Topics in Writing: Travel Writing
WRTG 3020-888 and NRLN 060 and 888, Fall 2010
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Course Overview
“Wherever you go, there you are.” This cliché implies that people cannot change themselves or their perspective by changing their location. In this course we will explore the potential and limitations of travel as a means to facilitate different types of journeys: physical, cultural and psychological. We will study theories of “place,” and the interplay between the viewpoints of traveler, “native,” writer, and reader. In addition to writing critical analyses of the readings, students will write their own travel narratives. You need not have traveled extensively to take this course.

The objective of this course is to help students improve critical thinking and writing skills by focusing on the rhetorical strategies employed by the writers of travel narratives. I will share my enthusiasm with you for the richness, variety, and complexity of these narratives, and will provide background on the variety of genre conventions that helped to produce them. Since these narratives are written self-consciously, with an eye to how they will be perceived by readers, they are a natural vehicle through which to examine rhetorical strategies as you fine-tune the rhetorical strategies you employ in your own papers.

You will learn to shape your essays by expressing an analytical or argumentative purpose and then presenting facts, observations, inferences and ideas in support of that expressed purpose. While skills in interpreting narrative will be covered and practiced in class, students should already possess the ability to read for inferences (that is, you should be able to recognize and explore ideas that are stated indirectly in a primary text, not just explicitly). Although issues of grammar and syntax may be addressed in class, students with deficiencies in these areas should see me about where to get additional help outside of class.

Why is this class a “core” course?
This 3000-level writing and rhetoric seminar satisfies upper-division core requirements in the College of Arts & Sciences and is part of the state-wide “Guaranteed Transfer” pathway of courses. It extends rhetorical knowledge and writing skills practiced in 1000-level writing courses at CU (which meet “Guaranteed Transfer” goals for Intermediate Writing, GT-CO2) by engaging theoretical perspectives and addressing specialized disciplinary communities. Thus, this upper division course meets the state-wide goals of an Advanced Writing course (GT-CO3) through:

Rhetorical Knowledge: While our focus will be on persuasive writing, the course also focuses on critical reading strategies to enable students to recognize how authors choose images, language, and syntax as rhetorical strategies aimed at particular audiences. Key rhetorical texts that will guide our analysis of the primary materials include Rosenwasser and Stephen’s Writing Analytically, which focuses on strategies for critical analysis of disciplinary discourses, the writing process, and writing conventions; Bruce Ballinger’s The Curious Researcher, Robert Harris’s Writing With Clarity and Style: A Guide to Rhetorical Devices for Contemporary Writers; Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola’s Tell It Slant: Writing and Shaping Creative
Nonfiction, and Robert Root Jr.’s, “Collage, Montage, Mosaic, Vignette, Episode, Segment.” Texts that help students examine these narratives through different theoretical frames include Jacques Derrida’s “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.”

Writing Process: The course provides multiple opportunities for students to understand writing from the perspective of various audiences while engaging in specialized discourse. For example, in addition to writing an analysis of rhetorical strategies employed by the author of a travel narrative, students will engage in peer review of their own works in progress. The course covers a variety of approaches to the writing process, including strategies for gaining facility with a specialized discourse, conducting research within a discipline, generating ideas, making initial ideas more complex, using multiple drafts, and applying a variety of approaches to revision as well as a variety of techniques for conducting constructive peer review.

Writing with Technology: as part of the writing process, the course deepens students’ facility with the research methods and tools necessary for discipline-specific research in various online databases, as well as with uses of technology specific to the writing and revision process, such as editing and comment tools within word processing programs.

Writing Conventions: The theoretical and scholarly texts within the course will introduce students to the specialized vocabulary and conventions of selected disciplines, and students will choose a disciplinary focus for their final research paper. In addition to learning the conventions of writing within a particular field, students also will learn how to make their analysis accessible to secondary audiences.

Effective Communication Strategies: Students will become familiar with writing within a disciplinary or specialized rhetorical situation, will practice effective communication strategies appropriate for different contexts and audiences, and will adapt their writing style to the context in which an analytical argument is made.

