

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Voyage: *Spring 2013*

Discipline: *English*

ENWR 3559: *Travel Writing*

Division: *Upper Division*

Faculty Name: *David B. Morris*

Pre-requisites:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Travel Writing is a hybrid course that focuses both on travel and on writing. A typical class period will include ad hoc writing assignments mixed with pointed discussion of the assigned reading or viewing. We will explore travel as concept and event, discussing narrative texts—from films to memoirs to intellectual history—both *about* travel and *by* travelers. (We will ask about such important questions as the differences between travelers and tourists.) The texts we read together—both assigned on the syllabus and emerging ad hoc through the process of discussion—will help us approach travel less as raw experience than as experience shaped and represented through narrative.

The course, however, will also consistently focus on your own writing. We will read and discuss—in small increments—journalist Roy Peter Clark's recent book Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer (2006). We will talk in class about what makes for effective travel writing. The classroom will, in addition, provide space for structured and improvisational exercises meant to present you with specific writing challenges. There will be time to share, in the semi-privacy of small groups, your own written experience as a traveler and to workshop your work-in-progress with classmates and with the instructor.

The culmination of the course is an individual final project that you will be working on during the voyage. The choice of project is up to you, with approval required from the instructor. Maybe it will be an extended short story, or a day-by-day hand-written journal, or a blog. Whatever form you choose, the project will be the completion of a substantial (if possibly incomplete) written response to the experience of your voyage, in which case, it will count as a direct or indirect travel narrative. **Please, if possible, bring along five or six traditional composition books: the elementary-school classics roughly 9" x 7" & with double-sided lined pages between stiff marbled covers (easily available at Staples and other outlets).**

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course aims to improve your skills as a writer through writing assignments inside and outside the classroom. The focus on writing will culminate in the creation of your own travel narrative. Toward this end, the course also aims to extend your understanding of travel as an enduring human activity marked by the personal histories of individual travel writers, by differing cultural traditions, and by significant distinctive structures.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Basho, Matsuo
 TITLE: The Narrow Road to Oku
 PUBLISHER: Kodansha International
 ISBN #: 477 0020 287
 DATE/EDITION: 1996
 COST: \$16.50

AUTHOR: Clark, Roy Peter
 TITLE: Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer
 PUBLISHER: Little Brown & Co.
 ISBN #: 031 6014 990
 DATE/EDITION: 2008
 COST: \$7.82

AUTHOR: Ghandi, Mahatma
 TITLE: Third Class in Indian Railways
 PUBLISHER: Nabu Press
 ISBN #: 177 7034 296
 DATE/EDITION: 2010
 COST: \$12.29

AUTHOR: Nachmanovitch, Stephen
 TITLE: Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art
 PUBLISHER: Penguin Putnam
 ISBN #: 978 0 87477 631 7
 DATE/EDITION: 1990
 COST: \$10.17

AUTHOR: Robinson, Jane (Ed.)
 TITLE: Unsuitable for Ladies: An Anthology of Women Travelers
 PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press
 ISBN #: 019 2802 011
 DATE/EDITION: 2001
 COST: \$24.95

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

I. Mind of the Traveler: Approaching Japan**(A1 – A6)**

- A-1 Lindberg, "In Defense of Tourism"
Gellhorn, Travels with Myself and Another (pdf)
- A-2 Polo, The Travels (pdf)
Film: *In the Footsteps of Marco Polo*
- A-3 Leed, Mind of the Traveler (pdf)
- A-4 Leed, Mind of the Traveler (pdf)
- A-5 Basho, The Narrow Road to Oku
- A-6 Basho, The Narrow Road to Oku
Smith, "The Anthropology of Tourism" (pdf)

II. Travel and Narrative**(A7 - A10)**

- A-7 Nachmanovitch, Free Play
- A-8 Nachmanovitch, Free Play
- A-9 Film: *Thelma and Louise*
Robertson, "American women and travel writing" (pdf)
- A-10 Said, Orientalism (pdf)

