

## Long Form Globalized Journalism: Fact-Based Narratives From Print to Digital

Fall 2020

McDaniel College, Budapest  
Instructor: György Túry, Ph.D.

Tags: IN

### Course Description:

State-sponsored propaganda, censorship, lack of oppositional political parties, human rights abuses, information embargoes, travel bans and restrictions, surveillance, informers and punishments in the absence of anything even resembling due process: these have been some of the harsh realities for hundreds of millions in the former Soviet Bloc and across Latin America. With the fall of communism in one region and the renunciation of military governments in the other over the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such a reality seems to be consigned to the past. Yet events in the twenty-first century suggest that what was their past might well be our future, and on not a regional but a global scale. But it doesn't have to be.

Fact-based narratives, also known as literary journalism in English language scholarship, *reportage* in the former Soviet area, or *crónica* in Latin America, combines journalistic and literary characteristics and practice. Though the claim is contentious, some hold that Latin American literary journalism of the latter twentieth century was influenced by European reportage under totalitarianism, and that it was in this moment that the form matured. Reading like fiction, the genre seeks however to be informative, to give an account of reality based on epistemologically objective data, mixing the intransigence of facts with the passion of narrative. Additionally, and this really constitutes the purpose of this course, scholarship on this form highlights its critical role not only in open society, but in opening societies.

In this course we'll travel around the globe and learn more about the recent and contemporary histories (political, social, cultural, and personal) of countries and cultures like Albania, Chechnya, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Honduras, Russia, Serbia, the Soviet Union, South-Africa, and Turkey. All our sources (print and digital) will be fact-based, non-fictional and rooted in extensive and in-depth research by their authors (that, again, represent many countries, cultures, and, thus, perspectives).

### Schedule:

Class 1, Sept 2, Wed.

Introduction to the Course

### Bloc I

In Bloc I of the semester we'll travel to Central- and South America and will try to understand what and why has been happening there in the last couple of decades. Drug and human trafficking are the most serious issues in some of these countries, esp. Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, and Salvador. Most people in these countries live their everyday lives in fear, used to violence, and only dreaming of a better life (often by migrating North, to the U.S.). Some of the best journalists of our age cover

these and similar topics and we'll read their work in order to better understand the contemporary social, political, and cultural histories of the region.

Class 2, Sep. 7, Mon. and Class 3, Sep. 9, Wed.

Honduras in the 2010s

Alberto Arce's *Blood Barrios: Dispatches from the World's Deadliest Streets* is the winner of the 2018 PEN Translates Award for non-fiction and covers contemporary Honduras. We'll read Part I: Red Journalism from the book ("Inside the Volcano," "Crime Beat Rookie," "Night of the Chepos," "Death of a Taxi Driver," and "Four Boards Strapped to the Back").

Class 4, Sept. 14, Mon. and Class 5, Sept. 16, Wed.

A Surreal but Real Event: The Soccer War (1969)

In these two classes we'll stay around the same region, but travel back in time a little bit, to the late 1960s. It was in 1969 that Honduras and Salvador engaged in a short (but real) war that broke out—because of a soccer match. Yet another, unbelievable, but true story that was covered, among others, by one of the best authors of the genre Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski in his internationally well recognized book *The Soccer War*.

Class 6, Sept. 21, Mon. and Class 7, Sept. 23, Wed.

We'll move countries, but keep the topic: we'll read non-fiction stories from South-America that take soccer as their starting point on a journey to the heart of Latin American society: "Queens Football" by Alberto Salcedo Ramos (Colombia) and "A Grenade for River Plate" by Juan Pablo Meneses (Chile).

Class 8, Sept. 28, Mon. and Class 9, Sept. 30, Wed.

One of the undisputed classics of the genre is American Joan Didion's *Salvador*, a beautifully written book that looks at the tangled nature of the civil war that was fought for many years and left tens of thousands dead in this small Central-American country. Didion very carefully looks at the ways her own country, the U.S. was responsible for the war. A true masterpiece.

Bloc II

In Bloc II of the semester we'll travel to a very different region of the world: the socialist and post-socialist space, visiting such countries and cultures as Albania, Cuba, Russia, and the Soviet Union. We'll try to understand how socialism worked, and also why many people in the East-Central European region feel nostalgic about communism.

