

Travel Writing in Metz and Alsace-Lorraine: Navigating the Art and Science of War and Peace

Last Updated: Mon, 01/05/2026

Course prefix: LMC

Course number: 3234

Section: RMZ

CRN (you may add up to five):

31765

Instructor First Name: Jennifer

Instructor Last Name: Orth-Veillon

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

With Gallo-Roman ruins, art museums, sweeping cathedrals, winding water ways, mysterious passages, and the ghosts of three recent major wars haunting the streets and surrounding landscapes, Metz and the Lorraine region offer an interesting conversation between war and peace that may be compelling to diversity of artistic and historical sensibilities. We will process this sensorial experience through the genre of travel writing. Travel Writing is an exciting reflection on travel by connecting with foreign places through our unique, personal perspectives. Travel writing is not neutral or objective. But it isn't fiction either. You will be constantly asked to make comparisons between your cultural experiences and observations with ones made in France. Renowned travel writer Pico Iyer claims that "We travel, initially, to lose ourselves; and we travel, next, to find ourselves." For our topic, we must consider that war destroys lives but also familiarity and tradition. However, in the wake of peace, creation abounds. New landscapes, design, art, history, and ways of thinking reflect the shifts in consciousness after war. This course will help you produce clear, expressive prose, sharpen your eye for travel detail, and cultivate your individual voice through the lens of art and history shaped by the painful events in war, but also by the rich culture developed in peace, in Metz, the Lorraine, and Alsace.

Course learning outcomes:

- Through course readings and discussions, students will demonstrate knowledge of the origins and types of travel writing.
- Students will be able to conduct close textual analyses of selected travel writing.

- Through course readings and discussions, students will demonstrate knowledge of the moral and ethical issues involved in the act of writing about other cultures.
- Through course readings and their own written work, students will show an understanding of narrative structure, as well as the importance of style, voice and ethos in the genre of travel writing.
- Write lucid, well-constructed arguments analyzing and interpreting texts.
- Synthesize primary and secondary readings to write an extended paper on the course theme.
- Students will utilize their own travel writing as a tool for analysis of cultural and political issues relevant to Metz, Alsace-Lorraine, and France.
- Understand basic concepts of intercultural sensitivity, worldview structures and mindful learning
- Situate Metz, France and the Grand Est region and Europe in broad historical, cultural, and geopolitical contexts
- Develop and sharpen critical thinking skills and apply them to concepts and debates around identity, globalization, and notions of globalism and global citizenship
- Understand and analyze socio-cultural and political developments and current societal debates in France and Europe and be capable of considering these phenomena in cross-cultural, cross-regional and cross-national contexts

Required course materials:

Course Reader - available on Canvas Course Site

Grading policy:

Students will keep a travel journal and will write regularly. These writings will serve as the basis for class discussion, workshops, and travel essays. The journals will be checked and evaluated several times over the semester. They will be turned in along with the periodic essays that will be due. Recommended journal: MOLESKINE or another cheaper journal with hard cover. Travel journals can be purchased at Carrefour bookstores, “librairies” and stationary stores “papeteries.” You can also just use a regular notebook, but the travel journal is a place of portable free expression - take it everywhere and tape, glue, attach, or draw in it as you would like.

Students will write 2 travel writing essays over the course of the semester that reflect the themes and forms studied. Some of the journal entries serve as kind of a rough draft. They will turn this essay into the instructor and to the group. Students and instructor prepare for the group writing workshop the following class. During these workshops, students will critique writing and give feedback to others. Reading assigned material and rigorous participation in the workshops is expected.

The final project will culminate in a multimedia class travel blog that we will work on throughout the semester. Students will polish their travel essays to get them ready for publishing on the blog, which means many revisions are possible on one draft. Students

may revise as many times as they like after receiving a travel essay grade until they obtain the desired grade.

As a class, we will study other travel blogs and come up for the best format for ours. Students will choose the final version two of their travel essays and upload it to the blog, adding photos, videos clips, a list of recommended visits, and other media. Possibilities for video and photos essays are possible. They will also be asked to comment on other class blogposts. The final class will be a presentation of the final blog entry and a brief explanation of the revision process the student undertook to get it to a publishable state.

Participation and Classroom Conduct

Good participation entails not only speaking and sharing your thoughts on a regular basis, but also being considerate and respecting the views of others. This is especially important during writing peer workshops. To earn high points in the participation part of the final grade, students will have demonstrated their awareness of the different functions of classroom comments by:

1. varying their discussion strategies,
2. considering what they say before they say it,
3. taking intellectual risks, and
4. always respecting the feelings of peers by not interrupting classmates while speaking and acknowledging interesting ideas.

Rubrics and Detailed Assignment Descriptions

For each assignment, you will receive a detailed assignment description well in advance of the deadline, which will include the grading rubric. I aim to return your assignments graded within one-two weeks maximum of the due date.

Attendance policy:

You are required to attend all classes and excursions. You can miss a maximum of 2 class days, no questions asked. Excursions count as classes, but they do not count in the allotted two days of absences. The excursion days entail assignments linked the outing that can only be completed on-site.

Each unexcused absence after 2 will result in 1 point deducted from your final grade. You must have approval and justification from the GTE administration in writing for an absence to be excused and not counted toward your 2 absences. If you miss on a portfolio workshop day, you will still be expected to do the work in your peer group. Missing a day of class does not excuse you automatically from turning an assignment due that day.

Coming to class late and leaving early for an unexcused reason will result in an absence. This includes, among other things, leaving early to make a train or plane for independent travel. Coming more than 15 minutes to class for an unexcused reason will result in an absence. Leaving up to 15 minutes early with an unexcused reason will also result in an absence for that day. If you need to leave class early or come late for an excused reason, you must have approval and justification from the GTE administration in writing.

Cancelled or late trains and flights, travel snafus, travel with friends or family DO NOT count as excused unless you have administrative approval. This means written permission from Paul Voss, the Dean Representative.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Arts, Humanities & Ethics area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts in English or other languages, or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence