

“Us and Them: Travelers and Travel Writing”
English 120/9128 College Composition II (3 credits)
Spring Term 2007 North Dakota State University

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TTH 9.30-10.45

FLC 413B

Office Hours: 2-3.00 pm T
and by appointment

Blackboard:

Objectives

In his essay “Why We Travel,” Pico Iyer tells us that “We travel ... to lose ourselves; and ... to find ourselves.” Visiting new and different places and meeting new and different people causes us to think about what exactly makes those people different from us and in turn who we are and what our community is. One way of looking at these questions of difference is to examine how we “Other” people to understand ourselves. In simplest terms, the Other is everything I am not. Put another way, I know who I am because I construct the Other as different than I am. Travel writing is an especially rich opportunity for investigating how we regard (construct? represent?) the Other when we are away from home. We will pursue a number of connected questions in this course to help us understand how we create our own identity amidst and among people who are similar to us and people who are different. In what ways does the Other help us understand who we are and our place in our community? In what ways does the Other prevent us from knowing who we are and obscure our place in our community? Because we are away from home when we travel, cut off from the comfort of the familiar, might we become the Other and lose our identity? And perhaps most importantly, how does a knowledge of Othering help us to a critical understanding of diversity and community?

We will work toward answering these questions by reading, viewing, discussing, and writing about a variety of texts. We will read some fiction and non-fiction, a memoir, a graphic narratives, view a film, and examine on-line material. In the end, through investigating the Other, we will have a richer understanding of our ourselves, our world and our place in it. Academically, we will refine our critical thinking, reading, and writing skills as well as research strategies, and facility with on-line materials. The variety of texts helps us to understand the interdisciplinary nature of travel writing. The authors, living and dead, American and not, represent a range of cultures and experiences and can be a guide to our own understanding of the Other.

Requirements

We will work toward the above outcomes through a number of interrelated tasks, including small and large group discussion, informal in-class writing, and formal papers written outside of class. Details of these assignments are described below.

Grading (on Blackboard gradebook)

4 Summaries (25 points each)	100 points
2 Discussion Leader (50 points each)	100 points

Scale

A	100-92 %
B	91-82 %

Subjective Essay	100 points	C	81-71 %
Final Essay	100 points	D	70-60 %
3 Background Reports (10 points each)	30 points	F	59-0%
Visual Project	70 points		
Total	500 points		

Texts

The Call to Write, John Trimbur

Carnet de Voyage (Travel Journal) Craig Thompson

Travels with Charley in Search of America, John Steinbeck

The Travels of Sir John Mandeville trans. C.W.R.D. Moseley

Travel narratives available on Blackboard site

A dictionary (bring to every class)

A floppy disk or flash drive

Students with Special Needs

Any students with disabilities or other special needs who need special accommodations in this course are asked to share these concerns with me as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty

I assume that all work you turn in for this course is yours, and any material that you have acquired from an outside source is documented properly. Failure to do so is considered plagiarism and may result in failure of the course.

Late Papers

Late papers will lose ten points per day until they are turned in. You are responsible for turning in all work assigned in this class. Failure to do so will result in failing this class.

Attendance and Participation

University policy recognizes the importance of class attendance (<http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/policy/333.htm>) and important parts of the work for this course will be done in small and large groups. This means that your consistent presence is important to the success of the class as a whole. If you are unable to attend class, you must contact me via phone or email within twenty-four hours. You are still responsible for any work done or due in class that day. Similarly, you are responsible for contacting your group members if you miss a class.

Participation includes not only contributing to class discussion, it also covers prompt attendance, listening and responding constructively to your classmates, attending class prepared to discuss the readings, and bringing your books and writing material to every class meeting. If you miss more than three class meetings, this includes leaving early or attending but unprepared, you may lose one letter grade from your final grade. If you miss four or more classes, you will not pass the class. Missing a scheduled conference is equivalent to missing two class meetings.

Paper Format

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be type-written, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, in twelve-point Times font. Your name, the date, the class, my name and the assignment are to be at the top of the first page. Do not forget to title your work. Any papers longer than one page must have page numbers and be stapled.

Grade Guidelines

These descriptions apply to the final grade in the class and the score on particular assignments.

