

# Travel Writing/ENGL 2730W



Professor Tom Deans

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Office Hours in Austin 132: Wednesdays 10:30-11:30, Thursdays 2-3:30pm, and by appointment

Here's the catalog description: *Introduction to the craft of travel writing, with attention to the history, variety, and ethics of the genre.* Yes, the course is all that, but you deserve more detail: Travel writing is both a report of an unfamiliar place and a revelation of the self. We will explore this vibrant genre of non-fiction by reading a range of travel writing, most of it contemporary; you will also compose original essays grounded in your experiences. We will do this against the backdrop of the history of the genre, which is ethically fraught, and use that history and a range of readings to help us make thoughtful ethical and artistic choices. You don't have to be journeying to exotic places during the course, but you do need to adopt the attitude of an explorer and storyteller, taking account of your travels (past or present) in either far-off or nearby locales. We will write 4 major essays: 1 critical analysis of published travel writing and 3 creative essays that report and reflect on your experiences. You will also select one of those essays to remix into another medium, such as a video, audio essay, illustrated narrative, or annotated map. All the essays will be composed in drafts, with peer review. Other requirements include posting to discussion boards, completing tests and quizzes, reviewing the drafts of others, and assembling a final portfolio.

## Books/Readings

*Americana (And the Act of Getting Over It)* by Luke Healy (Nobrow Press)

*The Best American Travel Writing 2021* edited by Padma Lakshmi (Mariner/Harper-Collins)

*Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail* by Cheryl Strayed (Vintage paperback, but any edition is OK)

Lots of online and PDF readings that are linked in HuskyCT

## Abbreviated Course Outline

Movement 1: What Is Travel Writing?

Movement 2: Critical Analysis of Travel Literature

Movement 3: Exploring the Self

Movement 4: Exploring a Public Issue

Movement 5: Exploring a Cultural Phenomenon

Movement 6: Remixing, Revising, Editing, Reflecting

## Course Requirements and Grading

Course Components	Points	Weight
In-Class Quick Quizzes, Collaborative Oral Exam, Online Discussion/Perusal Posts, Informal Writing, Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaborative oral exam 150</li><li>• 10 best quick quizzes 100</li><li>• Perusal posts, discussion posts, informal writing, editing assessments 140</li><li>• 2 presentations/discussion sparking 50</li><li>• Scene/place assignment 10</li></ul>	450	45%
4 Major Essays (in drafts)	400	40%
Peer Review Effort/Quality & Conferences	50	5%
Remix Project	50	5%

Portfolio Cover Letter	50	5%
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**In-Class Quick Quizzes, Collaborative Oral Exam, Online Discussion Posts, Informal Writing, Presentations & Assignments:** These will be our main way of both keeping up with the material and interacting as a community. Active discussion and participation matter. These activities and assessments are also designed to help you to learn and practice strategies that you'll apply in formal writing assignments.

**4 Major Essays:** These are the heart of the course and each essay will run about 1000 words (which is 4-5 traditional manuscript pages). For each essay, you'll do a draft and peer review. No essay will be accepted unless it is first circulated as a draft.

**Remix Project:** For this, you will take an essay you have already written and reframe it in another medium/format/genre, such as a podcast/audio essay, annotated map, video, or blog post.

**Grading:** To pass this course, you must pass its formal writing component. That is, if you do not get a combined passing grade for the 4 essays and remix, you cannot pass the course, even if you earn more than 600 points. This pass/fail criterion, which applies to all UConn W courses, supersedes the grading scale.

**Peer Review Effort/Quality:** Since we're trying to build a community of writers, responding to the drafts of others is a vital part of the course.

**Portfolio Revision and Cover Letter:** While you will be revising and throughout the course, for the final portfolio you will revisit, revise, extend, and edit all that writing. This includes a cover letter that reflects on the whole of your work. There is no final exam—instead the portfolio is the final assessment for the course.

**Late policy:** Essays submitted after the deadline lose 5%, with an additional 5% for each 24-hour period thereafter. For any *one* paper during the term (you choose it), you can get a grace period of 24-hours with no penalty. Tests and quizzes must be completed in class or by the announced deadlines and cannot be made up. If you are experiencing any extenuating circumstances, health issues, or a personal crisis, please contact me as soon as possible.

### Grading Scale

Grade	Letter Grade	GPA
930-1000	A	4.0
900-929	A-	3.7
870-899	B+	3.3
830-869	B	3.0
800-829	B-	2.7
770-799	C+	2.3
730-769	C	2.0
700-729	C-	1.7
670-699	D+	1.3
630-669	D	1.0
600-629	D-	0.7
<600	F	0.0

### Academic Integrity

In this course we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars and writers, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. All are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others, even to test out the strategies you see at work in academic and creative writers—that's a vital part of academic life. You may certainly discuss readings outside of class, go to the Writing Center

with your drafts, and share drafts with classmates or friends. However, when you use or borrow or closely imitate another's ideas or language or even syntax—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it with a standard form of academic citation, or, depending on the genre (as in your creative essays), with signal phrase (“According to Jose Calabra...”) or acknowledgement statement (“In this essay I drew inspiration from...I also used...”). This same principle of transparency and disclosure applies to AI writing tools. If you try to pass off another's ideas or writing as your own or use the work of others or AI without signalling that to readers—even if just one part of an essay or assignment—you will fail not only that assignment but the course. If you have any questions about when and how to credit the work of others or AI, please come talk to me.

