

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE PROPOSAL
UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON

Use this form to submit **EXISTING** courses for review. If this course will be submitted for review in more than one category, submit a separate proposal for each category.

COURSE NUMBER:	FSEM100		
COURSE TITLE:	TRAVEL WRITING		
SUBMITTED BY:	Marie McAllister	1/23/08	
<i>This course proposal is submitted with the department's approval. (Put a check in the box to the right.)</i>			X
<i>If part of a science sequence involving two departments, both departments approve.</i>			

THIS COURSE IS PROPOSED FOR (check one).

First-Year Seminar (<i>indicate in the rationale if this will also count for major credit</i>)	X
Quantitative Reasoning	
Global Inquiry	
Human Experience and Society	
Experiential Learning	
Arts, Literature, and Performance: Process	or
	Appreciation
Natural Science (<i>include both parts of the sequence</i>)	

NOTE: See the report entitled "General Education Curriculum as Approved by the Faculty Senate," dated November 7, 2007, for details about the general education categories and the criteria that will be used to evaluate courses proposed. The report is available at www.jtmorello.org/gened.

RATIONALE: Using only the space provided in the box below, **briefly** state why this course should be approved as a general education course in the category specified above. *Attach a course syllabus.* **Submit this form and attached syllabus electronically as one document to John Morello (jmorello@umw.edu).** All submissions **must** be in electronic form.

Already approved in FSEM area for Fall 06 (FSEM100G) and Fall 07 ((FSEM100G; WI credit).
Fulfills all requirements for FSEM.

Travel Writing: A First-Year Seminar

FSEM100G, Fall 2007, Dr. McAllister

Think of the long trip home.
Should we have stayed at home and thought of here?
Where should we be today?
Is it right to be watching strangers in a play
in this strangest of theatres?
What childishness is it that while there's a breath of life
in our bodies, we are determined to rush
to see the sun the other way around?
—from Elizabeth Bishop, "Questions of Travel" (1965)

The world is a book, and those who do not travel, read only a page.
— attributed to Aurelius Augustinus, Saint Augustine of Hippo

The most ancient writings, either in prose or verse, are nothing more than the relations of travellers. —Thomas Nugent, *The Grand Tour* (1756)

It may, I think, be justly observed that few books disappoint their readers more than the narrations of travelers. —Samuel Johnson, *Idler* 97 (1760)

ABOUT THE COURSE

By coming to Mary Washington, most of you are travelling from one place to another. All of you are travelling from your past self to your future self. It thus seems appropriate to ponder how others have thought and written about their own travels, whether literal or metaphorical.

This course will introduce you to the genre of literary travel writing. You will read and analyze great nonfiction travel writing, do a little travel writing of your own, and read some basic cultural theory about travel, travellers, and the interdisciplinary field of travel studies.

Together we will explore some of the most fundamental questions about travel and travel writing. Some examples: What counts as “travel writing”? Can we learn to see the world from a perspective other than our own? Can a traveller represent another culture accurately? How does travel change us, and how does our own identity shape our experiences of travel? How does the form of travel—exile, emigration, pilgrimage, tourism, scientific discovery, etc.—relate to the writing that results? How universal are such emotions as homesickness or culture shock? How have exploration, colonialism, and travel writing been related? In what ways is physical travel a metaphor for other kinds of journeying? Why is travel such a popular literary genre? What makes some travel literature better than others?

This course is a Brompton Seminar. We will have periodic joint meetings with three other seminars, James Farmer, Civil Rights, and the Great Debaters; Energy Resources in the 21st Century; and Daily Life in Ancient Rome. There will also be many (optional) opportunities for fun and learning with the other Brompton Seminar members and the seminar professors, Dr. Tim O'Donnell, Dr. Charles Whipkey, and Dr. Liane Houghtalin.

COURSE GOALS

- Be exposed to great travel writing from a range of authors writing in English.
- Hone skills in advanced textual analysis, critical thinking, and analytical writing.
- Begin, or continue, to develop skills in writing creative nonfiction.
- Think deeply about social, political, economic, and other issues relevant to travel, tourism, and travel writing.
- Learn to travel thoughtfully and to reflect on the journey(s) you are making in your own life.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Office hours: MWF 9-9:50, TTh 11-11:50, and by appt. **Office:** Combs 338. **Telephone:** 654-1534.

E-mail: mmcallis@umw.edu. (Note: I delete e-mail from accounts I don't recognize, so if you write me from a non-UMW account, use the subject line to let me know it's you.)

REQUIRED TEXTS

Writing the Journey: Essays, Stories, and Poems on Travel, ed. David Espey (Pearson Longman, 2005).

One additional classic literary travel account, chosen by you and your presentation group.

Additional readings will be made available on the web page.

