the locations delineated in the narratives discussed. London is a city of neighborhoods, and for each century, we will explore its legacy in civic architecture, but also in the current sense of place, whether in the Strand or the Theatre district, or the historical East End locations of poverty, or the intellectual life of Bloomsbury, or even the contemporary areas of urban sprawl and working class habitation.

And as they read first- and third-person accounts of London and British life, the students will also be contributing to this literature by keeping their own London Journal, shared periodically with the instructor, that records their own wanderings and observations about the city that will be their residence for several months.

II. Student Learning Outcomes—Study Abroad Program and English Department

English 364 WI: Non-Fiction Prose—Life Writing and British Expository Prose is designed to achieve the following Study Abroad Program and SAC Course Student Learning Outcomes, as well as those found in the Department of English Student Learning Outcomes Statement. In each case, the SLO's link to a course specifically designed for London will be explained.

A. SAC Program and Course Student Learning Outcomes

Since the Program and the Course SLOs are so integrated in their emphasis on knowledge, understanding, analysis, and respect for different national and regional cultures and disparate viewpoints, I have supplied course specific information that nevertheless addresses the larger programmatic concerns.

1. Students will demonstrate awareness of their own cultural values and biases and how these impact their ability to work with others.

All of the texts and the field trips will direct the students toward situating the attitudes and ideologies of the historical periods and the class positions of the writers studied. London has always been a highly diverse environment, with huge disparities in class and opportunity. The London Journal assignment and the chronological range of the readings
will allow the students to historicize and to analyze the often highly personal, yet culturally representative, nature of reading and writing about lives in London.

2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of diversity with a focus on the population or topic of interest in the specific Study Abroad program.

Life writing and non-fiction prose more generally are the genres of history and cultural preservation. Both the primary and secondary readings offer insight into very different backgrounds that nevertheless have made up the shared experience of being Londoners.

3. Students will demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints.

Since life writing has historically made possible registering disparity even within dominant, or even imperial societies, the students will gain a very strong sense of how people for hundreds of years have talked back, and insisted on a multiplicity of viewpoints, and also recognize how different genres—the interview, the report, the letter, the diary—actually construct different kinds of subjects.

B. English Department Student Learning Outcomes

The English Department general Student Learning Outcomes statement indicates that "students develop advanced skills as readers, writers, and interpreters of texts across a variety of genres and rhetorical situations . . . as part of a challenging program in literary and cultural studies, English language studies, composition and rhetoric, and creative writing." As a London Study Abroad course, English 462 WI: Studies in Drama will not directly address the English SLO that students will "recognize Hawai‘i’s geographic and cultural location in the Pacific," although we certainly will draw on the students' experience as residents of Hawai‘i and the Pacific, and as students at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, to explore the contrasts and commonalities between actions of social critique and their targets in British and European theatre, and in historical and contemporary Oceania.

Here are the SLOs from the English department's undergraduate curriculum map that will govern English 364 WI.

1. Students will use secondary sources in the interpretation of texts

In this course, a number of the primary texts—Ackroyd, Edel, Strachey, Woolf, for instance—can also serve as secondary texts, providing context for the literary and journalistic prose produced in the period described. Ganier's and Atkinson's work provides strong context for life narratives. In London, secondary sources will also include the National Portrait Gallery, the British Library, the Museum of London, and a host of other resources.
2. Students will develop skill in reading

The reading in the class will be extensive, and cover a range of historical periods and styles, including dream narratives (De Quincey), urban history (Ackroyd), primary source documents (Pepys, Boswell, Woolf), and journalistic and intellectual prose (Mayhew, Masters).

3. Students will develop skill in writing

Because English 364 is a writing intensive class, there will be a substantial number of writing assignments—essays, postings, a London journal. All essays will be discussed in individual conferences with the instructor, followed by detailed revision, insuring that students will be receiving instruction at all stages of the writing process.