## Student Responsibilities and Resources

As a member of the University of Connecticut student community, you are held to certain standards and academic policies. In addition, there are numerous resources available to help you succeed in your academic work. Review these important [standards, policies and resources](#), which include:

- The Student Code
  - Academic Integrity
  - Resources on Avoiding Cheating and Plagiarism
- Copyrighted Materials
- Netiquette and Communication
- Adding or Dropping a Course
- Academic Calendar
- Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships
- Sexual Assault Reporting Policy

## Students with Disabilities

The University of Connecticut is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, ***please let me know as soon as possible so that we can discuss options.*** Students who require accommodations should also contact the Center for Students with Disabilities, Wilbur Cross Building Room 204, (860) 486-2020 or <http://csd.uconn.edu/>.

## Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze a representative sample of travel writing, focusing on rhetorical, literary, and stylistic features
2. Compare several different travel genres and their defining features, with an eye toward writing in those genres and employing those features
3. Compose original travel writing in multiple modes.
4. Conduct research, including first-hand observation, interviews, and use of sources.
5. Debate the ethics of travel writing historically (its role in colonialism, for example), moments of questionable ethics and appropriation in contemporary travel literature, and the ethics of your own writerly choices and those of your peers
6. Provide constructive feedback on drafts for fellow students.
7. Revise and edit using peer and instructor feedback.

**To review the latest iteration of a detailed schedule of readings and assignments, follow this link:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xTtmEX9JMpEX7FozT8wLuGufBo2JWiEN2gfpmwK0Pmc/edit?usp=sharing>

### CCC+ Curriculum objectives

Topic of Inquiry	Common Curriculum objective	Course student learning objective(s)	Course assessment(s)
TOI-1	<p><b>Learning Objective 1:</b> Students will be able to assess the importance of creativity, ideation, innovation, and/or technical design output to individuals, organizations, society, and/or various fields of study.</p>	LO1, LO2, LO5	<p>Lectures</p> <p>Discussions of wide range of readings and books in multiple styles and modes</p> <p>Lecture and reading quizzes</p> <p>Collaborative oral exam</p> <p>Style exercises</p> <p>Exercises in literary techniques and research/reporting methods</p> <p>Reflective/analytical cover letter for portfolio</p>
TOI-1	<p><b>Learning Objective 2:</b> Students will be able to demonstrate skill with evaluating, adjusting, and adapting the creative process to address particular challenges, needs, or conditions.</p>	LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4, LO6, L07	<p>3 original travel essays</p> <p>Remix/multimodal assignment</p> <p>Exercises in literary techniques and research/reporting methods</p> <p>Style exercises</p> <p>Student presentations</p> <p>Drafting, Peer Review, and Revising</p> <p>Individual and small-group conferences with instructor</p>

TOI-1	<p><b>Learning Objective 3:</b> Students will be able to design or create new ideas, mechanisms, methodologies, artistic works, and/or products</p>	LO1, LO2, LO3, LO4 LO6, L07	<p>3 original travel essays</p> <p>Remix/multimodal assignment</p> <p>Drafting, Peer Review, and Revising</p> <p>Individual and small-group conferences with instructor</p> <p>Assembling a portfolio</p>
TOI-5	<p>1. Using theories and methods of social scientific and/or humanistic inquiry relevant to studying institutions and individual values, students will be able to critically and comparatively examine how individuals influence and are influenced by political, social, economic, and/or familial institutions.</p>	LO4, LO6, L07	<p>Readings</p> <p>Lectures</p> <p>Discussions</p> <p>Persual annotations of reading</p> <p>Collaborative oral exam</p> <p>Critical essay assignment</p> <p>Attention to ethics, appropriation and identity in drafting and peer review of creative essays and the final portfolio</p> <p>Reflective/analytical cover letter for portfolio</p>

**Narrative explanation for excel sheet:**

This course was co-designed by a creative writer and scholar/critic in writing studies, and it is intended to introduce students to travel writing as a genre, but even more importantly get them *creating* as novice travel writers. While it has some traditional features of a humanities seminar—especially the first 2 modules that focus on the history, defining features, critical issues, and ethics of the genre, culminating in a critical essay assignment—the other 4 modules are all about the production original travel narratives, plus one “remix” piece that demands

converting one of the earlier essays into a new medium, such as a audio/podcast, video, comic, webstory, or some other remixing of mode or audience. (Note that in some iterations of the course instructors allow students to opt for 2 critical essays and 2 creative ones, plus the remix, rather than the 1 critical, 3 creative, plus the remix.) Those 4 modules that focus on artistic and cultural production have all the hallmarks of creative writing pedagogy: emphasis on technique, on experimentation, on iterative drafting, on peer review, on regular conferences with the instructor, and on curating a portfolio. Along the way and with the portfolio, reflections on process are built in.

TOI 5 is less pronounced in the course than TOI 1, but individual/society is still a significant framework and theme. Travel writers compose from an individual point of view while trying to capture culture phenomena, often in cultures not their own, which entails challenges and contradictions that we discuss. We also track trends toward more intentional engagement with identity, especially gender, race, and disability, as well as with social problems, such as inequality and climate change. In fact, one of the creative essay modules is Writing about a Public/Social Issue (within the travel genre)—the other two are Writing about the Self and Writing about a Cultural Phenomenon—and that Public/Social module triggers debate on how much travel writing should be about reporting and entertaining and how much about identity and critique. More traditional ethical inquiry figures into course in a number of ways: (1) we explore the how travel writing emerges from and is entwined with religious traditions (especially pilgrimage narratives), early modern global scientific exploration, and the politics colonialism and exploitation; (2) we unpack how those ideological inheritances, genre conventions, and social structures are discernable—and affirmed, complicated, or resisted—in contemporary travel writing; and (3) and in practical terms students examine the cultural defaults that emerge in their own drafts and puzzle out their personal ethics of representation and disclosure.