

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS  
University of Virginia, Academic Sponsor

**Voyage: Spring 2015**  
**Discipline: English Writing**  
**ENWR 2559: Travel Writing Workshop**  
**Lower Division**  
**Faculty Name: Silva**  
**Credit Hours: 3; Contact Hours: 38**

**Pre-requisites:** Students must have successfully completed a writing-intensive college course.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

In this course, we'll approach travel writing in a number of different ways. We'll start by looking at the history of travel literature from Ancient Greece through the Grand Tour and beyond. We'll read travel pieces by Petrarch, Paul Bowles, Richard Wright, Paul Theroux, Ann Beattie, and many others. Before we arrive at each port, we'll read travel essays about our location to prepare us for our trip and to provide topics for classroom discussion. Gathered in-port experiences will form the basis of several different types of travel writing, including personal essay, journalism, creative non-fiction, and more. Students will write two long essays during the term, as well as shorter assignments for each port and our time at sea. Each student will keep a travel journal, as observation and written reflection are key to turning experience in the world into experience on the page. Students will submit their two longer pieces to workshop. These sessions will provide feedback and fresh ideas for revision. The final project will consist of a portfolio of your work throughout the term. The portfolio will also contain a revision of one piece from workshop and a reflection-based essay on your experiences throughout our voyage.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- To practice the art of careful observation and attention to detail in order to strengthen our writing and experiences in new places
- To gain an understanding of the history and variety of travel writing
- To work in a variety of creative forms within travel writing
- To read exceptional travel writing essays in order to investigate what makes the essays impactful
- To utilize the elements of fiction so as to strengthen our own travel writing
- To add new experiences to our travels, and to deepen our understanding of our travels through reading and writing about the places we visit

- To improve our writing through peer workshop and revision
- To produce two travel essays of varying length along with shorter exercises for each port
- To create a portfolio of successful travel writing and to practice the craft of revising our writing.

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

There are no required textbooks for this course. All readings will be in our electronic course folder. There will be books on reserve in the library for your reference.

## **TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE**

Depart Ensenada- January 7:

### **A1- January 9:**

Meetings Greetings and Introductions

What is Travel Writing? Beginnings and a Brief History

Discuss “The Lonely Planet Guide to My Apartment” by Jonathan Stern

### **A2-January 11:**

From Exploration to the Grand Tour and Beyond

Discuss Chapter 5 of *Cambridge Companion to Travel Literature*

Discuss “Ascent of Mt. Ventoux” by Petrarch

Discuss selection by Marco Polo

### **A3- January 13:**

Tools of the Trade and Getting to Your Story

Discuss “The Art of the Travel Essay” by Patti Marxsen

Discuss “On Keeping A Notebook” by Joan Didion

Discuss “Shitty First Drafts” by Anne Lamott

Discuss “Content Management” by William Zinsser

Discuss “The 300-Word Challenge” by William Zinsser

Discuss Hawaii writing assignment

Hilo: January 14

### **A4-January 16:**

Tourist vs. Traveler

Discuss “Why We Travel” by Pico Iyer

Discuss “Not a Tourist” by Thomas Swick

Discuss “In Defense of Tourism” by Peter John Lindberg

**Hawaii Writing Assignment Due**

**A5-January 19:**

Getting Creative: How Travel Writing is Like Fiction Writing

Discuss "Introduction" by Tim Cahill

Discuss pgs. 3-29 of *The Situation and the Story* by Vivian Gornick

Discuss "A St. Petersburg Christmas" by Gary Shteyngart

Discuss "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway

Discuss writing assignment for our "At Sea" period

Study Day: January 21

**A6- January 22:**

Keeping it Real: How Travel Writing is *not* like Fiction Writing

Discuss "Guy Walks Into a Bar Car," by David Sedaris

Discuss "Now Ye Know Who the Bosses are Here Now" by J. Malcom Garcia

Discuss "My Year at Sea" by Christopher Buckley

**A7-January 24:**

Race, Gender, Class, Ethnography, and other issues in Travel Writing

Discuss "Representing the Other" and "Women's Travel Writing Today" by Carl Thompson

