

WONDERWORKS

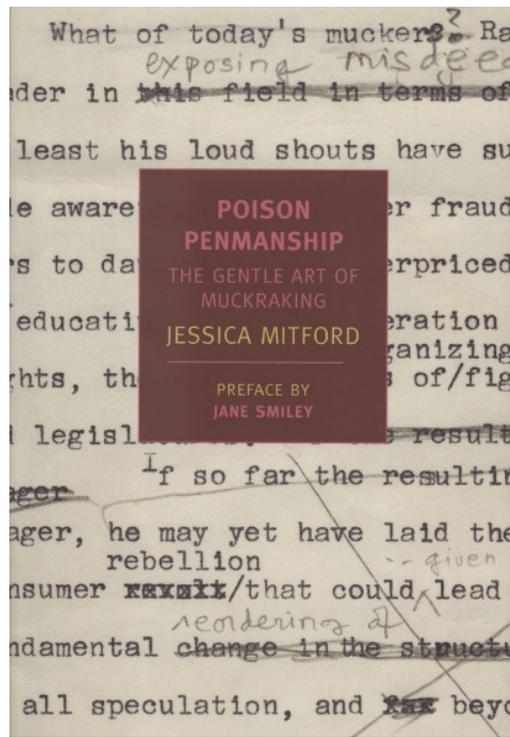
and the

Jack J. Valenti School of Communication,
University of Houston

present

a reading-intensive introduction
to nonfiction and journalism,
plus documentaries and films
based on true stories, and
individual/group journalism projects

10 JUNE – 12 JULY 2019
10 AM – 4 PM, MONDAY – FRIDAY
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON



Jessica Mitford (1917-1996) came to journalism in middle-age, acquiring a muck-raking eminence and peerless style of her own – witty, incisive, and wickedly understated – that eventually led to an appointment as visiting lecturer at Yale in 1976. Nearly 200 students competed for eighteen available spots in her class, since she was by then, at least in some circles, the journalistic equivalent of rock star. As she later recalled, “each student (or group of students if they preferred to work in teams) chose his or her own subject to investigate. Those who tackled hot issues on campus, such as violations of academic freedom, or failure to implement affirmative-action hiring policies, turned in excellent work; but the lad who decided to investigate ‘waste in the Yale dining halls’ was predictably unable to make much of this trivial topic.”

A collection of her shorter journalism, *Poison Penmanship*, originally published in 1979, was reissued in 2010 by New York Review Books (left). J. K. Rowling, the inventor of Harry Potter, called Mitford “my most influential writer, without a doubt.” David Bowie chose her best-known (and best-selling) *The American Way of Death*, as number 20 among his 100 favorite reads. Manuscripts and papers related to her three book-length works of investigative journalism are in the Harry Ransom Center of the University of Texas.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

STRANGER THAN FICTION is open to high school students of special promise and ability who will be entering grades 10, 11, or 12 next fall or who will have just graduated from high school this spring. Admission is competitive – Wonderworks requires at least a 3.0 cumulative grade-point average plus a high level of achievement in relevant core subjects and PSAT/SAT (or ACT) scores consistent with benchmark criteria for college readiness in order to consider an application.

Tuition and fees (not including parking) are \$500. Scholarships are available in the form of full-tuition waivers, but only for students demonstrating true financial need. Admissions are determined on a need-blind basis. No student will be prevented from participating in the program because of inability to pay tuition.

Classes are held at the University of Houston Central Campus, Monday – Friday, except 4 and 5 July. This program is meant to be enjoyable, but it is also challenging and requires focused effort and commitment.

You may apply online or by mail or email. To ensure full consideration, applications must be received by 3 May; early applications are encouraged and will receive early decisions in the cases of well-qualified applicants. Late applications will be considered only if space remains available.

If you have questions or need additional information, please e-mail info@wonderworkshouston.org or call 832.450.9505.

Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't.

MARK TWAIN *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World*, 1897

It had the austere simplicity of fiction, rather than the tangled woof of fact.

RAYMOND CHANDLER *The Big Sleep*, 1939

Whereas journalists once felt humbled by the novel, we now live in an age in which the novelist lives in a state of anxiety about nonfiction. You see it most clearly with films in the lust to be able to put at the end of the film, “This is a true story.”

MICHAEL LEWIS interviewed by Robert S. Boynton,
The New New Journalism, 2005

The search for truth is the noblest occupation of man; its publication a duty.

MADAME DE STAËL *De l'Allemagne*, 1813

Very few things are as simple as they might seem. **STRANGER THAN FICTION** will introduce you to a world of often hidden complexity and nuance, the ins and outs of which can rival even the best mystery books. You'll read page-turning long-form articles and excerpts from books by Lytton Strachey, A. J. Liebling, E. B. White, George Orwell, Joseph Mitchell, Joan Didion, Hunter S. Thompson, Jessica Mitford, James Baldwin, Calvin Trillin, Oliver Sacks, Jane Kramer, Michael Lewis, Janet Malcolm, and Emily Nussbaum among others. Each “morning after” you'll retrace your steps and you'll discuss the pieces you've just read in a seminar-like setting to see what makes them tick as narrative, analytic, or critical propositions. In the afternoon, you'll watch unforgettable films based on true stories that will keep you on the edge of your seat, while also providing the grist for post-mortem appraisals of how and why they work as they do.

The readings and screenings will cover a multitude of topics: people, places, food, war, politics, nature and the environment, medicine, art, music, sports, fashion, space exploration, and more. Since seeing can lead to doing, you'll also have the opportunity to develop portfolio-ready short projects based on your own observations and reporting, individually and/or in groups. For avid readers (and watchers) only!