Required Texts

- Handouts and articles on CULearn: [https://culearn.colorado.edu](https://culearn.colorado.edu) An educational technological platform that supports teaching and learning.
- Articles on the Program for Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) website: [http://www.colorado.edu/pwr](http://www.colorado.edu/pwr)
Photocopies of your and your classmates' papers. Multiple copies of drafts of your papers are REQUIRED and should be considered as part of the textbook costs for the course.


A CU email account that you check regularly.

Workshops
The workshop format provides a forum for learning to participate in a discourse community not only through your own writing, but also through engagement with the writing of your peers. Therefore, I require that you carefully consider and critically appraise the work of your peers; in return, you will receive the benefit of your classmates' assessment of your work, along with my comments. Your critiques of other papers should try to assess understanding of content and use of rhetorical strategies; identify flaws in logic, organization and expression; and make suggestions for improvement. It also is helpful (and nice) to identify particular points that are persuasive and clearly expressed. Your written comments should include suggestions for how the writer might improve the paper. The focus always will be on the writing, not the writer. It can be difficult to accept criticism of your writing, but by listening to and considering such critiques, you will become a better critical thinker and writer. Coming to class prepared, with all the reading done and with written and oral comments for other student papers, is a substantial part of your grade (see below).

Drafts of Papers
You will be required to write multiple drafts of each of the major papers and of some of the writing exercises. When you submit the final version for a grade, you will need to turn in the previous drafts that have my comments on them. Papers must go through the draft and revision process to receive a grade. If you do not turn in drafts, you will earn a zero for the assignment. Revision is an essential part of the writing process. I expect that you will make substantive changes to each draft of your papers.

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 paper and computer files.

All drafts must be typed, 1.5 or double-spaced (not single-spaced), in a readable font. Your name and page number should appear at the top of every page. Final drafts should be double-spaced.
Overview of Assignments

You will be required to write three major papers and several short exercises and to make brief presentations throughout the course. Detailed assignment sheets will be provided for each major paper.

The major essays that you will write in this course (Papers 1, 2, 3) will develop out of a sequence of reading, writing, and thinking assignments that will culminate in a rhetorically sophisticated, idea-driven essay. Although the Homework & Writing Exercises are put into their own category and are not weighted heavily in terms of point totals, they provide the basis for you to explore ideas and get thoughts down on paper with little risk—if you do the assignment, you get the credit. There is a correlation, however, between effort put into these homework assignments, and the quality of your papers, as the homework and writing exercises help you lay the foundation for developing your initial thoughts into a polished paper.

**Paper 1: Rhetorical Analysis.** A short paper (4-5 pages), in which you analyze the rhetorical strategies used in a travel essay. 10%

**Paper 2: A Local Travel Article.** Using course readings as a model, you will “travel” to a nearby location and write a local travel article. The article will need to have a clear theoretical, philosophical or argumentative purpose (implicit or explicit). The article must include some research in addition to your own observations. (approx. 5-7 pages) 15%

**Paper 3: The Researched Travel Essay.** Building on the skills developed in the previous papers, you will choose a disciplinary lens (philosophy, biology, anthropology, etc.) through which to write a travel essay. The essay will include substantial research, make an argument (implicit or explicit), anticipate counterarguments, and use rhetorical strategies appropriate for the chosen audience. The research will provide opportunities for students to write papers that enter into conversations taking place within various discourse communities about the ethics and purpose of travel. (approx. 7-10 pages) 25%

**Reflective Cover Letters:** For each major paper you will include a cover letter, which is a reflective self-analysis of what you accomplished and learned from creating the written document. Each cover letter addresses what you thought the assignment prompt asked you to do, how you pursued your goals for the paper, what changes you made to the paper as you revised your drafts, and why you made these changes rather than others. The cover letter sets the stage for the instructor to understand the revised draft of the major papers; you should provide thoughtful insight into your writing process and outcomes. You also may identify and describe other in-class activities, writing prompts and/or homework assignments that helped you develop your writing skills. Three total; 5% each

**Homework & Writing Exercises:** These are designed to help you hone your writing skills and develop the major papers for the course. These are not individually graded—see below for late homework policy. 10%

**Revised Homework & Writing Exercises:** You will include a selection of your strongest homework assignments and writing exercises in your midterm and final portfolio. Two sets; 5% each