A work is outstanding. It goes beyond the basic requirements of the assignment and the class. The work shows evidence of critical and original thinking. Ideas are clearly supported and explained.

B work is more than satisfactory. It shows understanding of the given task and an understanding of the rules for writing as set out in the syllabus. Thinking is clear, though not necessarily highly critical or highly original. Ideas are supported and explained, although not always clearly or consistently.

C work is satisfactory. It shows familiarity with though not a complete understanding of the given task and rules for writing as set out in the syllabus. Thought shows inconsistent critical engagement or originality. Ideas are too broad and not clearly supported with evidence. Writing tends to summarize or describe rather than analyze.

D work is below average. It shows an inconsistent understanding of the given task, text, and rules. Thought and writing are often disorganized and do not communicate an understanding of audience or genre. Paper seems to be written quickly with little attention to revision or proofreading.

F work is unsatisfactory. It shows little if any understanding of the given task, text, or rules. Thought and writing are disorganized and do not communicate an understanding of audience or genre.

Calendar (subject to change)

*The titles marked with an asterisk are available on the course blackboard site. They are taken from *The Best American Travel Writing 2006* ed. Tim Cahill. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2006.

** We will meet in a computer cluster (IACC 116) on these days.

- 9 January Introductions and interviews
Group Story Project assignment
- 11 January "Travels with Omar" by Jeffrey Tayler*
Discussion of travel motives and identity
- 16 January Caitlin Flanagan, "The Price of Paradise"* Group 1 Discussion Leaders
Summary 1 due
- 18 January Discuss Subjective Paper and *Call to Write* Chapter 5**
- 23 January Tony Perrottet, "The Joy of Steam"* Group 2 Discussion Leaders
Summary 2 due
- 25 January *Call to Write* Chapter 17
- 30 January Gary Shteyngart, "A St. Petersburg Christmas"* Group 3 Discussion
Leaders
Summary 3 due
- 1 February Outline of Subjective Paper due **
- 6 February Christopher Soloman, "Let's Ski Korea"* Group 4 Discussion Leaders
Summary 4 due,
- 8 February Subjective Paper due**
- 13 February Andrew Cockburn, "Iran: Are You Ready?*" Group 5 Discussion Leaders
Summary 5 due *Call to Write* Chapter 2
- 15 February Websites**
Call to Write Chapter 20
- 20 February *Carnet de Voyage*
- 22 February Website evaluation**
- 27 February *Carnet de Voyage*
- 1 March *Carnet de Voyage*
- 6 March *Mandeville* pp. 43-80, (background report 1)
- 8 March *Mandeville* pp. 80-115
Visual project due**
- 12-16 March Spring Break
- 20 March *Mandeville* pp. 115-49 (background report 2)
- 22 March *Mandeville* pp. 150-90 (background report 3)

27 March	Conferences
29 March	Conferences
3 April	Conferences
5 April	No class
10 April	<i>Travels with Charley</i> , Part 1 discussion leader: Group 1
12 April	<i>Travels with Charley</i> , Part 2 discussion leader: Group 2
17 April	<i>Travels with Charley</i> , Part 3 discussion leader: Group 3
19 April	<i>Travels with Charley</i> , Part 4 discussion leader: Group 4
24 April	<i>Motorcycle Diaries</i> (film)
26 April	<i>Motorcycle Diaries</i> (film)
1 May	First draft of final essay due**
3 May	Final Essay due

Course Work Summaries

You will write four summaries in this course, one on each of the short stories we will read, except the one on which you are presenting. These are to follow the paper format guidelines above and be exactly 250 words long and on one page. (Use your word processor to count the words and note the number of words at the top of the page). The summary should give the reader a brief, objective description of the story or excerpt you have read. Basic information such as title, author, setting, main characters, point of view should be included in the summary. Summaries are written in the present tense, using the third person.

The first sentence of your summary should give the reader all the basic information he or she will need to understand your summary. For example: Set in modern India, "Scholar and Gypsy" by Anita Desai traces the difficulties an American married couple encounter while the husband researches his thesis. The rest of the summary will fill in the details, the characters' names, the nature of the conflict and its resolution, details about the setting (if necessary).