Discuss "Take Nothing, Leave Nothing" by Simon Winchester

Discuss "On Japanese Trains" by Sallie Tisdale

Discuss Japan writing assignment

**At Sea Writing Assignment due**

Yokohama: January 26-27

In-Transit: January 28

Kobe: January 29-31

**A8- February 1:**

Mixing It Up: Different Types of Travel Writing

Discuss "How to Explore Like a Real Victorian Adventurer" by Monte Reel

Discuss "The Parachute Artist" by Tad Friend

Discuss "Strange Stones" by Peter Hessler

Discuss "Passing Through" by Yiyun Li

Discuss China writing assignment

**Japan Writing Assignment Due**

Shanghai: February 3-4

In-Transit: February 5-6

Hong Kong: 7-8

**A9- February 9:**

Discuss “After the Fall” by Tom Bissell and Morgan Meis

Discuss “The Scent of Two Cities” by Kathleen Lee

Discuss and prepare for Field Lab

**China Writing Assignment Due**

Ho Chi Minh: February 11-16

**A10- February 17:**

What a Voice: Aspects of Voice and Style

Discuss “A New Mecca” by George Saunders

Discuss requirements and expectations for 1<sup>st</sup> Workshop Piece

Singapore: February 19-20

Study Day: February 21

**A11-February 22:**

Isn't that Funny? Humor in Travel Writing

Discuss “Turbulence” by David Sedaris

Discuss “Winter Cruises Under Ten Dollars” by Bruce McCall

Discuss “Shooting an Elephant” by George Orwell

Discuss “The Generals in Their Labyrinth” by Patrick Symmes

Discuss Burma writing assignment

**Field Lab Report Due**

Rangoon: February 24-March 1

**A12-March 2:**

It's Ok Not to Love It

“Trying Really Hard to Like India” by Seth Stevenson

“Tantric Sex for Dilettantes” by Rolf Potts

“A Shared Plate” by Chitrita Banerji

“A Dream of Glorious Return” by Salman Rushdie

**Burma Writing Assignment Due**

**A13- March 4:**

The Workshop: How it Works, Why it Works, When it Doesn't

Discuss procedures for the workshop

Discuss India writing assignment

**1<sup>st</sup> Workshop Piece Due (6-8 Pages)**

Cochin: March 6-11

Study Day: March 12

**A14-March 13:**

Workshop

**India Writing Assignment Due**

**A15-March 15:**

Workshop

Study Day: March 17

Port Louis: March 18

**A16- March 19:**

Workshop

**A17-March 21:**

Workshop

Discuss assignment and expectations for 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop Piece

**A18- March 23:**

Revision

Discuss Chapter on Revision from *Writing Fiction* by Janet Burroway

Discuss “A Black American Watches Apartheid Fall: ca 1990” by Eddy L. Harris

Discuss “Cape Town Townships: 1995” by Laura Resnick

Cape Town: March 25-30

Study Day: March 31

**A19-April 1:**

Discuss Chapters 7 & 8 of *Black Power* by Richard Wright

Discuss “The Rise and Fall of the Proper Negro” by Leslie Alexander Lacy

**2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop piece due (8-10 Pages)**

**A20-April 3:**

Workshop

**A21- April 5:**

Workshop

Tema (Accra): April 7-9

Takoradi: April 10-11

**A22-April 12:**

Workshop

**A23: April 14:**

Workshop

**A24: April 16**

Wrapping Up

Reflections and Reports

Discuss “Where Donkey’s Deliver” by Susan Orlean

Discuss “Casablanca” by Paul Bowles

Discuss “Under the Sheltering Sky” by Bill Donahue

Discuss Final Portfolio

Study Day: April 18

April 19: Global Lens Exams and Study Day

Casablanca: April 20-24

**A25: A Day Finals**

Discuss “A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again” by David Foster Wallace

**Final Portfolio Due**

April 29: Arrive in Southampton

## **FIELD WORK**

Field lab attendance is mandatory for all students enrolled in this course. Please do not book individual travel plans or a Semester at Sea sponsored trip on the day of your field lab.

### ***FIELD LAB: The Vietnam War***

For our Field Lab, we will spend the day visiting three sites related to the Vietnam War. We'll start our day at the Củ Chi tunnels outside of Ho Chi Minh City. During the War these tunnels served as supply and communication routes, as well as well as hiding spots for soldiers. From there, we'll head to the War Remnants Museum. This museum deals primarily with the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. For our final destination we will visit the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and Museum.

### ***FIELD ASSIGNMENTS***

The Field Assignment will consist of two separate projects. First, students will write a 4-5 page personal travel essay about their experience during the Field Lab. This essay can focus on one or all of the sites we visit. The essay must contain specific detail and impressions from the sites mentioned. With this, students are expected to take notes—when appropriate—during our Field Lab. In preparation for our lab, we will read travel essays based on aspects of the Vietnam War.

The second component of the Field Lab will consist of travel guide style reviews for each of the three sites we visit. These reviews should include pertinent information to each site, including hours of operation, cost to visitors, and other details such as a general idea of how many of the exhibits at each site are in English, etc. These reviews should also include a paragraph about what each site has to offer. NOTE: The reviews WILL NOT be a “rehash” of the travel essay component. The first assignment will be based on your personal experience during the Field Lab while the reviews will give a general impression of what a visitor can expect from each site.

These two assignments will make up 80% of your Field Lab grade, with the rest coming from attendance and participation, including your notes while on the lab.

