

---

## WRT 350 / TRAVEL WRITING (online)

*Language is fundamental to the possibility of re-wonderment, for language does not just register experience, it produces it. The contours and colours of words are inseparable from the feelings we create in relation to situations, to others and to places.*

Robert Macfarlane

**WELCOME TO WRT 305!** Being a travel writer requires initiative, curiosity, time management, and reading. As a 4-credit course with a field component, this travel writing class assumes that each writer will devote time to traveling (locally or state-wide, etc), writing on location, and honing polished final pieces of writing. You will have the support of this class, but need to be an independent thinker, traveler, journalist, researcher, reader, and, of course, writer.

My wish for you in this class is that you discover new words, new places, new perspectives (on place and yourself), and mastery of three genres.

**Writing:** There is a rhythm to this class: discover, wonder, research, craft, publish. We will practice this together before you each embark on the three main writing projects, a 3-minute digital story, a blog post, and an essay.

**Reading:** We will read and discuss a variety of travel writing this semester. There has been an explosion in place writing in the last few decades and there is much to admire and emulate in the pieces I have collected in our online site. Some writers will inspire you, others will frustrate you – all of them are prize-winning travel writers. It will be important that you actively read the assigned pieces -- to be prepared for discussion, any short quizzes, and to learn the writing strategies they employ.



Think of our online class as a writers' studio. For the summer, 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 develop your skills as a travel writer – that is, someone who can engage and inform their readers. Engage through vivid description and reflective observations. Inform by an ability to collect relevant historical, cultural, and contextual material through research. In other words, I am serious about working with you as students to help you become nimble, thoughtful, impressive writers, so that you will continue to develop two key skills currently being sought by employers and graduate schools: the ability to write well and the ability to think independently.

**Official Catalog Description:** Writing about places both new and familiar. Emphasizes descriptive techniques, the use of facts, and different cultural perspectives. May include travel essays, place journals, guide-books, query letters. Requires sustained fieldwork.

**WHAT WILL WE LEARN?**

WRT 305 is an upper-level writing course designed as an elective for students who want an opportunity to develop their writing skills and are willing to undertake some local travel to explore new places. There is a demanding reading schedule in addition to the writing projects, and we will be discussing theoretical approaches to travel writing as well as recent award-winning texts.

Upon completion of WRT 305 you will have:

- Developed creative capacity in writing
- Developed skill in expressing oneself in writing
- Acquired skills in working with others as a member of a team
- 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
- Considered, applied, and controlled different stylistic options in crafting your texts

- Synthesized and integrated insights across your projects in this course.

**WHAT MATERIALS WILL WE NEED?**

- Access to our Brightspace site where you will find selected readings/audio/videos
- \$10-30 for a tour
- A recording device, either smartphone or audio recorder

**WHAT PROJECTS AND ASSIGNMENTS WILL WE BE DOING?**

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.

Class participation	10%
Short Assignments/peer review/reflections	15%
Project 1: Digital Story	25%
Project 2: Blog Post	25%
Project 3: Essay	25%

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

## DO WE HAVE A FINAL EXAM?

A Final Reflection will be due at the end of the summer session.

**DEADLINES or DUE DATES:** All work is due on the dates specified. The nature of drafting, peer reviewing, and revising means that deadlines matter in fast-moving summer courses. Unless special arrangements have been made with me, penalties will be applied to late papers.

**ABOUT THE PROJECTS:** We will begin with a Digital Story, in which you choose a place you love and then will practice descriptive writing and insight; then we will move to the Blog Post in which you will write and design a visually interesting engagement with place that includes metal or stone; and end with the Gathering Essay, when you will bring a cultural awareness of others to your travel writing. As we progress through these projects, we will discuss the different audiences and purposes involved.

### Digital Story

A 3-minute personal narrative film that starts with a script and revisions, then culminates in a compilation of audio and video, and finally a shared viewing experience, in order to listen to the stories of others. No experience in editing is required to make this project. I will guide you step by step through the process. Because this is a travel writing course, this story will be focused on sense of place – one that matters to you now or that was pivotal for some reason as you were growing up.

### Blog Post

This semester's class blog will be titled Rust & Stone. What signs in the landscape have you seen that are made of these materials? Why are we sometimes fascinated by structures in a state of collapse: rusted bridges, collapsed walls? Looking at the Romantic tradition of the 'ruin', we will read contemporary travel writing that features urban or rural decay. You will write and design a blog post that describes a trip (walking, biking, etc)

in which you explore either metal (rust, disused infrastructure, ruins, feats of engineering) or stonework (walls, cairns, wayfinders). You will take notes on what you discover, photograph the journey, and create a draft for peer review. Following feedback from readers, you will revise the post, making changes and developing areas of potential. The first version will be due off-line in a consultation with me when we will discuss your rhetorical decisions for the next version to be 'published' to the class blog.