Along with your summary, you will attach a page listing ten words from the text that you did not know and had to look up. After each word, identify the page it appears on in the text and a brief definition or identification. These words can be unfamiliar vocabulary, or names of places, objects, or people that are important to text.

Points will be deducted if your summary fails to meet all of the above criteria.

Discussion Leaders

For each of the five narratives we will read and each section of *Travels with Charley*, a group will be responsible for conducting a discussion of the work. This includes: 1.) introducing the author's background, a combination of biographical and cultural information; 2.) knowing the text well enough to answer any questions about it and to guide discussion; 3.) making connections between the text and previous readings and class discussions; directing a discussion of the text. Your group will need to meet at least twice before the discussion to divide the labor, conduct the research necessary to understand the text, and prepare the discussion group report. The discussion group report consists of: a bibliography (in MLA style) of the sources you used to research the text (and no more than half of these may be on-line); a list of questions/topics you generated for discussion; the names of group members, date of the discussion, etc. The goal is to carry on a discussion of the work in terms of the questions about travel writing and the Other that we have been investigating this term. You must also turn in a *Group Member Evaluation Form* for each member and a *Peer Rating of Group Members*.

Note: It is not the group's responsibility to lecture or to dominate class discussion. The groups provide contextual information, raise issues, ask questions, and shape discussion. It is the expectation that all students will have read the materials and be prepared to contribute to discussion regardless if they are leaders for that class period.

Subjective Essay

On the first day of class you will be interviewed by a partner about a memorable trip you took. Your partner will take notes on this interview, and give the notes to you at the end of class. We will then do some free writing on this journey. Using this interview and the free writing, write a two to three page (500 – 750 word) narrative of

that journey. Keep in mind the motives for travel that we have discussed. Did your trip conform to them? Which?

Visual Project

While in the computer classroom, we will examine and analyze a number of visual representations of the Other. In this project, you will identify and analyze another example. Go to the National Geographic Society's on-line Photography Index and click on History and Culture:

(<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/siteindex/photogallery/history.html>). In the section labeled "People of Today," locate at least two images that you feel represent the Other, either for yourself or someone else. For your essay, choose one of the images and in a 2-3 page (500 – 750 word) paper discuss how the image represents the Other, and what the maker of the image seems to value. Be sure to print a copy of the image about which you are writing. Think about the terms we will have discussed: foreground, background, framing, lighting, black and white vs. color. Is this visual representation similar to the representations in the stories we have read so far? How? Do images of the Other affect the viewer differently than verbal descriptions? How?

Background Report

These are brief research projects you will conduct on some element of the homework reading from *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*. These projects are to be 250-300 words in length and should include a bibliography in MLA style. You must use at least four sources and no more than half can be on-line. For this report you will choose one or more aspects of the homework reading, such as geographical features, people, languages, or animals, and learn as much as you can about them. What is Mandeville writing about?

Final Essay

In this course we have read and seen a variety of travel narratives, and we have discussed how meeting the Other is a means by which we form our own identity. For your final essay, I want you to return to your Subjective Essay and add a reflective conclusion to it. After having discussed and investigated travel narratives, how have your ideas about your journey changed?

In a five to six page essay (1,250 – 1,500 word) essay, revisit your travel narrative and reflect on your experience through free writing. Then conduct some research about your destination? Can you find some images of the place? How does it present itself to the world? How do others react to that place? Then turn to your own response to that place. To what extent did your trip involve an encounter with the Other? How did the journey affect your sense of self? How do visual elements affect your narrative and your memory? I encourage you to draw on the course materials as way to compare or contrast.

Tips

1. Always have your homework assignment read, annotated, and be ready to ask and answer questions about it.
2. When emailing your instructor, always use a salutation (Dear...), identify yourself by your full name, and use a closing (Sincerely...).
3. Do not wait until the last minute to write and print your papers.
4. Attend class punctually.

5. Get to know at least three other people in each of your classes.
6. Be familiar with Blackboard and all its features.
7. Visit the office hours of each of your instructor at least once per term.
8. Have a system for saving copies of all the papers you write for every class, either on your own computer or on a flash drive.
9. Use a calendar to keep track of all your deadlines and assignments.