4. Students will develop skill in interpretation of texts

The historical range and class diversity of the readings will strengthen students' abilities to recognize a substantial number of the rhetorical strategies and levels of style to be found in English prose. And with understanding of the linguistic markers of class, education, and literary environment, the students will also become more confident and adept at understanding what can initially seem alien.

5. Students will become familiar with a wide variety of genres and rhetorical situations

It is hard to imagine a wider variety of genres and rhetorical situations than those encountered in the field of life writing. Students will be reading letters, diaries, journalism pieces, historical overviews, memoirs, group biographies, polemical essays, political exposés, class testimonies, interviews—certainly a wide range of genres.

The following Student Learning Outcomes for Writing Intensive courses will also shape the course curriculum.

1. Students will write postings about texts read and the field trips; the essays will go through extensive revision after mandatory conferences.

2. Students will keep an ongoing London Journal that will gather together notes on the reading, observations on London life as a Study Abroad student, and first-hand accounts of activities in the city.
Course Syllabus for Faculty Resident Directorship, London Program Spring 2017

ENGLISH 364 WI: NON-FICTION PROSE—LIFE IN BRITAIN

Instructor: Craig Howes

3 Credits, 45 contact hours

Pre-requisites: Consent of the Instructor

Texts

Primary Texts

Peter Ackroyd, *London: A Biography*
Samuel Pepys, From the *Diary*
Samuel Johnson, *The Life of Savage*
James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson,* and *The London Journals* (Selections)
Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*
Pierce Egan, *Life in London*
Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and London Poor* (Selections)
Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Classes in England* (Selections)
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own,* and selections from *Letters and Diaries*
Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*
Leon Edel, *Bloomsbury: A House of Lions*
Carolyn Kay Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*
Alexander Masters, *Stuart: A Life Backwards*

A selection of contemporary narratives, based on recent publications

Critical and Theoretical Texts

Juliette Atkinson, *Victorian Biography Reconsidered*
Reginia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain 1832-1920*

Course Requirements

A. Attendance, Participation, Assignment Reading, Field Trips
B. An individual "London Journal," comprised of weekly entries about the experience of the Study Abroad Program, within the context of British life writing prose
C. Six Postings on the course materials, read by all students, and due every other week
D. Four five-page papers—with revisions
E. Mandatory conferences with the instructor for all papers.
F. A final examination
General Weighting for Grades

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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postings (Six)</td>
<td>18 (Half off if late)</td>
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<td>The London Journal</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>One Class Presentation</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Four short papers, with revisions</td>
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<td>Final Examination</td>
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A = 85%  B = 75%  C=60%  D=50%  F = less than 50%

Because of the nature of the Study Abroad Program, attendance is assumed; if students miss more than two classes, 2% will be taken off for each absence.

Additional Guidelines

1. This course will essentially be a group directed reading. You will have a substantial number of texts to read and trips to attend. Please keep up with the reading; you will receive detailed instructions about what you're responsible for every day.

2. You must complete ALL the assignments to receive a grade in the course. I will also be using pluses and minus for the individual assignments, and for the concluding grade. I do not take marks off for late assignments, largely because I've found that students do a very good job of penalizing themselves. I will not, however, accept an assignment until I have received the previous assignment, and we have conferenced about it.

7. Postings should be submitted by midnight of the due date. If they are late, you get half credit, and you still must still complete them.

4. The papers will deal with the assigned texts, integrating the narratives into historical, geographical, generic context. A number of suggested topics will be provided; students may also design their own topics. There will be mandatory conferences for all papers. Revisions turned in within a week of the conference will get the second grade.

5. Especially since I will be working with you closely on your writing, and supervising revisions, academic honesty is important. Plagiarized materials will result in an automatic F for any assignment; anything further will result in an F on the course. Just don't.