III. India: Postcolonial Travelers**(A11 – A12)**

- A-11 Film: *Passage to India*
McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term *Post-colonialism*"
- A-12 *Gandhi*, Third Class in Indian Railways

IV. Writing Africa: The Danger of A Single Story**(A13 – A17)**

- A-13 Film: *Nelson Mandela: Life & Times*
- A-14 Wainaina, "How to Write About Africa" (pdf)
Wainaina, *How to Write About Africa II: The Revenge* (pdf)
- A-15 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The danger of a single story" (online)
- A-16 Theroux, "Travel Writing: The Point of It" (pdf)
- A-17 Levinas, "The Face" (pdf)

V. Writing Women Travel**(A18 – A20)**

- A-18 PROJECT FIRST DRAFT: Discussion
- A-19 Unsuitable for Ladies, ed. Robinson (pdf)
- A-20 Unsuitable for Ladies, ed. Robinson (pdf)

VI. Travel & Tourism vs. Dwelling: Two States of the Soul?**(A21 – A23)**

- A-21 Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" (pdf)
- A-22 Nachmanovitch, Free Play
- A-23 FINAL PROJECT DUE : Discussion

VII. Final Examination**(A 24)**

VIII. Questions and Assignments

This course is ultimately about travel writing: thinking about it and doing it. Specific questions for each day grow directly from the assigned texts—and begin with making certain that students have read with full understanding and grasped the main points. Mini-lectures (meaning, instructor discourse punctuated with specific questions for discussion) will provide opportunities for emphasis and elaboration, and the mini-lectures will most often be accompanied by powerpoint slides, which will be posted online after class. Classes devoted mainly to questions about writing will proceed in workshop fashion, with improvisational in-class exercises supplemented by small-group reading and discussion of student work-in-progress.

Major recurrent questions will begin to emerge through reading key chapters in Leed's The Mind of the Traveler (1991)—now out of print but available in my posted pdfs—concerning the purposes, structures, and experience of travel as an enduring human and historical phenomenon. Leed does not emphasize, however, the dynamics of travel as inflected within specific cultures, and he is not mainly concerned with questions of gender and of place, both of which receive extended analysis in more recent sociological, anthropological, and theoretical work. Thus questions and assignments will call attention to these and other features of texts under analysis, as an aide to the small and large writing projects that each student will undertake. The payoff will come as students write their own travel narratives—the major course project—which will ask them to include an explicit awareness of their own socioeconomic and cultural and gendered status as travelers.

I need to maintain leeway for ad hoc assignments that emerge directly from my own re-reading and preparations immediately preceding each class. I have never taught with a prefabricated list of questions because in my experience questions are most meaningful if students feel that the questions link clearly and directly to issues arising within the classroom and that, in this case, are relevant to the activity of travel writing. These issues are therefore not entirely predictable, but I have prepared many pdf files of readings that I anticipate may prove relevant. My own method of teaching, although *method* is too grandiose and technical a concept for what I practice, might find its best explanation in Stephen Nachmanovitch's Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art (1991). There is a big difference between an unprepared teacher who is irresponsibly “winging it”—where discussion wanders and wobbles without direction—and a well-prepared and experienced teacher who targets questions to emerging themes and who leaves room open for creative, ad hoc assignments that bring a subject to life through their relevance to problems experienced in the classroom and to current work in progress. The travel narratives that students produce for their final projects—around which the entire course revolves—will be worth reading by other than immediate family members to the extent that students proceed in an improvisational spirit of openness.

FIELD WORK

FIELD LAB (At least 20 percent of the contact hours for each course, to be led by the instructor.)

An all-day combination cable-car/hike ascent to the top of Table Mountain.

Table Mountain, Cape Town, South Africa (Monday 25 March)

Table Mountain--part of the Table Mountain National Park--is an immense flat-topped landmark overlooking the city of Cape Town, South Africa. The cliffs of the main plateau are split by Platteklip Gorge ("Flat Stone Gorge"), which provides an easy and direct ascent to the summit and was the route taken by António de Saldanha on the first recorded ascent of the mountain in 1503.