**Class Discussion Leader/Oral Presentation:** Each student will have the opportunity to facilitate class discussion on a particular travel piece with a focus on mapping the geographical journey of the author or on inviting discussion of a particular rhetorical or stylistic device in the essay. A sign up sheet will be provided in class. 5%
Class Participation: Includes thoughtful participation in class discussions, preparation of oral and written comments for peer workshop, timely submission of drafts, arriving to class on time, and attendance. (Please see attendance policy.) 10%

Midterm Portfolio: At mid-semester I will ask you to turn in a midterm portfolio, comprised of the Local Travel Piece, Cover Letter, and your choice of revised writing exercises and homework assignments. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided. The midterm portfolio counts 25% towards the final grade and is weighted as follows: Local Travel Article (15%), Cover Letter (5%), and selection of revised writing exercises (5%) = 25%.

Final Portfolio: The Final Portfolio will include the Researched Travel Essay, Cover Letter, and a selection of writing exercises and assignments since the midterm. A detailed assignment sheet will be provided. The Final Portfolio counts 35% towards final grade and is weighted as follows: Researched Travel Essay (25%), Cover Letter (5%), and selection of revised writing exercises (5%) = 35%.

Grading Scale for Papers
A Excellent in form and content—insightful; clear, eloquent style, no mechanical errors
B A good, interesting paper with some minor flaws, but no major ones
C Adequate, reasonably competent; a mixture of strengths and weaknesses
D Poor in content—lacking careful thought; generally slipshod in form or mechanics
F Incoherent, seriously flawed or difficult to understand, or not turned in when due

Grading Scale for Participation
A Always prepared for class; participates without being called on; written and oral responses to other students’ papers show insight, close reading; comments are clear, succinct and helpful
B Generally prepared for class; occasionally participates without being called on; responses to other student papers demonstrates mastery of the course goals; comments are generally clear and helpful
C Sometimes prepared for class; only participates when called on; mastery of the course goals generally evident, but responses to other student papers, although somewhat helpful, demonstrate a less-than-thorough rhetorical awareness or reading of the paper
D Inadequately prepared or cannot always participate when called on; response to other student papers demonstrates a superficial or inaccurate reading, at best; comments demonstrate a failure to master the course material
F Disruptive to class (talking inappropriately, continual tardiness, text-messaging, etc.); absent; unprepared when called on, unable or unwilling to participate in class discussions or peer review of papers
Late Work

**Late policy for homework:** late homework will be accepted for half-credit if it is turned in by the class period following the original due date. Emailed homework will earn half-credit, even if it is sent before the class period in which it is due. I will not print emailed assignments; please bring me a hard copy when you are able to return to class. Repeated late work will lower your final grade for the course, regardless of the total of your individual assignment grades. Plan ahead: computer or printing problems do not excuse late work.

**Late policy for paper drafts and portfolios:** late drafts of your papers will affect your grade more severely than late homework. Some class periods will require that you bring multiple copies of paper drafts to class, and some class periods will require that you post a draft electronically—you need to read the assignment sheets and follow the directions. Drafts brought in the wrong format will count as late.

Drafts also count as late if they are missing, incomplete (e.g., three pages when the full draft should be five), or you bring an insufficient number of hard copies to class for your group members (when hard copies are required), or you send the paper electronically after class has begun (when electronic copies are required) for the class period in which they are due (e.g. class begins at 8 a.m. and you post your paper at 8:05 a.m.). Late drafts will cause the final paper to be marked down by one-third for each instance (A- to B+, for example). Late portfolios will be marked down one-third for each class period they are late. Repeated late work will lower your final grade for the course, regardless of the total of your individual assignment grades.

