

WRT 305 / Travel Writing
Winter J-term / Online
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The land is sacred. These words are at the core of your being. The land is our mother, the rivers our blood.

Mary Brave Bird, Lakota

The whole object of travel is not to set foot on foreign land; it is at last to set foot on one's own country as a foreign land.

G.K. Chesterton

We need only travel enough to give our intellects an airing.

Henry David Thoreau

Welcome to WRT 305! Being a travel writer requires initiative, curiosity, time management, and reading. As a 4-credit course, this travel writing class assumes that each writer will devote a considerable amount of time to traveling (locally, state-wide – if permissible -- and so on), writing on location, and honing polished final essays. You will have the support of this class, but need to be an independent thinker, traveler, journalist, researcher, reader, and, of course, writer. Among the tools necessary to be a successful travel writer are curiosity, a notebook, curiosity, a lust for reading, and, again, curiosity. I am here to support your learning and writing, and I am always eager to read about students' travel experiences, however local they may be!

Think of our class as a Writers' Studio. For the next THREE weeks, you will be 'out there' observing, recording, writing, and you will be checking in here, at the Studio, for guidance, practice, peer support, to celebrate breakthroughs and share frustrations, and, most importantly, to hone your skills as a travel writer.

Please read this syllabus through completely and print a hard copy of it in case the website is down and you cannot access it when you need it. Spend some serious time getting to know the components of our Brightspace learning environment: this syllabus, course content (where I will present key ideas), discussions, the assignments. Taking the time to explore now will ease anxiety later when deadlines become crucially important.

Important Note: You will need to log in to the website frequently. Announcements will be posted on the main entry page, but you will also need to make sure you are checking URI e-mail to receive these.

Official Catalog Description: According to the URI Course Catalog, WRT 305 should include "Writing about places both new and familiar. Emphasis on descriptive techniques, the use of facts, and different critical and cultural perspectives. May include place journals, book reviews, proposals, non-fiction essays."

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of WRT 305 you will have:

- Developed creative capacities in writing
- Developed skill in expressing oneself in writing
- Gained experience in writing effectively, reading complex texts, and understanding human difference;
- Identified rhetorical situations calling for a wide range of responses;
- Evaluated the appropriateness of your rhetorical choices;
- Evaluated and responded to other writers, both professionals and your peers;
- Practiced organizing your texts according to the conventions of the genres and forums you choose;
- Produced sophisticated texts with correctness, recognizing and self-editing your errors
- Demonstrated coherence and cohesion in your written texts;
- Synthesized and integrated insights across your projects in this course.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- All the essays and articles we will be reading are available for free online or will be scanned and available in Content each week.
- Access to Online Writing Lab, Purdue University (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>)
- You will need a camera/phone to take pictures

TECHNOLOGY ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

Although there are no technology prerequisites for this course, you must have frequent access to a networked computer and a scanner (or camera) to successfully navigate the class. Brightspace functions as a learning environment for us – quite literally, we meet here. Our discussions go on here. Our peer workshops and revisions happen here (we will connect to Eli Peer Review online). Our class blog will be in Wordpress (I will get you set up in there). If you will not be able to access our site at least five times a week for a substantial amount of time, then it would be advisable to drop the class. Even better, make it a habit to log in daily to be sure you are on top of this high-speed class.

FIELD RESEARCH

This is a 4-credit 300-level university course and as such has a field research component. This means going outside, walking/cycling/driving/boating (“traveling”), writing extensive notes, talking to other people (while maintaining social distance!), listening to others, being sufficiently active and curious in order to learn about places and to reflect on their meaning to you. Scanned notes will be part of some projects. Successful field research also requires planning in advance, especially in the summer version of this course. Deadlines come up fast and there is no time to delay the travel part of each project. The sooner you complete the travel, the sooner you can begin drafting, and this results in stronger writing at submission stage.

PROJECTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade in this class will be based on your writing process, your final products, and your active participation with the other writers in this class.

Discussions (in class & online)	= 15%
Short assignments/peer review	= 20%
<i>The main projects</i>	
Nature Walk Essay	= 20%
Water Essay	= 20%
Rust & Stone Blog Post	= 20%
Query Letter	= 5%

GRADING SCALE

A	93	B+	88	C+	78	D+	68
A-	90	B	83	C	73	D	63
		B-	80	C-	70	F	59

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION POSTS

Your active participation in Discussions is a key contribution to building our learning environment. New discussion threads will open throughout the session, and you will post an original response to one of the threads, before offering two thoughtful and constructive responses to posts from other classmates. Please read Guidelines attached to Reading Discussions to learn more about the expectations of these posts.