COURSE TECHNOLOGY

Our home page can be found at <http://mcallister.elsweb.org>. Your first writing assignment for this course is to go to the "who's who" tab and add your picture plus a little information to help your classmates and me get to know you. (Ask me if you need help getting a digital photo.) The home page will include links to copies of the syllabus, handouts, and assignments; readings; helpful resources; our workshop space; and anything else we decide to add.

The Brompton Seminars home page can be found at Brompton.umwblogs.org.

This course and the Brompton Seminars program make use of a number of new technologies. Our Instructional Technology Specialist and I will make sure you learn how to use anything that's new to you!

REQUIREMENTS

- > Attendance and active participation. This includes (a) being present and on time, having read the assignment carefully ahead of time and completed any exercise due that day, (b) volunteering regularly in—but not dominating—discussions, (c) listening carefully to your classmates during discussion and workshop, (d) making a sincere effort on all in-class writing exercises and having them ready for workshop as scheduled, and (e) being an active and positive contributor to workshops and group work.
- > Numerous short writing exercises. Some will ask you to analyze the texts we're reading and some will ask you to try your hand at various skills used in writing creative nonfiction. These exercises will be workshopped so that you have feedback on all of them, and I will record completion for each, but they will not receive letter grades.
- > A portfolio, turned in three times during the semester for a grade. This will contain your workshop draft of every exercise done so far. The first two times your portfolio will also include revised versions of your two best pieces from that portion of the course, plus a reflective commentary on your work thus far. You will get both an overall grade for the portfolio and a grade for the revised pieces. The third time your portfolio will include your five best pieces from the semester; you will get a grade for the five pieces.
- > Three oral presentations: two one-minute "pitches" in which you tell the class about a book on our options list, and one ten-minute group presentation about the book your group read independently.
- > Active participation in the five required Monday Brompton Seminars meetings, especially the October 8th meeting. (Participation in all other Brompton Seminar opportunities is optional.)

Detailed guidelines will be provided for all assignments.

GRADING POLICIES

This course is based on discussion, workshops, and in-class activities. You can only get credit if you are here, fully prepared, with your book and any writing assignment in hand. Because the work we do in class each day is a major part of how you demonstrate your learning in this course, any student who misses more than 20% of the class meetings (5 classes) will automatically fail the seminar unless emergency arrangements have been made. Coming late counts as an absence after the first two times. If you ever have to miss a class, it is your responsibility to get good notes from a classmate and find out what we did.

There is no way to make up credit for in-class activities. Late exercises will receive no credit, and late portfolios will be docked a full letter grade. The final portfolio will receive no credit if late. Oral presentations cannot be made up except by prior arrangement. You must complete all assignments to pass the course.

Grades will be weighted as follows:

- 25% participation
- 10% 10/2 portfolio and reflective commentary
- 10% 10/2 revised pieces
- 10% 11/6 portfolio and reflective commentary
- 10% 11/6 revised pieces
- 15% 12/11 five best pieces and reflective commentary
- 5% two pitches
- 15% group oral presentation

ASSIGNMENTS: FORMAT, ACADEMIC HONESTY, AND RESOURCES

All your writing must be word-processed using a regular 12-point font. Use MLA style for citations (page numbers in parentheses, plus a list of works cited). Please do not right-justify. Proofread all work; just write in any corrections.

Violations of the Honor Code, including cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's ideas or words without giving them credit), will result in honor charges. Please ask me for help if you are ever unsure how to give credit for ideas, suggestions, or facts.

I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the **Writing Center** in Trinkle and the **Speaking Center** in Combs as you work on papers and presentations. Bring a copy of the assignment to your session.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

I will make every effort to accommodate disabilities. Please provide official notice from the Office of Disability Services as early as possible in the semester; retroactive accommodations are not available. Because this is a workshop course, most of what we do in this course cannot be done alone or made up individually, so it is not possible to waive attendance and participation requirements.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Please be on time to avoid disturbing discussion. Please turn cell phones off before entering class (parents: let me know if you need an exception). Please avoid taking bathroom breaks during group work.

SCHEDULE

* indicates a presentation or portfolio due date

- M 8/27 4:15-7 pm, Combs 139 and Faculty-Staff Dining Room, Seacobeck: Brompton Seminars technology training and meeting
- T 8/28 Introduction. What is "travel writing"? What is "travel"? Erika Warmbrunn, from *Where the Pavement Ends* (handout). In-class description exercise (unusual food).
- Th 8/30 William Least Heat-Moon, from *Blue Highways* (138-46). Exercise one.