Table Mountain has an unusually rich biodiversity, and the main vegetation types belong to the Cape Floral Region protected areas: a World Heritage Site. An estimated 2,200 species of plants are confined to Table Mountain, more than in the entire U.K., including many endemic species found nowhere else. The Table Mountain range has the highest concentration of threatened species of any continental area of equivalent size in the world.

Our academic objective—based on the educational trio of related and at times compatible options, “knowledge-skill-experience”—is to share an experience and then (melding first-hand knowledge with ad-hoc research) to write about it. It will be our own experiment in the multiple perspectives suggested in American poet Wallace Stevens’ “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.” Since at this point in the course you are all practiced writers, we will discuss what happens—what we can learn and possibly steal--when twenty or so SAS travelers look at (ascend and descend) fabled Table Mountain.

ATTENDANCE MANDATORY!

METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC

30%	Final project: Travel Writing In-Person
25%	Daily reading, writing, & ad hoc assignments (10-12 pages minimum)
25%	Class participation*
20%	Final Examination

*Class participation includes both attendance and oral response. Attendance implies on-time arrival. Participation includes demonstrated preparation, completed outside assignments, and strong performance on diagnostic quizzes, in general discussions, and in small-group activities.

RESERVE LIBRARY LIST

Leed, Eric J. The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism. New York: Basic

Books. 1991.

Orientalism: A Reader. Ed. Alexander Lyon Macfie. New York: NYU Press, 2001.

Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel. Ed. Michael Kowalewski. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992.

The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing. Ed. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

De Barros, Deborah Paes. "Driving that highway to consciousness: late twentieth-century American travel literature." The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing. Ed. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. 228-243.

Dillard, Annie. "An Expedition to the Pole." Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters. New York: Harper & Row, 1982. Pp. 17-52.

Fish, Stanley. "Why Sentences." How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One. New York: Harper, 2011.

Gellhorn, Martha. Travels with Myself and Another. London: Allen Lane, 1978.

Heidegger, Martin. "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1954). Poetry, Language, Thought. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. Pp. 145-161.

Hokusai, Katsushika. Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji. Digital folder.

Kopf, David. "Hermeneutics versus History" (1980). In Orientalism: A Reader. Ed. Alexander Lyon Macfie. New York: New York University Press, 2000. Pp. 194-207.

Latour, Bruno. Paris: Invisible City. <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/virtual/EN/index.html>

Leed, Eric J. The Mind of the Traveler. From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism. New York: Basic Books, 1991.

Lindberg, Peter Jon. "In Defense of Tourism." Travel and Leisure. January 2009. Pp. 30 ff.

Robertson, Susan L. "American women and travel writing." The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing. Ed. Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. 214-227.

Smith, Valene L. "Introduction." Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism. Ed. Valene L. Smith. 2nd edn. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989. Pp. 1-17.

Theroux, Paul. "Travel Writing: The Point of It." Fresh Air Fiend: Travel Writings. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000. Pp. 49-53.

Wainaina, Binyavanga. "How to Write About Africa." Granta, no. 92 (2005): 91-94.

-----, "How to Write About Africa II: The Revenge." 2006/2007.
<http://www.bidoun.org/magazine/21-bazaar-ii/how-to-write-about-africa-ii-the-revenge-by-binyavanga-wainaina/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (DVDs)

In the Footsteps of Marco Polo. Denis Belliveau and Francis O'Donnell, producer/directors. 2008. PBS. 90 minutes.

Easy Rider. Dennis Hopper, director. 1969. Sony Pictures. 95 minutes.

Gandhi. Richard Attenborough, director. 1982. Sony Pictures. 190 minutes.

Nelson Mandela: Life & Times. Nelson Mandela, director. 2010. Kulture Video. 102 minutes.

Passage to India. David Lean, director. 1984. Sony Pictures. 164 minutes.

Thelma and Louise. Ridley Scott, director. 1991. MGM. 130 minutes.

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]."