Objectives:

To practice and refine note taking while in the field

To use these notes to form the basis for a personal travel essay

To reflect on the nature of conflict between countries and the lasting impact thereof

To generate reviews for the sites visited

To increase your knowledge of the conflict in Vietnam

To use skills other than language—observation, visceral detail, etc—when experience traveling

**FIELD LAB: South Africa: Our Journey from Asia to Africa**

For our Field Lab, we will spend the day exploring two of South Africa's famous natural sites. We will begin the day by driving from Cape Town down to Cape Point, one of the southernmost points in Africa. During our drive down, our guide will provide important history and background information on South Africa. Our drive will also give us an extended view of the natural setting of South Africa. I will also have discussion questions and keys to consider during our drive down. Once we arrive at Cape Point, we will tour the area and also take time to write. I want you to both take notes on your surroundings and also look back on your time in Asia. On our way back to Cape Town, we will stop for lunch. As we return to Cape Town, we will visit Table Mountain. Weather permitting, we will take a hike either up or down Table Mountain. At the top we will again have time to write. I want you to again record details of your surroundings and also write about our upcoming journey through Africa.

**FIELD ASSIGNMENT:** The Field Assignment will consist of two parts. First, you will write a four-page essay regarding your general thoughts and impression on our journey through Asia and on your thoughts/hopes/expectations/anticipations regarding our journey through Africa. For the second part of the Field Assignment, you will write a four page travel essay about our Field Lab. I want you to include as much physical detail as you can. For this part of the assignment, I expect you to rely heavily on the notes you took during our Field Lab.

**Objectives:**

- To practice and refine note taking while in the field
- To gather detail regarding setting and place
- To use these notes to form the basis for a personal travel essay
- To reflect on the our voyage to date
- To consider your personal state of mind as we continue to Africa

These two assignments will make up 80% of your Field Lab grade, with the rest coming from attendance and participation, including your notes while on the lab.

**METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC**

Field Lab and Field Assignments: 20%

1<sup>st</sup> Workshop Piece: 15%

2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop Piece: 20%

Writing assignments for individual ports and journal exercises: 10%

Attendance and Participation: 25%

Final Portfolio: 10%

**The Readings:** This course requires a lot of reading. You learn best how to write well by reading well written pieces. For each class meeting, you should expect to read 35-50 pages. I will alter the reading schedule as needed as we might not have time to get to all of the readings. The reading load will decrease once we begin the workshop phase of the course.

**The Essays:** During the course, you are required to write two travel essays. While the actual topic of the essay will be of your choosing, the subject/content/setting must come from your in-port experiences. I ask that for the first essay you stick to one port. For the second essay you can, if you chose, use a broader approach. As mentioned, during the first part of the course we will read several travel essays; these reading will give you a better idea of the expectations for your essays. The first essay must be between 6-8 pages and the second 8-10 pages. If you have trouble coming up with ideas of what to write about, I will schedule a conference with you to help generate ideas.

**The Workshop:** This course utilizes peer-based workshop. We will discuss the workshop process in greater detail in class.

**Conferences:** After each of your workshops, I require you meet with me. These meetings usually last fifteen minutes and provide you an opportunity to bring up any issues or concerns in regards to your workshop or to ask me any further questions you have based on the experience. During the conference we will also further discuss your piece and I will provide you with a typed-page of written comments and suggestions. I will also identify particular areas I would like to see you address in your next piece or in your final revision.

**Attendance and Participation:** Students must attend each class session having completed the assigned reading and any other assignments for the day's session. Students must also participate actively in class discussions. While there will be some lectures throughout the term, much of the class is based on discussion and those who participate daily will have more success in the course. Active participation in the workshop is also required. Each student will give written comments on each peer-essay they read for workshop. These responses will be a component of your attendance and participation grade. You are allowed one unexcused absence. After that, your grade will be deducted by a third of a letter grade per absence (e.g. an A will become an A-). **If you have more than three unexcused absences, you will not pass this course.**

## **RESERVE BOOKS AND FILMS FOR THE LIBRARY**

AUTHOR: Paul Fussel, Ed.  
TITLE: *The Norton Book of Travel*  
PUBLISHER: Norton  
ISBN #: 978-0141044262  
DATE/EDITION: 1987

AUTHOR: William Zissner  
TITLE: *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*  
PUBLISHER: Harper Perennial  
ISBN: 0060891548  
DATE/EDITION: 30th Anniversary Edition, May 2006

AUTHOR: William Strunk & E.B. White  
TITLE: *The Elements of Style*

PUBLISHER: Longman  
ISBN: 020530902X  
DATE/EDITION: 4th Edition, Sept. 1999

AUTHOR: Carl Thompson  
TITLE: Travel Writing  
PUBLISHER: Routledge  
ISBN: 978-0415444651  
DATE: 2011

EDITORS: Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs  
TITLE: Cambridge Companion to Travel Literature  
PUBLISHER: Cambridge University Press  
ISBN: 978-0521786522  
DATE/EDITION: 2002

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

The Writing Center

### **HONOR CODE**

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager's Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: "On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment." The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed "[signed]."