First-Year Research Seminar: Questions of Travel  
NYU Gallatin – Spring 2012  
T/Th 3:30 – 4:45 pm

Professor Robert Huddleston  
Office Hours: Tues. 2–3 pm, 1 Washington Pl., rm. 503, or by appt.

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Course Description:
As Susan Sontag observed: “Books about travel to distant places have always opposed an ‘us’ to a ‘them’—a relation that yields a limited variety of appraisals.” In this course we will attempt to question and to complicate the familiar binaries of self and other, foreign and familiar, utopia and dystopia that condition our understanding of writing about the “exotic.” We will read texts that have sought to imagine the strange and unfamiliar and at the same time come to grips with the ever-elusive idea of what it means to be at home. Readings will include works by Homer, Voltaire, Kafka, Freya Stark, Elizabeth Bishop, and others.

This course will focus on research and writing as a process, helping you to discover yourself as a writer and encouraging you to envision writing as a skill to learn and a craft to be improved upon. We will explore various stages of the writing process, including free writing, multiple drafting, revising, editing, and polishing. This course will also include an introduction to research skills and techniques. Finally, there will be a workshop component to this course in which we will discuss, critique, and edit each other’s written work.

Course Requirements and Grades:

PARTICIPATION
Class participation is the first and most important course requirement. It is crucial that you attend all class sessions, that you come prepared with the written responses, drafts, readings, and other materials that will be discussed each day, and that you participate actively. NOTE: You must purchase the required texts and bring them to class when a reading is being discussed. Bring printed copies of Blackboard readings.

ABSENCES
If you must be absent, please inform me ahead of time and please submit all written work that is due before the class begins if you are not able to attend. In addition, remember that you are required to participate in class discussions. The participation of each student is vital to the success of the class as a whole, and excessive absences (more than 2) will jeopardize your grade.

READING RESPONSES
You will have a response to the reading due almost every week. Sometimes I will distribute a topic for you to focus on in these responses; at other times you will be free to
write on a topic of your choosing. You should bring a hard copy to class for discussion. The responses should be approximately one page, typed, double-spaced. Remember that these responses will help you to participate in our discussions and to write your papers later, so they are an integral part of your writing and thinking process. You should keep them all together as an ongoing discourse with yourself about the themes of the course. \textit{Late responses will not be accepted.}

\textbf{ESSAYS}  
There will be three graded written assignments. You will be required to bring your writing to class at various stages of completion, so please pay close attention to due dates written on the syllabus. The last two of these essays will have a research component. \textit{Late papers will be penalized one letter grade per day late. Final papers must be turned in by the due date or receive an F.}

\textbf{PRESENTATIONS}  
Each student will be required to give a 10-minute mini-presentation (with a partner if you wish) on the issues raised by one of the assigned readings. The point of the presentation is to guide class discussion for that day. A sign-up sheet will be distributed.

\textbf{GRADE}  
Your grade will be based on both the quality of your written work and on the quality of your participation in class discussion and writing workshop activities.

\textbf{Plagiarism}  
As a Gallatin student you belong to a community that values honest and open intellectual inquiry. This depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

\textbf{Required Texts:*}  

1. Rebecca Solnit, \textit{A Field Guide to Getting Lost} (Penguin)  
5. Elizabeth Bishop, \textit{Poems} (Farrar, Straus, Giroux)  
6. Freya Stark, \textit{The Valleys of the Assassins} (Random House)

*Note: Please buy the editions that have been ordered to facilitate class discussion.

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard. Finally, we will be watching two films. These will be placed on reserve at the Avery Fisher Media Center in Bobst Library before our class discussion, and you will be responsible for watching them on your own.
WEEK ONE
1/24  Introduction

1/26  Readings: George Santayana, “The Philosophy of Travel”; Susan Sontag, “Questions of Travel” (Blackboard)

WEEK TWO: Getting Lost
2/2   Read: Solnit, pp. 155–76.
      Writing due: Response to Solnit

WEEK THREE: Travelers’ Tales: Truth and/or Fiction?
2/7   Read: Homer, The Odyssey, bks. 1–5
2/9   Read: Homer, The Odyssey, bks. 6–9
      Writing due: Response to The Odyssey

***Special Event: Rebecca Solnit & Pico Iyer at the 92nd Street Y, 8 pm***

WEEK FOUR
2/14  Read: Homer, The Odyssey, bks. 10–14

2/16  WRITING WORKSHOP: Please come prepared to discuss your essay topic.
      Writing due: Essay #1, first draft ***email a copy to me as an attachment***

WEEK FIVE
2/21  WRITING WORKSHOP: Please read and come prepared to discuss your classmates’ work.

2/23  Watch: Film, TBA
      ***Writing due: Essay #1 Final copy***

WEEK SIX: Picaresque Journeys and El Dorados
2/28  Read: Voltaire, Candide, pp. 1–57

3/1   NO CLASS

WEEK SEVEN
3/6   Read: Candide, pp. 58–94

3/8   Watch: Aguirre: Wrath of God, dir. Werner Herzog (on reserve at Avery Fisher)
      Writing due: Response to Candide or Aguirre

WEEK EIGHT
3/13 & 3/15: NO CLASS--SPRING RECESS
WEEK NINE: **Getting Lost**
3/20  Read: Kafka, *Amerika*, pp. 1–84

WEEK TEN
     Writing due: Response to *Amerika*
3/29  Read: Kafka, pp. 242–53
     Preliminary discussion of research papers; Writing due: Research essay topics

WEEK ELEVEN
4/3   Library Research Session: Meet at 3:30 in Bobst Library.
     Writing due: Bring a copy of your research topic
4/5   **WRITING WORKSHOP**
     Writing due: Essay #2, preliminary intro & thesis

WEEK TWELVE: **Questioning Travelers**
4/10  Read: Elizabeth Bishop, *Questions of Travel*
     Writing due: Essay #2, first draft & preliminary biography ***email a copy to me as an attachment***
4/12  **WRITING WORKSHOP**

WEEK THIRTEEN
4/17  Read: Elizabeth Bishop, *Geography III*
     ***Writing due: Essay #2, final copy***
4/19  Read: Pico Iyer, “Why We Travel”; Jan Morris, “From *Places*” (Blackboard)

WEEK FOURTEEN
4/27  Read: Stark, pp. 159–89
     Writing due: Essay #3, first draft ***email a copy to me as an attachment***

WEEK FIFTEEN
5/1   **WRITING WORKSHOP**
5/3   **Last Class!**
     ***Writing due: Final essay***

Have a happy summer!