

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Discipline: English Writing
Fall 2008
ENWR 220Z: Writing about Travel
Lower Division
Instructor: Professor David C. Miller

Suggested Pre-requisite: successful completion of at least three previous credit hours in college level English or Writing courses or approval from the instructor

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will be run primarily as a writing workshop in which drafts of student essays undergo critique and peer review. Students will focus on writing about landscape, cityscape and art as well as society and culture, with special emphasis on seeing cross-cultural interactions within geographic, political, economic and historical perspectives. Discussion will stress the richness of representation and symbolic action within various cultural settings encountered on the voyage, informed by the knowledge and understanding you are gaining in your SAS classes. Analysis of the work of professional travel writers and ethnographers and some sense of the history of travel writing will provide guidance. Stress will be placed on how to make the most of telling details, blend observation and inference, and develop a distinctive authorial point of view that respects as well as interrogates the values, interests and perspectives of people from other cultures while exhibiting as much self-consciousness as possible about one's own cultural assumptions and prejudices. Workshops will address stylistic and mechanical as well as substantive issues, including effective paragraphing and punctuation. For this purpose, we will consult and occasionally discuss William Zinsser's *On Writing Well*.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course should help you make the most of your travel experience by sensitizing you to the endless possibilities for life enrichment raised by travel and giving you a chance to process and project your experiences through effective writing. Critiques will emphasize close observation combining showing with telling as well as thinking about the diverse assumptions underlying the variety of cultures we encounter on this voyage. Writing will be approached as a process of discovery.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

- I. Introductory: aims and assumptions of the course (B1 to B2).
- II. The discipline of ethnography and the interrogation of cultural assumptions: discussion of readings on reserve from David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous*, James Clifford's *Writing Culture*, and Renato Rosaldo's *Culture and Truth* (B3-8).
- III. The principles of effective travel writing, with reference to the history of travel writing in the West, including readings from Eric J. Leed's *The Mind of the Traveler* (on reserve) and Paul Fussell's *Abroad* (B9-13).
- IV. The techniques of good travel writing, explored through a discussion of selections from Paul Theroux's *The Old Patagonian Express* and other 20th century travel writings on reserve. This section of the course will include writing workshops on converting student notes from various ports into successful travel writing (B14-17).
- V. Return to issues of ethnography and insider/outsider dynamic, with focus on the issues of colonialism, post-colonialism and imperialism. Reading of selections from Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, and James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways of Culture, 1800-1918*, both on reserve (B18-21).
- VI. Workshops reviewing final two or three papers of the course (B22-23).

Throughout the course we will be critiquing each others work, either in class wide discussions or in smaller groups. Emphasis will be on frank and constructive peer review. I have purposely left the above outline general and open-ended since each class needs to find its own rhythm and concerns.

FIELD REQUIREMENTS

You must complete *three* practica (either Faculty Directed or Independent). At least *two* of these should be faculty-directed field trips (see list below). If you so choose, the third one can be an Independent Practicum developed as part of a regularly-offered SAS trip or may stand alone. If you select an Independent Practicum, you must meet with me prior to arriving in the port-of-call to discuss your approach and objectives.

You are required to keep a journal of your field observations out of which you will write your formal travel essays, to be turned into me and possibly discussed in class. Journals should be records of your notes from the field experiences. Instructions about how to take field notes will be given during class prior to arriving in each port. You are encouraged to engage a local person(s) in conversation about the work of art, temple or other site and to make notes of relevant comments from this dialogue (though, given language barriers, this may not always be possible).

FDPs led by me:

Salvador: Sacatar: International Artists' Residency/Community

FDPs not led by me (if available):

Cape Town: Visit with an Indian Community
Township and District 6 Museum
Races & Race Classification: Before/During Apartheid

Chennai: Temples of India

Hong Kong: Street Markets of Hong Kong

Shanghai: Suzhou
Shoe Manufacturing and the Global Economy

Kobe: Rokko Mountain Hike and Public Bath
Japanese Tea Ceremony
Takarazuka Revue

METHODS OF EVALUATION

During the course, you will complete five 4-6 page travel accounts, to be reviewed by me along with assigned peer readers and continually revised until they are as rich, vivid, closely observed and well-written as possible—at which point they will receive a final grade. Field journals from port visits will provide raw material for these accounts and will be turned in as well from time to time. Extensive and constructive participation in class and peer review is absolutely crucial and will constitute roughly one third of your grade. This will include discussions of the secondary readings listed above. To prepare for these discussions, you will be required to keep a journal of responses which may be turned in from time to time without prior announcement and will be reviewed as a whole by me at the end of the course.