Attendance Policy

Class time is for the exchange of ideas and for deepening your understanding of the readings, writing strategies and conventions. If you don’t attend class, you won’t get much from the course; thus, I have an attendance policy: each absence after **3 ABSENCES** (1.5 weeks of class) will drop your class participation score. If you miss 6 classes, you will earn a zero for class participation. For **each** absence after 6, students can expect their total course grade to further drop by one third (B- to C+ for example). Students missing 9 classes or more may fail the class. An absence is an absence: I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences, so take care not to use up your three "penalty-free" absences early in the semester. Two late arrivals and/or two early departures count as one absence; text messaging in class or any non-course related electronic activity conducted in class counts as an absence. If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out what you missed from a classmate before the next class. Extenuating circumstances, such as a documented extended illness (hospitalization), will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Please be considerate and turn off cell phones before class begins.

The Writing Center

CU-Boulder has an outstanding Writing Center where you can receive extra help with your writing. You can bring in papers from any class (not just a writing class), and you don’t even need a draft: you can bring in your assignment sheet and brainstorm thesis ideas with the Writing Consultant to get your paper off to a strong start. Consultants provide feedback and advice on all aspects of writing, including development of ideas, organization, the clarity of your language, and so on. They won’t “fix” your papers, but if you need help at the sentence level they will help you identify patterns of error and help you learn to correct them.

Planning ahead is key: the Writing Center is popular and appointments fill up. See [http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html](http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html).

Hint: I’ve heard that if you can’t get an appointment, you might try stopping in at the top of the hour to see if there are last-minute cancellations.
Communication: please communicate. If a situation arises that interferes with your ability to do the work for this class, please tell me about it, write me a note, or talk to me after class. I would rather learn about problems, concerns, or suggestions during the course when I have a chance to help you succeed, than at the end of the semester, when it is too late to remedy things for you.

Campus Policies

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 (including but not limited to failure of the course) and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Papers may be submitted to Turn-it-in.com. 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/

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please provide a letter from Disability Services (DS) and discuss specific needs with me, preferably during the first two weeks of class. DS determines accommodations (303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

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. In this class, if a religious observance conflicts with your ability to attend class, please notify me two weeks in advance and make arrangements to make up the work.

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, 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

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at http://www.colorado.edu/odh
Schedule

- The due dates for assignments are subject to change. Short assignments may be added.
- Readings and assignments are to be completed for the date listed. You are not required to do the exercises in the textbook unless they are specifically assigned.
- If you miss class, look for homework assignments and handouts on CULearn, and get notes from a classmate.

FIRST PROGRESSION: Rhetorical Analysis
Rhetorical focus: critical analysis and reading for inferences

Jan. 11  Introduction to course
What is Travel Writing; what is Creative Nonfiction

Jan. 13  Read Theroux's essay, "Five Travel Epiphanies" on CULearn:
https://culearn.colorado.edu, under “Readings”
Homework due (handed out in class; also posted on CULearn)
Read entire syllabus (on CULearn)
For all homework:
1. Please see the individual homework assignment sheet; there will be rhetorical or skills-development readings listed on the homework sheet that we will apply to the primary texts
2. To get credit your homework must be typed and not emailed

Jan. 18  Read the “Foreword” by Jason Wilson and “Introduction” by Simon Winchester in Best American Travel Writing (hereafter abbreviated as BATW)
Homework due, see assignment on CULearn
Turn in course questionnaire (you may print and bring to class, or send to me in private mail via CULearn)

Jan. 20  Read “I Stand Here Writing” on CULearn
Read “Intimacy” in BATW
Homework due

Jan. 25  Read “Gettin’ Jiggy” and “Deer at Providencia” on CULearn
Homework due

Jan. 27  Paper 1 draft due (Group 1)
Read “Ecotouring in Honduras” and “The Cabin of My Dreams” in BATW
Homework due; students in Group 1 may turn in the homework next class

Feb. 1  Workshop drafts Paper 1 (Group 1)
Read all drafts; peer responses due—see assignment sheet
Discuss Paper 2: Local Travel Article

Feb. 3  Paper 1 draft due (all groups besides Group 1)
Read “No-Man’s Land” on CULearn
Read “Who is America” in BATW
Homework due
Feb. 8  Workshop Paper 1; peer responses due
Proposal paragraph for Paper 2 due (multiple copies--see assignment sheet)

SECOND PROGRESSION: Moving from Observation to Interpretation
Rhetorical focus: claims and evidence; style as argument; strategies for peer review