6. Many of the materials in this class deal with such issues as ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexual identity, and relationship to land and place. Precisely because these all affect us personally, and differently, mutual respect and consideration in the classroom is essential so that we can all have an intellectually safe and unthreatening environment.
Week by Week Syllabus for English 364 WI:
Non-fiction Prose—Life in Britain

There will be at least four mandatory trips to neighborhoods and regions—the City, Bloomsbury, Westminster, and the South Bank—and visits to major institutions that provide historical context—the British Library, the British Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, and the Museum of London. Optional tours through other areas will be available as well.

This syllabus is based on a fourteen week semester. Since I do not know the number of classes a week, or the specific days, I will describe what will happen each week.

Week One: Introduction to Course, and to London

Texts: Peter Ackroyd, London: A Biography

As the biographer of William Blake, Charles Dickens, T.S. Eliot, and Oscar Wilde, Peter Ackroyd probably knows London as well as any major writer. His "Biography" of the city will provide us with a map for situating virtually all of the succeeding texts, and with a historical sense of the city as a living, changing, yet enduring entity.

Week Two: Pepys, Johnson, and the City

Texts: Samuel Pepys, From the Diary, Samuel Johnson, The Life of Savage

No one gives us a better account of life in the City of London during the Restoration than Samuel Pepys—the theatres, the political intrigues, the Great Plague, and the Great Fire. His diary is an eye-witness account of an important player in the court, and also a highly engaging read. Johnson gives us a detailed account of the lives of young writers trying to survive in the literary center of the English-speaking world—his descriptions of the London streets, the publishing industry, and his own struggles to survive are riveting. And of course, as the writer who famously remarked that to be tired of London is to be tired of life, he also provides some of the most familiar and affectionate writing about his city.

Week Three: Johnson, Boswell, and London

Texts: James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, and The London Journals (Selections)

Boswell provides a number of perspectives on London lives. Most famously, he is the chronicler of the life of Samuel Johnson, his older friend and mentor, so we will read a number of sections from his biography that describe Johnson, and often Boswell as well, in London. But Boswell is also one of the most prolific self-chroniclers in British history, and
his detailed, uncensored accounts of his own activities in London offers an insight into areas of the city, and into the lives of affluent men who indulge in the pleasure of the metropolis.

Tour of the City and the Strand

Week Four: London at Night, the Adventures of a Man About Town, and an Addict

Texts: Pierce Egan, Life in London; Thomas de Quincey, Confessions of an English Opium Eater

Pierce Egan's lively accounts of London nightlife in the early 1800s gave his readers access to the entertainments, the pleasures, and the dangers of the City after dark. De Quincey's account of roaming the streets in poverty presents a far darker, more frightening, but perhaps more accurate account of what London could be like for a person without means or hope. Both narratives provide strikingly personal narratives, offered in different styles, of the urban landscape.

Hand in first installment of London Journal

Week Five: Lives, Politics, and Economics: Life Writing as Social Protest

Texts: Henry Mayhew, London Labour and London Poor (Selections); Frederick Engels, The Condition of the Working Classes in England (Selections)

Critical Text: Juliette Atkinson, Victorian Biography Reconsidered

Mayhew once said that for the more affluent, the lives of the lowest impoverished classes of Londoners are actually more mysterious and foreign than tribes and peoples in distant lands. First appearing in serial form in the Morning Chronicle, Mayhew's huge collection of interviews and portraits of individuals created a panoramic group biography of London's most ignored and often desperate citizens. Engels meticulously describes what industrialization has done to the lives of its workers, suggesting in the process that these stories collectively present us with a society that is unsustainable.

Hand in First Essay; sign up for conference

Week Six: Bloomsbury—Its Life Writers, and Its Historians

Text: Leon Edel, Bloomsbury: A House of Lions

Edel's engaging group history of what became known as the Bloomsbury group is a narrative that offers us insight not only into the individuals who made up this group of writers, artists, and intellectuals, but also into the cultural and aesthetic importance of their
relations, through a series of linked chapters. This book will provide an introduction to a community, in both geographical and sociological senses.

