Exploring the Possibilities of Travel Writing
WRTNG-UG 1315:
M 3:30-6:10 pm
1 Washington Place, Room 401
January 23 – May 7

Instructor: Aaron Hamburger
aih204@nyu.edu/aaronhamburger@gmail.com/www.aaronhamburger.com
OFFICE HOURS: M 6:30-7:30 and by appointment/1 Wash Place, Room 613

“When I write, I try to make landscapes rise from the page, to appear in the camera lens of the reader's mind... I am influenced by words and the chewiness of language, the specialized phrases and names that have come out of human work and travel through the landscapes.”  Annie Proulx

In this creative writing workshop, we’ll explore the wide range of creative possibilities available to practitioners of the much-misunderstood genre of travel literature. In addition to developing practical skills of research and crafting sentences, we’ll consider how the struggle to capture settings with words reveals larger truths about not only the places we visit, but also the people who inhabit them (including ourselves). Other issues we examine include the ethical dilemmas of travel writing, the relationship of place of origin to destination, and the thorny question of the “authentic” travel experience.

Students will complete four types of travel writing projects: service-oriented travel writing, memoir travel writing, researched non-fiction travel writing, and a work of fiction.

COURSE GRADING REQUIREMENTS AT A GLANCE:

50%: Three Projects
- PROJECT ONE: A service-oriented travel piece about a site of your choice in New York. 200 words. First draft due date January 30. **FINAL DRAFT DUE Feb 6TH, NO EXTENSIONS (10%)**
- PROJECT ONE: A memoir-style piece about a significant journey you’ve taken. 1200-1500 words. First draft due date to be assigned. **FINAL DRAFT DUE APRIL 2ND, NO EXTENSIONS (20%)**
- PROJECT TWO: A researched non-fiction piece profiling a neighborhood of your choice in the New York area. First draft due APRIL 9TH, NO EXTENSIONS. **FINAL DRAFT DUE MAY 7TH, NO EXTENSIONS. (20%)**

50%: Class Participation:
- Meeting assignment deadlines. (Late work earns a maximum grade of C.)
- Completion of the creative fiction assignment.
- Thoughtful completion of **in class writing exercises and SHORT STORY**.
- Completion of the reading and short homework assignments.
- Written critiques of fellow students’ work.
- Regular attendance in class.
- **Active contributions to in-class discussions**.
GRADING NOTE:
Grades on student projects and writing are based on a rubric of criteria that will be handed out with each assignment. Class participation grades are determined entirely by student effort at fulfilling criteria listed above.

Grades are as follows: A (excellent effort and work); A- (excellent effort, promising work); B+ (good effort, promising work); B (good effort, above average work); B- (above average work and effort); C (fair work and effort); D (poor, but passing); F (failure)

REQUIRED READING:
Students will receive a packet of readings corresponding to the four modes of writing we’ll be doing in the course: service-oriented travel writing, memoir travel writing, researched non-fiction travel writing, and fiction writing.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE
Any electronic device that must be shut off when a plane is about to take off must also be turned off while you are in class. Please be respectful of all members of the class. (And remember that the professor is also a member of the class!) Classroom etiquette will be taken into account in determining your class participation grade.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:
This class has no excused (or unexcused) absences. The policy is simple: missing more than one full class period affects your class participation grade. Three tardies and/or early exits = one absence. Excessive absences jeopardize your chances of passing the class, regardless of work turned in. If possible, let me know before class if you must be absent. Also, find out from your “study buddy” what you’ve missed.

PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship 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 [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

WRITING CENTER:
Basic grammar and syntax skills are essential for clarifying your thoughts about the texts we’re reading. I strongly urge you to go to the Writing Center in Room 423 in the Gallatin Building in order to make sure your skills are in order. Appointments can be made online at: http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/writingcenterappointments.html

“Write from what you know into what you don’t know.” — Grace Paley
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES
Please see list below

SERVICE-ORIENTED TRAVEL WRITING:
Jan 23:  Introductions, Thinking about place/Service-Oriented Travel Writing /Homework for next class: Read Orwell on Language/Write a Service-Oriented Piece and bring 16 copies to distribute to class.

Jan 30:  **Due: Draft 1 of Service-Oriented Travel Article for workshop (200 words)**. Discuss Orwell.  Homework for next class: Read Obama and Orwell “Shooting an Elephant”

Feb 6:  **Due: REVISED SERVICE-ORIENTED TRAVEL ARTICLE 200 WORDS**/Discuss Obama & Orwell “Shooting an Elephant”/Creative Activities to generate Memoir Travel Pieces.  Homework for next class:  Read Joan Didion

MEMOIR-STYLE TRAVEL WRITING:
Feb 13:  Memoir Travel Pieces (1200-1500 words) individual deadlines assigned, Discussion: Joan Didion, strengths and problems with the memoir form.

Feb 20:  No Class, but Memoir Round 1 students will submit work electronically

Feb 27:  Memoir Travel Pieces Workshop Round 1/**Memoir Round 2 due**

March 5:  Memoir Travel Pieces Workshop Round 2/**Memoir Round 3 due**

March 12:  No class.  Travel somewhere!

RESEARCH-BASED NON-FICTION FEATURE:
March 19: Memoir Travel Pieces Workshop Round 3/Research-Based Non-Fiction Feature (2000-2250 words), Discussion of how to Research/**Memoir Round 4 due**

March 26: Memoir Travel Pieces Workshop Round 4/**Choice of non-fiction place and research plan due**.  Homework for next class: Read Farley and Proulx, Continue Research

April 2:  **MEMOIR REWRITE (1200-1500 wds) DUE**. Discuss Chatwin, Sebald, Farley, Proulx /Research notes due. Organize notes into a blueprint.  Homework for next class:  Write first draft

April 9:  **Bring draft of Non-Fiction Feature and workshop reading aloud** in small groups/Discuss Revision Strategies

April 16: Individual Conferences.  Homework for next class:  Read Lahiri and Highsmith

FICTION:
April 23:  Fiction Discussion, Lahiri, Highsmith/Homework: Short Story (1500-2000 words)

April 30:  **STORY DUE** (Class Participation Credit)/Fiction vs. Non-Fiction/Discussion of Travel/Discussion of “Pitch Letters”/Write a Pitch letter for your Non-Fiction Piece

May 7:  **FINAL RE-WRITES OF NON-FICTION PIECES (2000-2250 words) DUE**  Fiction Workshop in small groups/Story Responses for Extra Credit due/Final Thoughts