travel writing

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course overview & objectives:

In the mid-Nineteenth century, during his travels to the Kingdom of Hawaii, Mark Twain wrote "Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrowmindedness." In more recent years, Larry McMurty suggested that "It may be that the availability of speedy travel has mainly worked to make the human animal—or at least the American animal—more impatient." This course will explore the tension and potential of these two statements. In other words, what is the potential of travel in our global culture? To consider:

* Barry Lopez suggested that in order to become a good writer, one ought to "get away from the familiar". But he went on to say that travel to exotic destinations need not be the way to exit the familiar. So what, then, does travel mean?
* Etymologically, travel is akin to travail. Is travail, in fact, an imperative element of enlightened travel?
* What is the distinction between traveler and tourist? Is this distinction dissolving?
* What dangers of cultural appropriation exist? How should a traveler treat a distinct (and foreign) culture? What value exists in preservation of/noninterference with existing cultures?
* Is the notion of enlightenment through travel a pretentious intellectual construct? Must one launch into any journey, of any length and type (physical, emotional, etc.) with an existing seed of understanding for the beautiful, for the potential for enlightenment?

Students will explore and develop their understanding of these concerns through response to classic and contemporary travel writing, but most importantly, through writing about their own ideas. What is it that drives a human being to hit the open road, to subsist on ramen noodles for months in order to purchase a plane ticket, to push him/herself to physical extremes of cold or heat, hunger, and even illness, all in the pursuit of the unknown, the elusive, or the culturally bizarre? This course will examine travel as both a physical and a philosophical or spiritual pursuit. We will examine travel through historical and contemporary lenses, looking closely at the exchange between various cultures. This travel writing course will give students the opportunity not only to begin to write their own travel narratives, but it will also provide a chance to examine the seemingly essential human instinct to explore through research and philosophical inquiry essays.
texts & materials:

The texts are being held at the Boulder Bookstore in the reading group section (next to children’s section) under the title “Travel Writing”. Texts will arrive by 26 January. You should receive a 10% discount.

1. Pico Iyer: Sun After Dark
2. Robyn Davidson: Tracks
3. Jon Krakauer: Into Thin Air
4. Bill Bryson: A Walk in the Woods
5. Peter Matthiessen: The Snow Leopard
6. Kira Salak: Four Corners
7. Bill Carter: Fools Rush In
8. Paul Bowles: Their Heads are Green and Their Hands Are Blue
9. Barry Lopez: Arctic Dreams
10. Beryl Markham: West with the Night
11. Bruce Chatwin: In Patagonia

The main text in this course is your own writing. Throughout the term, you will be asked to provide up to fifteen copies of your writing projects for class distribution and evaluation.

YOUR GRADE will be determined as follows:

30% participation and weekly papers - includes quality of classroom presence, class discussions and critiques, quizzes, weekly response papers (total of 10 count for grade)

70% writing portfolio to be submitted sequentially throughout term as well as in final revised version at term’s end.

note on plagiarism:
Plagiarism will not be tolerated. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean. Penalties for plagiarism range from an “F” for an individual paper to expulsion from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

additional policies and recommendations:

email: (bulk of following policies taken directly from official UCB official email policy):
Assignment of student e-mail addresses:
Information Technology Services (ITS) will assign all students an official University e-mail address. It is to this official address that the University will send e-mail communications; this official address will be the address listed in the University’s Enterprise Directory for that student.

Redirecting of e-mail:
A student may have e-mail electronically redirected to another e-mail address. If a student wishes to have e-mail redirected from his or her official address to another e-mail address (e.g., @aol.com, @hotmail.com, or an address on a departmental server), they may do so, but at his or her own risk. The University will not be responsible for the handling of e-mail by outside vendors or by departmental servers. Having e-mail redirected does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with communication sent to his or her official e-mail address.

Expectations regarding student use of e-mail:
Students are expected to check their official e-mail address on a frequent and consistent basis in order to stay current with University communications. Students must check email twice a week at a minimum, in recognition that certain communications may be time-critical.

Note: I will check email regularly M-F, but I do not check email on the weekend.

attendance and participation

Regular attendance and active participation throughout the semester are crucial to this seminar/writing workshop. Students who miss class will be expected to ask classmates for the information and assignments that they miss. Students who miss more than two classes can expect the final course grade to be lowered by one fraction of a letter (i.e. A to A-) for each absence after the second. An absence carries the same weight whether due to a doctor’s appointment or a faulty alarm clock. Even when excused, more than five absences can result in an IW, IF, or F for the course. Class starts at the announced time; tardiness is not acceptable (two late arrivals count as one absence). Finally, physical presence in a classroom does not necessarily mean that you are in mental attendance—you must positively contribute to the course workshops.

Students who miss the first class meeting will be administratively dropped from the course.

Students are expected to contribute to a positive classroom environment. Students who conduct themselves in a disruptive manner will be asked to leave the classroom; all students who are asked to leave will be marked absent for that class meeting. Furthermore, students are expected to dress appropriately for class (i.e.: do not wear pajamas or slippers to class); students who arrive to class in inappropriate dress will be asked to leave; on these occasions, they will be counted absent.
**special notes**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices). I will make every reasonable and appropriate effort to meet your learning needs.

If you speak English as a second language, you should contact me before the third class meeting so that I can better assist you in the course, advise you about special ESL courses, and/or refer you to appropriate services on campus.

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please inform me at the beginning of term if you will need to make special arrangements due to religious obligations. http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at:

http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at
http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at:

http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at:
http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/
assignments

A regular and required assignment is that you pick up and read papers (in advance of the class) to be workshopped. You must come to class ready to comment on the work of your colleagues and to share in their inquiry. Presentations on drafts submitted by classmates will be a regular feature of the workshop. These presentations should be prepared in advance of class and should be well organized, cogent, and to the point. The presentations should identify strengths and weaknesses as well as propose possible remedies.

In addition to a number of short assignments and activities, you will develop three project-based essays or documents in this class. (Assignment sheets will detail the nature and requirements of each project.) Although relatively short, these essays or documents will require considerable thought and attention. Frequent revisions will be necessary. You will be expected to work on these documents throughout the term, even on days when your draft may not come up for discussion.

Each student is responsible for saving copies of all drafts of work submitted. It is best to save work (including various drafts) in computer and paper files.

All essays and essay drafts must be submitted on time. Students can expect that late drafts will not receive comments. If a student misses class when his/her essay is due for workshop, he or she should expect that it will not be workshopped.

Late assignments will be accepted only in cases of documented emergency.

All essays containing more than seven grammatical or mechanical errors will be returned, ungraded, for revision. Grades will not be assigned until grammatical/mechanical errors have been corrected.

All essays and drafts must be typed, double-spaced, in TNR or similar font. Your name and a page number must appear at the top of every page. Please submit all essays in a manila folder.

The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities.

The University takes action to increase ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity, to employ qualified disabled individuals, and to provide equal opportunity to all students and employees.