- T 9/4 Jack Kerouac, "Big Trip to Europe" (online).
 Th 9/6 Francis Bacon, "Of Travel" (90-92); Mary Morris, "Women and Journeys: Inner and Outer" (63-69); Salman Rushdie, "On Adventure" from *Imaginary Homelands* (34-37). Exercise two.
- T 9/11 * Jonathan Raban, "The River" from *Old Glory* (54-60). First pitch due today.
 Th 9/13 Malcolm X and Alex Haley, "Mecca" from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*" (233-42). Exercise three.
- M 9/17 5-7 pm, Faculty-Staff Dining Room, Seacobeck: Brompton Seminars meeting
 T 9/18 Ted Conover, from *Rolling Nowhere* (135-38); Richard Wright, from *Black Boy* (75-80). Exercise four.
 Th 9/20 * Beryl Markham, "Why Do We Fly?" (164-71). Second pitch due today.
- T 9/25 Truman Capote, "A Ride through Spain" (160-64). Exercise five. (You'll have some time in class today to plan out what book your group wants to present.)
 Th 9/27 Apsley Cherry-Garrard, from *The Worst Journey in the World* (195-204). Exercise six.
- T 10/2 * Mike Tidwell, from *The Ponds of Kalambayi* (225-33). Turn in your portfolio.
 Th 10/4 Chang-Rae Lee, "Coming Home Again" (372-81). Exercise seven.
- M 10/8 * 5-7 pm, Faculty-Staff Dining Room, Seacobeck: Brompton Seminars meeting — Travel Writing Seminar in charge
 T 10/9 Colin Thubron, from *In Siberia* (206-11); Jan Morris, "City of Yok" from *Among the Cities* (181-92). Exercise eight.
 Th 10/11 Paul Fussell, "From Exploration to Travel to Tourism" from *Abroad* (249-59); V. S. Naipaul, "Passenger: A Figure from the Thirties" from *A Way in the World* (273-77); Jamaica Kincaid, "The Ugly Tourist" from *A Small Place* (277-80).
- break: You should have finished reading your group book before you come back.*
- Th 10/18 James Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village" from *Notes of a Native Son* (293-304). Exercise nine.
- T 10/23 Paul Theroux, "Mapping the World" from *Sunrise and Seamonsters* (37-43). Exercise ten.
 Th 10/25 Bruce Chatwin, from *The Songlines* (92-99). Exercise eleven.
- M 10/29 5-7 pm, Faculty-Staff Dining Room, Seacobeck: Brompton Seminars meeting
 T 10/30 Fred Strebeigh, "The 'Wheels of Freedom: Bicycles in China" (122-30); Peter Chilson, from *Riding the Demon* (153-60). Exercise twelve.
 Th 11/1 Rebecca West, "Deliverance" (online); Susan Rich, "The Scent of Gasoline" (60-62); John Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman*s Homer" (53-54).
- T 11/6 * Will Ferguson, from *Hokkaido Highway Blues* (146-53); Mary Roach, "Monster in a Ryokan" (211-14). Turn in your portfolio.
 Th 11/8 Eric Leed, "For a History of Travel" from *The Mind of the Traveler* (19-31).
- T 11/13 * group presentations
 Th 11/15 group presentations continue as needed

- T 11/20 Douglas Adams, "Sifting Through the Embers" from *Last Chance to See* (online); John Haines, "Moments and Journeys" (116-22). Exercise thirteen.
- break*
- M 11/26 5-7 pm, Faculty-Staff Dining Room, Seacobeck: Brompton Seminars meeting
- T 11/27 Scott Russell Sanders, from *Staying Put: Making a Home in a Restless World* (360-65); Pico Iyer, "The Alien Home" from *Global Soul* (403-405); Margaret Atwood, "Approximate Homes" (353-58).
- Th 11/29 portfolio workshop: bring everything you've written this term
- T 12/4 portfolio workshop: bring everything you've written this term
- Th 12/6 course wrap-up

Turn in your final portfolio absolutely no later than the end of our exam period: Tu. 12/11, 8:30-11.

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TENTATIVE EXERCISE LIST, TRAVEL WRITING SEMINAR

Upper limit for all exercises: 500 words. Lower limit: 200 words.
(You may expand on selected pieces later for your portfolio.)

Exercise one: literary analysis (detail and impact)

Find a moment—a scene, a paragraph, a single line—in Least Heat Moon's piece that you would argue is particularly effective, and explain your choice.

Exercise two: creative nonfiction (memory, description)

Describe the journey you made to get to school in elementary school—whichever grade you like. What means of locomotion did you use, what did you see or hear or smell on the route, who was with you, what did you notice? Use significant detail to help us see your journey. If you like, you can try to create the feeling of adventure through your description; otherwise, simply seek to put us in your place.

Exercise three: creative nonfiction (memory, reflection, description)

If you have been to another country or a region of this country substantially different from your own, describe either a moment or a physical object that, without being very important in itself, made you feel the differences. (If you've never travelled, describe one thing or moment you've experienced here at UMW that, without being very important in itself, really made you feel the difference from your high school.)