Class 10, Oct. 5, Monday and Class 11, Oct. 7, Wed.

The Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe of 1986 was and still is seen by many as a powerful metaphor for how "really existing socialism" worked. Nobel Prize winner Belarussian non-fiction writer, Svetlana Alexievich reconstructs the events in her *Chernobyl Prayer*, from which we'll read "Land of the Dead."

Class 12, Oct. 12, Mon.

How was the Soviet Union, just years after Stalin's death? Why don't we hop on the Trans-Siberian express train with one of the best possible guides Ryszard Kapuscinski and try to find the answers? Text: "The Trans-Siberian, '58" from *Imperium*.

Class 13, Oct. 14, Wed.

MID-TERM EXAM

Class 14, Oct. 19, Mon. and Class 15, Oct. 21, Wed.

Roughly 50 years after Kapuscinski, his compatriot Jacek Hugo-Bader sets out to travel across Siberia from Moscow to Vladivostok. In his *White Fever: A Journey to the Frozen Heart of Siberia* he tells us what life is like there in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Class 16, Oct. 26, Mon. and Class 17, Oct. 28, Wed.

In this class we'll learn about a country that is physically very close to us (that is from Budapest, Hungary), however, it's hardly ever mentioned in the global media: Albania. Award winning Polish journalist Witold Szablowski presents socialist Albania through a never before experienced lens: that/those of the chef of the country's long ruling dictator, Enver Hoxha.

Class 18, Nov. 2, Mon. and Class 19, Nov. 4, Wed.

The socialist period will be looked at in these classes, too, but we'll travel back to the Caribbean, more precisely to Cuba. Once again, our source will be the Szablowski books *How To Feed a Dictator* and *Dancing Bears: True Stories of People Nostalgic for Life Under Tyranny*.

### Bloc III

In Bloc III we'll look at the world in the post-1989 period. The very late 1980s and the early 1990s saw tremendous changes all over the globe: it was not "only" that communism fell in the East-Central European region, the Soviet Union collapsed, but also apartheid ended in South-Africa, dictatorships came to an end in Latin America, etc. This is the era in which our own world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was born.

Class 20, Nov. 9, Mon. and Class 21, Nov. 11, Wed.

The Soviet Union was an empire, just like that of the Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, or that of the Incas in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, or that of the Khmers between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was in the second half of the 1980s and in the early 1990s that it began to stumble and then, eventually, fell. We'll look at those years, following the footsteps of one of the greatest, Kapuscinski. We'll read and discuss "The Third Rome," "The Kremlin: The Magic Mountain," and "The Sequel Continues" from his *Imperium*.

Class 22, Nov. 16, Mon. and Class 23, Nov. 18, Wed.

What was inexplicable for the rest of the world was the system that was left almost untouched for many decades in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the apartheid in South Africa. It also came to an end in the early 1990s and we'll learn more about the democratization process that followed this event from *Burning the Grass: At the Heart of Change in South Africa* by Wojciech Jagielski.

Class 24, Nov. 23, Mon.

The Empire of the Soviets did fall, but it did not mean that everything became wonderful in its former territories—on the contrary, in many senses. A good case in point is the wars that were fought in Chechnya. We'll learn about the reasons of the wars and how everyday people dealt with their everyday reality. Our source will be *Towers of Stone: A Battle of Wills in Chechnya* by Wojciech Jagielski.

Class 25, Nov. 30, Mon. and Class 26, Dec. 2, Wed.

The 1990s and the following decades saw a dramatic rise in terms of drugs and human trafficking. In Bloc I of the semester we dealt with the former issue, now it is time to look more closely at the second one, i.e., human trafficking and some of the related issues (forced prostitution, honor killings, etc.). We'll travel back to Central-America and also to Turkey. Texts to be read and discussed: "It's out of Love, Sister" from *The Assassin from Apricot City* by Szablowski and "The Men

Who Sell Women” from *A History of Violence* by Óscar Martínez. (Optional, semi-fictionalized text: “Taking Trinidad” by Sándor Jászberényi.)

Class 27, Dec. 7, Mon.  
Summary

Class 28, Dec. 9, Wed  
END-OF-TERM EXAM