ABOUT PEER FEEDBACK

You will upload your “best draft” to your group in Eli Peer Review (I will introduce you to this site during Project 1) and your classmates will give you guided feedback. Likewise, you will offer feedback on their work. These workshops are an important way for you to hear how different audiences read and respond to your writing. I will create those groups when the first projects are due. Please note that giving peer feedback is an important part of your participation grade. I will support reviewers in giving constructive and supportive feedback – initially it will be anonymous – and no one should feel worried about this process even if it is your first time doing peer review work. Writers need readers, and getting reader responses can be very helpful to writers – and learning to give quality feedback is also itself an important skill to practice.

ABOUT THE PROJECTS

We will progress from a Cloud-Watching Task in which you will practice vivid description, to the Nature Walk Essay, in which you will practice descriptive writing and insight, and then to the Water Essay when you will add a layer of historical, contextual, theoretical or factual information to your work. The goal is to give your reader a rich experience of place. In each case, the essays are written for armchair travelers (readers of specific American publications) who are experiencing the world vicariously through you (the purpose is to give them an immersive experience). The Rust and Stone Blog Project is more whimsical and the audience will be this class: each post provides pictures and written text that respond to a landscape. We will upload these to a Wordpress site.

When you turn in each of your revised projects for my comments, you will receive credit for the whole project from pre-writes and notes to polished pieces. Projects also include plans for revision and post-writes, to be submitted with your revision. Students who do not revise based on their peer feedback (or their own review of their initial drafts or feedback from me) will not get full credit for their process in a project. Incomplete drafts will receive only partial process points; drafts that do not show some degree of care – proofreading, for example, or an ending -- will likewise be reduced.

“ATTENDANCE” AND PARTICIPATION

Because this is an online and highly intensive course, "attendance" looks different than in a traditional face-to-face class. Do know that I am able to track your activity on the course site. Some days you will be required to post to Discussions -- or where indicated, submit short responses to videos/readings. For more specifics on the discussion guidelines, please print out the Guidelines in Discussions. For your three projects, you will be expected to offer peer feedback to your classmates. This is real: discussion and feedback activities are worth a substantial part of your final grade. Those who miss deadlines, post assignments late or not at all, do not upload drafts, and/or contribute very little or nothing to online (synchronous and asynchronous) discussions will receive a grade of zero and/or an unexcused absence. Other absences or non-participation (for illness, accident, or personal tragedy) may be instructor-approved; however, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor—via email or text—to explain the absence within 12 hours of the missed deadline, or to provide documentation in support of the missed deadline. Absences that are not university-sanctioned or instructor-approved will mean a loss of points or a deduction to the final grade. The equivalent of three weeks of “absences”—including non-participation and/or missed deadlines—will mean an “F” for the course. This will be at the instructor's discretion in consultation with the Department Chair.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Your access in this course is important. Please send me your **Disability Services for Students (DSS)** accommodation letter early in the term so that we have adequate time to discuss and arrange your approved academic accommodations. If you have not yet established services through DSS, please contact them to engage in a confidential conversation about the process for requesting reasonable accommodations in the classroom. DSS in Kingston contact: 401-874-2098, web.uri.edu/disability/, dss@etal.uri.edu. DSS in Providence: 401-277-5221, web.uri.edu/disability/providence/, dss@etal.uri.edu

This is a challenging course. Success requires that you keep pace with the work, understand course concepts, and study effectively. **Academic Skills Development** resources helps students plan work, manage time, and study more effectively. In Fall 2020, all Academic Skills and Strategies programming are offered both online and in-person. **UCS160: Success in Higher Education** is a one-credit course on developing a more effective approach to studying. **Academic Consultations** are 30-minute, 1 to 1 appointments that students can schedule on Starfish with Dr. David Hayes to address individual academic issues. **Study Your Way to Success** is a self-guided web portal connecting students to tips and strategies on studying and time management related topics. For more information on these programs, visit uri.edu/aec/academic-skills or contact Dr. Hayes directly at davidhayes@uri.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student's name on any written work, quiz or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student's own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty.

- Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation
- Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently
- Unauthorized possession or access to exams
- Unauthorized communication during exams

- Unauthorized use of another's work or preparing work for another student
- Taking an exam for another student
- Altering or attempting to alter grades
- The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams
- Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references
- Facilitating or aiding another's academic dishonesty
- Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the instructors

You can always seek help from others, but ultimately you must do your own work. In all of your classes, it will be assumed that you understand plagiarism and its consequences. Please consult the URI Student Handbook about academic honesty and related issues. The penalty for plagiarism can be a zero for the assignment and a report to your academic dean, who has the option to fail you for the course; in addition, the charge of academic dishonesty will go on your record in the Office of Student Life. If you need more help understanding when to cite something or how to make clear your references, PLEASE ASK.