### Gathering Essay

For the third project, you will write a traditional essay. The "essay" genre involves a meandering, a piece of writing in which we hear the mind of the writer following an idea or thought. The field research for this project will require attending an event, where you will observe people who have gathered for a common purpose: to watch a sports game, to play bingo, to

go for a dawn swim, etc. The essay includes observation, information, and reflection. You will also consider the “culture” of the event which you attend.

Please keep track of all your writing: notes, drafts, outlines, and hard copies of your drafts after every session of drafting or editing, plus photocopies and/or live links for any significant sources you have used or cited.

Important: save each successive draft as a different animal: eg “DS Project 01”; “DS Project 02”; rather than writing over (and losing) earlier versions.

For each project there will be a Feedback Cycle: Writing/Peer Review/Revision.

When, after peer review, you turn in each of your revised pieces for my comments, you will receive credit for all steps of the project. My comments will be aimed at offering suggestions for your writing in general. Students who do not revise based on their peer feedback (and on their own best judgment) will not get full credit for their process in a project. Incomplete drafts will receive only partial process points. After receiving a grade for the project, you may revise further and submit this to me for a revised grade. **You must complete all assigned writing projects in order to pass this course.**

**PEER REVIEW:** For each project, there will be a peer review session and we will be using the Eli Review site for this. Peer reviews offer opportunities to get ‘real readers’ for your writing and to revise your paper based on the feedback you receive. In all cases, I will give you prompts to help you respond meaningfully to a draft. The expectations for the feedback are very high. You will be graded on the quality of your feedback or the specificity of your suggestions for each writer. Generic, rubber-stamped comments are not acceptable. These workshops are an important way for you to hear how different audiences read and respond to your writing. You must meet deadlines for delivering your drafts and for giving others your responses.

**BRIGHTSPACE:** We will be using Brightspace as our means of communication and course management. Since announcements will go to your email address, please check NOW that you have an email address that will receive messages promptly. (Get your URI mail forwarded if necessary!) “I didn’t get the course message” will not be a reasonable excuse for not knowing what is going on in our course! Please take initiative and find out.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** It is assumed that each of you will work to the best of your ability. Learning is often a collaborative process; we can only learn when we work through the thoughts and words of others, and find ways to inhabit those thoughts ourselves. For this reason, I strongly encourage you to work together and learn from one another. **Cheating, however, is a different story, and you should be mindful of the line between collaboration and stealing.** 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. Here is University policy:

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. If you use someone else’s words—their intellectual property—then you must use quotations marks to indicate this direct use.

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 use of another's work or preparing work for another student
- 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.

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, and the paper that shows evidence of plagiarism will be ineligible for inclusion in your portfolio. If you need more help understanding when to cite something or how to make clear your references, PLEASE ASK.

**COURTESY & CIVILITY:** In all group communication such as discussion forums and peer review, please use a respectful tone and be open to the views of others. In teaching this class, I commit to doing my utmost to promote a positive learning environment for its members. Coming to the online class environment with your intellect switched on, a willingness to actively participate in class work, a commitment to show respect to others, and a positive learning attitude – these are required for successful completion of this course. Negative behavior (disrespect of

others, repeated complaining, reluctance to engage in field research/reflection/writing process, dismissive attitude toward assignments) will affect a student's participation grade and, in cases where this adversely impacts the learning environment of this class, may result in referral to the Dean of Students.

**WRITING CENTER:** The Writing Center, located in Roosevelt Hall 009, offers one-on-one tutoring for student writers who need help developing ideas or need advice on any aspect of writing. The Writing Center serves all student writers, not just "beginners." Visiting writers are encouraged to bring a draft, notes, syllabus, or any relevant information to help facilitate the session. Students may view the schedule and make appointments by logging onto <https://uri.mywconline.com/>. Sessions are 45 minutes per appointment. Students are encouraged to make appointments in advance. The Writing Center may be open during the summer, and should be offering online appointments.

**OTHER ASSISTANCE:** You are always welcome to contact me during the semester to discuss ways in which I can support your learning in this course. Useful resources that also support students in a variety of ways can be found in the Division of Student Affairs. Visit: <http://web.uri.edu/student-affairs/health-and-wellness/>