POLICIES

1. All written work must be handed in on time (or by negotiated deadlines) or you will not pass the course. Unexcused late papers or exams (the same criteria apply) will be graded down by a third of a grade for each day of tardiness. A second instance of lateness will increase the penalty to a full grade per day.

2. Regular attendance is required (I will regularly take role). More than three unexcused absences will affect your grade, lowering it by one notch (from, say, a B- to a C+) for every three additional unexcused absences. Excused absences include illness (a note from the Health Center is required) or a death in your immediate family.
3. Any instance of plagiarism or improper use of outside sources will result in a failing grade.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION IN CLASS

- an A grade for class participation is awarded when students regularly initiate discussion. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned reading and hence prepared to raise questions, open discussion, identify topics of interest in the reading and engage other students in discussion (but obviously not monopolizing discussion or shutting others out).
- a B grade for class participation is awarded to students who participate regularly and productively in class discussion, who are prepared, and who are willing to engage. B discussants differ from A students in that the latter are self-starters who don't rely on the instructor to set the agenda for discussion.
- a C grade for class participation is awarded to those who participate on a regular basis, though less frequently than the B student. C discussants will be typically be prepared for class, but their contributions will indicate that less thought has been given to assigned materials.
- a D grade for class participation is given to those who contribute only infrequently to class discussion and whose contributions do not appear to arise from thoughtful consideration of the assignments.
- an F grade results from non-participation in class discussion or any pattern of behavior that interferes with responsible and mature group discussion. Of course, participation is impossible if the putative participant is not I class. Frequent absences mandate F grades.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: WILLIAM ZINSSER
TITLE: ON WRITING WELL
PUBLISHER: COLLINS
ISBN #: 10: 0060891548
DATE/EDITION: 2006
COST: \$14.95

AUTHOR: PAUL FUSSELL
TITLE: ABROAD: BRITISH LITERARY TRAVELING BETWEEN THE WARS
PUBLISHER: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
ISBN #: 0-19-503068-0
DATE/EDITION: 1982
COST: \$19.95

RESERVE LIBRARY LIST

AUTHOR: ERIC J. LEED
TITLE: THE MIND OF THE TRAVELER: FROM GILGAMESH TO GLOBAL
TOURISM
PUBLISHER: BASIC BOOKS
ISBN #: 0-465-04619-3
DATE/EDITION: 1991
OUT OF PRINT (MAY BE AVAILABLE ON AMAZON)

AUTHOR: PAUL THEROUX
TITLE: THE OLD PATAGONIAN EXPRESS
PUBLISHER: Penguin
ISBN #: 10: 0140249796
DATE/EDITION: 1999
COST: TEMPORARILY OUT OF PRINT

AUTHOR: HENRY MILLER
TITLE: THE COLOSSUS OF MAROUSSI
PUBLISHER: MINERVA
ISBN #: 10: 079391715
DATE/EDITION: 1991
OUT OF PRINT

AUTHOR: RENATO ROSALDO
TITLE: CULTURE AND TRUTH: THE REMAKING OF SOCIAL ANALYSIS
PUBLISHER: BEACON
ISBN #: 0-8070-4623-X
DATE/EDITION: 1993
COST: \$20.00

AUTHOR: JAMES CLIFFORD AND GEORGE E. MARCUS, EDS.
TITLE: WRITING CULTURE: THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF ETHNOGRAPHY
PUBLISHER: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
ISBN #: 0-520-05729-5
DATE/EDITION: 1986
COST: \$25.95

AUTHOR: MARY LOUISE PRATT
TITLE: IMPERIAL EYES: TRAVEL WRITING AND TRANSCULTURATION
PUBLISHER: ROUTLEDGE
ISBN #: 0-415-06095-8
DATE/EDITION: 1992
COST: \$31.96

AUTHOR: JAMES BUZARD
TITLE: THE BEATEN TRACK: EUROPEAN TOURISM, LITERATURE, AND THE
WAYS TO 'CULTURE,' 1800-1918
PUBLISHER: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
ISBN #: 0-19-812276-4
DATE/EDITION: 1993
COST: \$65.95