You must complete all major writing projects in order to pass the course. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work is successfully and promptly uploaded to Brightspace. Please use Brightspace Tech Help if needed.

LEARNING ONLINE

As a 300-level writing course, Travel Writing is demanding of time and energy – but also gives writers the time to roam! I do like students to know though that they will have to be highly organized and self-motivated. I am here to support your learning – just make sure that you keep in touch and stay on top of deadlines. I plan to host drop-in Zoom meetings so we can chat about any questions you have or so we can just keep in touch.

So, one more note on staying on top of this class: In the past, occasionally a student will miss a deadline and when I contact them, they reply with “I couldn't access Brightspace” or “I've been having tech problems.” The minute you encounter such a challenge (after trying to problem-solve for 15 minutes or so), you must email me, and if applicable we will agree an extension. Telling me about this days later will not work in a J-term format and late penalties will become unavoidable. This course moves fast and there is not much room for late completion of required assignments. Devise a Plan B for tech issues during the first week (for example, where is the nearest library with internet access; who can lend you a computer if yours goes out of commission; are you backing up your work on a desktop as well as in Google?). This may sound harsh – but my goal is to preempt challenges wherever possible and to teach the problem-solving skill of always having a Plan B!

	SCHEDULE	
	Readings and Writings	Hard Due Dates
Week One	WALKING	
Jan 4	<p>Writing: Introduce yourself/ Reflection on Syllabus/ Cloud Task</p> <p>Reading: Syllabus & Project 1 assignment sheet</p>	Video Intro due in Discussions/ Reflection on Syllabus & Cloud-Watching Task due in Assignments – all by 10 pm.
Jan 5	<p>In class: Showing vs Telling / Walk Essay drafting</p> <p>In the Field: Project 1 field research: go for a walk!</p> <p>Rdg: Cadogan, “Walking While Black”; Kaplan, Solnit, and Haile readings</p>	Showing vs Telling task /Pre-write for Project 1 both due in Assignments by 10 pm.
Jan 6	<p>Wrt: Walk Essay drafting/ Meditation on Soil</p> <p>Rdg: Haile, “Going It Alone”</p>	<p>Keep drafting from field notes</p> <p>Post to Discussion on Walking readings by 10 pm</p> <p>Submit Meditation on Soil</p>
Jan 7	<p>In class: Narrative arcs & insight</p> <p>Rdg: Haile essay – please read twice before class</p>	<p>“Paul Bunyan” task due by 10pm</p> <p>Response to Haile essay due by 10pm</p>
Jan 8	<p>Wrt: Draft Walk Essay due in Eli Review</p> <p>Reader responses in Eli Workshop</p>	<p>Complete drafts due in Eli Review by 3 pm</p> <p>Reader responses due in Eli by 10 pm</p>
Weekend Jan 9-10	<p>Walk Essay completed</p> <p>Water project assigned</p>	Revised Walk Essay due + post-write in Assignments by Sat 10 pm
Jan 11	<p>Wrt: Water Essay assigned</p> <p>Rdg: Power, “Mississippi Drift”; Dickey, “The Last Wild River”</p> <p>Field: Water Project field planning</p>	Pre-write for Project 2 due in Assignments 10 pm
Jan 12	<p>Rahawa Haile class visit</p> <p>Field: Water Project field research (aka travel)</p>	<p>Mini Research Task due in Assignments 10 pm</p> <p>Reflection on Haile visit</p>

Jan 13	Rdg: Complete Water readings	Discussion post due on Water Readings by 10 pm
Jan 14	In class: Bunyan main point; target audience; integration of 'third thread' Watch Insight video	Keep writing!
Jan 15	Finalize draft for submission on Saturday	Respond to 2 posts in Water Discussion
Weekend Jan 16 & 17	Completion of Project 2	Draft due in Eli Review by NOON Responses due 10 pm Sunday: Project 2 due 10 pm
Jan 19	In class: beginning the Query Letter	Pre-Write for Project 3 due by 10 pm.
Jan 20	Reading: Knighton Continue travel/drafting Blog Post	Response to Knighton due in Assignments by 10 pm
Jan 21	In class: workshop for Query Letters Readings Quiz	Revised Query Letter due in Assignments by 10 pm
Jan 22	Workshop for Blog Post	Drafts (text only) due in Eli Review by NOON Reviews due by 10 pm
Jan 23	Revised Blog Posts Project 3 Post-Write/ Final Reflection	Due in Wordpress by 10 pm Due in Assignments by 10 pm

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK!