American Road
Travel Writing and Philosophical Inquiry

Spring 2007
WRTG 3020

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office hours: T/Th 12:3

Course Description:

The focus of your writing this term will be an examination of the social forces that facilitate the American longing for the open road. In what ways might these forces, these exploratory impulses, be distinctly American, and in which ways are they more central to the essence of human character? If these forces are universal, then how do they shape themselves in an American landscape, or overseas? What is the role of place in literature; what is its role in shaping consciousness? What do we seek to learn through travel? Through your writing this term, you will examine social construction and philosophy as it relates to place and movement. In this context, consider philosophy as all of the following:
- love and pursuit of wisdom by intellectual means and moral self-discipline
- inquiry into the nature of things based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods
- critique and analysis of fundamental beliefs as they come to be conceptualized and formulated
- the synthesis of all learning
- the science comprising logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and epistemology

*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.
— Larry McMurtry

*Bill Bryson once made the point that travel writing is a forgiving genre: once you walk out the front door, you’re traveling.

*{A} manuscript that is, in essence, the traveler’s journal is one in which the writer has failed to analyze the material. Reading these manuscripts is like those interminable nights spent at your neighbor’s house viewing several hundred uncataloged slides of his latest vacation.
— Tim Cahill

- a system of motivating concepts or principles
- the system of values by which one lives

A central goal of this course will be to identify the place of an individual, particularly an educated person, within a larger culture. We will use theories of relativity, literary theory, and especially close reading as metaphorical and practical platforms for thought and assertion. We will examine connections between psychology and travel as well as between sociological trends and the impulse to explore. Mark Twain stated that “travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness,” we will examine if and how Twain’s observation might apply to concepts of travel and philosophical or spiritual growth. Road may be defined not simply as a highway, a paved or dirt pathway, but perhaps as any route taken with the intention of movement or travel.

Students will learn to make and improve well-informed assertions concerning contemporary cultural and social constructions. Over the course of the term, each student will develop and present an individual definition of the cultural role that the American highway system plays.

Students will be required to write three major and several minor essays and to make brief presentations throughout the course. One essay will be a blend between philosophical investigation and research-intensive presentation of a relevant, current social concern; another essay will be a researched personal narrative essay, and the final essay genre will be determined by the author. In addition, students will keep a journal throughout the semester.

texts & materials:
All books are held at the Boulder Bookstore, in the course materials section (downstairs) under the listing “American Road - Travel Writing - Knowlton”. You should receive a 10% discount on the books.

On the Road - Jack Kerouac
Best American Travel Writing 2006 - ed. Tim Cahill
Siddhartha - Herman Hesse
Eat Pray Love - Elizabeth Gilbert
Shutterbabe - Deborah Copaken Kogan
Hold the Enlightenment - Tim Cahill

divide: Travel and Enlightenment, Fall 2006 issue, ed. Knowlton

notebook to use as journal

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

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<thead>
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<th>YOUR GRADE will be determined as follows:</th>
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<tr>
<td>20% participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes attendance, class discussions and critiques, quizzes, timely presentation of complete drafts, presentations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>80% writing portfolio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes sequence of several short assignments, three long papers, and journal. Papers are graded for quality of drafts as well as final essay.</td>
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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,
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.

attendance and participation
Students who miss two classes during the first week of the course will be administratively dropped from the course.

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 third. 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. Lack of preparation counts as ½ absence.

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.
special notes

Students with disabilities:

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, or www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices.

Religious holidays:

Campus policy requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, [insert your procedures here]. See policy details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

Classroom behavior:

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion, and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and nationalities. See policies at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code.

Honor 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, academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. I will report all incidents of academic misconduct to the Honor Code Council. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information may be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/.

Sexual harassment:

The University of Colorado Policy on Sexual Harassment applies to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been sexually harassed should contact the Office of Sexual Harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the OSH and the campus resources available to assist individuals who believe they have been sexually harassed may be found at http://www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment/.

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.

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.