**Tour of Bloomsbury and Surroundings—British Museum**

**Week Seven: Virginia Woof—Essayist and Life Writer**

*Texts:* Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, and selections from *Letters and Diaries*

As the daughter of Leslie Stephen, arguably the most influential literary biographer since Dr. Johnson thanks to his involvement with *Dictionary of National Biography*, Virginia Woolf was highly familiar with life writing, and also with the restrictions that gender and economic dependence imposed upon women and others as well. *A Room of One’s Own*, her series of lectures on Women and Literature, are also highly evocative of places in Oxbridge and London. (Her descriptions of the British Library in the British Museum, and London street life are especially fine.) And her letters and journals offer remarkable insights into the daily scene in London among the learned classes.

**Week Eight: Lytton Strachey—Eminent Victorians and Group Biography**

*Text:* Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*

Strachey is one of the most important theorists of biography, largely because of the introduction to this collection of four brief lives. We will focus in on his role as smasher of icons, but in the process, also study the British talent for creating and institutionalizing such icons. We’ll pay special attention to his remarks about the functions of biography.

**Tour of National Portrait Gallery, National Gallery, and Westminster**

**Hand in Second Essay; sign up for conference**

**Week Nine: Representing Themselves—Working Class Autobiography**

*Texts:* Selections from Working Class Narratives and the Mass Observation Project

*Critical Text:* Reginia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain 1832-1920*

As Reginia Gagnier has shown, a whole archive of working class writing provided access to the lives of British individuals in their own words. The Mass Observation Project of the 1930s also recorded the lives and opinions of those generally ignored, in some of the first and most important sociological research into self-representation and commemoration
of those who labor. We well look at a number of such narratives, but also examine carefully the assumptions and methods that governed their collection.

**Hand in Second Installment of London Journal**

**Week Ten: Literacy Narratives—Family and Class**

*Text:* Carolyn Kay Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman*

This account of growing up in a working class environment in the 1950s is a striking portrait of post-World War II Britain, of the expectations working class girls could legitimately have, and also of the impact such living conditions had on the relations between parents and children. Steedman captures both the damaging aspects of poverty, and the consequences of benign neglect on the part of the more affluent. This text will give students a very good sense of just how pervasive class assumptions are in Britain, and the impact they have on self-consciousness and social life.

**Week Eleven: Post-Thatcher Britain—Disability, Unemployment, and Narrative Form**

*Text:* Alexander Masters, *Stuart: A Life Backwards*

This biography/memoir tells the story of a friendship in the 1980s between a more privileged writer and social advocate, and Stuart Shorter, an often homeless, mentally disabled individual with an extensive criminal record. This book brings together a number of the themes we will have been exploring, but also takes the highly innovative path of telling the life of Shorter backwards, starting from his violent death, and moving through his life toward his earliest years. As a result, the layers of criminality, mental illness, poverty, and abuse peel away, eventually leaving us with a young boy, already in bad circumstances, but apparently with the potential not to live the life he did.

**Tour of Official London—Whitehall, the Government Buildings, the Inns of Court and the New Court, the Hospitals (St. Barts), and the business center**

**Hand in Third Essay; sign up for conference**

**Weeks Twelve Through Fourteen: Today's Lives in London**

*Texts:* A selection of contemporary narratives, drawn from recent memoirs, magazine profiles, performance pieces, and other lifewriting forms

To insure timeliness, I will be selecting these narratives closer to the residence time. I have close connections with the Center for Life-Writing Research at King’s College London, as an advisor on their Ego-Media grant, which supports critical studies of
contemporary lives in a variety of electronic media. At least some of our final narratives will be drawn from online sources; others from contemporary publishing. These texts will account for the racial and cultural diversity of the current city, due to a century of immigration.

**Week Twelve**—Hand in Third Installment of London Journal

**Week Thirteen**—Hand in Fourth Essay; sign up for conference

**Week Fourteen**—Final Examination