Exercise four: literary analysis (persona)

Analyze the persona used in one of today's readings, and how it is created. Start by asking yourself what kind of person the author is trying to seem like in this piece of writing. How does he present himself, or what does he let us know about his feelings, thoughts, or character. Now try to figure out how he creates that persona for us; that's what you'll write about. What writing strategies does he use to establish his persona? (For instance, is it his style, his descriptions, his dialogue, the actions he describes, his openness, his level of formality, the reactions others have to him, something else?)

Exercise five: literary analysis (beginnings and endings)

Look at the beginning and ending of Capote's piece or any other recent reading that you liked. What makes the beginning a good starting point? How does it introduce the topic? How does it hook you into reading further? Now look at the ending. What kinds of resolution does it offer? [Remember that for any reading that's an excerpt, our editor rather than the author chose where to start and stop; were his choices good?]

Exercise six: creative nonfiction (memory, reflection)

All of us have "survival" experiences, even if we've never confronted nature dramatically like Cherry-Gerrard: we've survived an embarrassing experience, a family or personal trauma, a move to a new school, a moment of actual danger, a social mistake, or something else—big or small—that forced us to call on resources we weren't sure we had. Choose a survival experience that isn't too personal to talk about in workshop. Instead of writing the narrative of the whole thing, choose just a few minutes of the experience and describe them so vividly that we feel like we're in your shoes.

Exercise seven: creative nonfiction (memory, description)

Write about one of the earliest vacations or other journeys you can remember. But instead of writing about the whole experience, choose one significant detail that you remember, and focus on it. *Show* us what made the detail significant; don't *tell* us why it was. Help us see why the experience sticks in your memory; did it change you in any way?

Exercise eight: creative nonfiction (observation, description, reflection)

Choose a safe location on campus that is open to you at multiple times of day. At three different times of day, go sit there for 15 minutes, taking notes on what you perceive. Write about your observations. (If you'd like to broaden out along the lines of Thubron and Morris: did you get any feeling of history while you were there?)

Exercise nine: literary analysis (rhetorical purpose, audience)

Baldwin's essay has an underlying purpose; he isn't simply describing the pretty scenery of Switzerland. What do you think he wants readers to take away from his essay? What audience(s) do you think he's hoping to reach? Back up your conclusions with evidence from the essay: how can you tell?

Exercise ten: maps (research, reflection, visual rhetoric)

Use GoogleEarth to explore an area outside the U.S. that interests you, then do an Internet search for other maps of that area. Try to find at least four, if possible including at least one very old map. Examine them closely, thinking about the ideas in Theroux's essay, then write a page or two presenting some of your reflections. Include links to the sites where you found good maps.

Exercise eleven: research (research, fantasy, description)

Let Chatwin's musing inspire you to exercise your own wanderlust: think of a place you've never been but want to visit: exotic, touristy, local, prosaic, anything you like. Next, go online and, using only resources found on the Internet—not actual travel guidebooks—plan an itinerary of things you would see and do if you visited. Then write a vivid description of your fantasy visit. (You might want to include web links in this one.)

Exercise twelve: creative nonfiction (local travel, observation, description)

With a partner or friend, visit one of Fredericksburg's main tourist attractions: Sunken Road and the Union cemetery, the Rising Sun Tavern, the Hugh Mercer Apothecary Shop, Kenmore Plantation, Mary Washington's house, or Chatham. (The first is free; most of the others cost \$2 with student ID. See the web for hours and directions.) Write about the most interesting part of your journey. Alternately, write about the tourists you see there. [A variation, if you prefer: with a partner or friend, take the FredBus to any location you have not previously visited. Write about what you saw during the trip.]

Exercise thirteen: creative nonfiction (writing about nature, memory, description)

Choose either a place in nature in which you have spent time or an experience that took place in the natural world. Find a detail or moment on which to focus, and use it to make the place vivid to us.

OPTIONAL EXERCISES

The optional exercises below can be used in two ways: (a) you can simply do them on your own to develop your writing skills, or (b) you can substitute one of them once during the semester when you feel totally stuck on an assigned exercise.

Optional exercise A: defamiliarization

Describe some location you know well, doing your best to defamiliarize it. What would a Martian unfamiliar with our culture notice if dropped into this location?

Optional exercise B: native/non-native

If you can read a language other than English, go online and research one tourist attraction or famous destination in any country where that language is spoken. How does the tourist information available to English speakers differ from that available to those who speak the local language? Is the attraction being promoted more to native speakers or to international visitors?

Optional exercise C: synergy

Write a poem or a song inspired by one of the readings we've done so far.

Optional exercise D: verbal into visual

Imagine one of our readings turned into a film. What would we see in the opening scene or two? (You needn't start exactly where the author started.)

Optional exercise E: observing the tourists

Tag along on at least half an hour of a campus tour. You're the native; they're the tourists: what do you observe?