Feb. 10  **Paper 1 Due, with Cover Letter (final version)**
Read lecture on Derrida’s, “Structure, Sign and Play…” on CULearn
Homework due
**Paper 2 draft due (Group A)**
Students in Group A may turn in the Derrida homework next class
Students in Group A may turn in Paper 1 next class

Feb. 15  Workshop Drafts Paper 2 (Group A)
Read all drafts; Written Peer Responses due
Read “Collage, Montage, Mosaic…” on CULearn
Homework due

Feb. 17  Read *The Odyssey* (excerpts);
Read *A Companion to Homer’s Odyssey* on CULearn
Homework due; see homework assignment sheet for specific reading assignment
**Paper 2 draft due (Group B)**
Students with drafts due today may turn in *The Odyssey* homework next class

Feb. 22  Workshop Drafts Paper 2 (Group B)
Read all drafts; written peer responses due
Workshop Group A revisions
Homework due

Feb. 24  Read *The Odyssey* (excerpts);
Read *A Companion to Homer’s Odyssey* on CULearn
Homework due; see homework assignment sheet for specific reading assignment
**Paper 2 draft due (Group C)**
Students with drafts due today may turn in *The Odyssey* homework next class
*Eula Biss, author of “No-Man’s Land,” reads from her work this pm, on campus

Mar. 1  Workshop Drafts Paper 2 (Group C)
Read all drafts; written peer responses due
Workshop Group B revisions
Homework due
Read “Internal Revision” on CULearn
Begin reading *Travels With Charley* pp. 1-75 (discuss next class)

Mar. 3  **Midterm Portfolio Due (Group A)**
Read/discuss first half of *Travels with Charley*; homework due
Students with Portfolios due today may turn in homework next class

Mar. 8  **Midterm Portfolio Due (Group B)**
Workshop Group C revisions
Read “Tyranny of the Thesis” and “What it Means to Have an Idea” on CULearn
Homework due; continue reading *Travels with Charley*
Proposals for Paper 3 due
THIRD PROGRESSION: Researching and Storytelling
Rhetorical Focus: using a disciplinary lens; argument, analysis, synthesis

Mar. 10  **Midterm Portfolio Due (Group C)**
Read/discuss second half of *Travels with Charley*; homework due
Proposals for Paper 3 due
Students with Portfolios due today may turn in homework next class

Mar. 15  Read essays TBA (see homework sheet)
Homework due
Proposals for Paper 3 due
Begin reading *Scribbling the Cat* pp. 1-75 (discuss next class)

Mar. 17  Read/discuss first half of *Scribbling the Cat*
Homework due
Proposals for Paper 3 due

Happy Spring Break!

Mar. 29  Online Research Methods day
Meet in a computer lab, room TBA
Continue reading *Scribbling the Cat*
**If you have not conducted research within CU’s databases, I highly recommend that you take this online tutorial before class. See esp. Part 1 (keywords) and Part 2 (Find books, articles, newspaper articles):**
GO TO: [http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/pwr/public_tutorial/home.htm](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/pwr/public_tutorial/home.htm)

Mar. 31  Read/discuss second half of *Scribbling the Cat*
Homework due

April 5  Read essays TBA (see homework sheet)
Homework due
Begin reading *In a Sunburned Country* pp. 1-75

April 7  **Paper 3 draft due (Group A)**
Read/discuss first half of *In a Sunburned Country*
Homework due

April 12  Workshop Drafts Paper 3
Peer Responses due
Homework due
Continue reading *In a Sunburned Country*

April 14  **Paper 3 draft due (Group B)**
Read/discuss second half of *In a Sunburned Country*
Homework due

April 19  Workshop Drafts Paper 3
Read all drafts; Peer Responses due
Homework due
Workshop revisions Group A
Start reading *The Places In Between* pp. 1-75
April 21  **Paper 3 Draft due** (Group C)
Read/discuss first half of *The Places In Between*
Homework due

April 26  Workshop Drafts Paper 3
Read all drafts; Peer Responses due
Homework due
Workshop revisions Group B

April 28  Read/discuss second half of *The Places In Between*
Homework due
Workshop revisions Group C

**May 2**  **Final Portfolio due**

Have a wonderful summer!