

Off the Beaten Track: Travelling and Writing in the Ancient and Modern Worlds

CLST0023

McInerney

Synopsis

In this class we will read a broad selection of travel narratives, from Herodotus to Ibn Battuta all the way up to the 20th century writers such as Robyn Davidson and Rory Stewart. Our focus will be on exploring how travel and travel writing create exotic cultures. The journey also becomes a discovery of self by an encounter with the Other. In the process, entire worlds of wonder open up for the viewer. How material is selected for recording reflects the priorities, anxieties and worldview of the writer. Travel has a unique ability to focus our attention and stimulate thoughtful reflection.

Readings

Herodotos, *The Persian Wars* (Selections)

Caesar, *The Gallic War*

The Greek Alexander Romance

Ibn Battuta in Black Africa

Usama Ibn Munqidh, *Islam and the Crusades*

Marco Polo, *The Travels*

Richard Hakluyt, *Voyages and Discoveries: Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* (Penguin Classics)

Robyn Davidson, *Tracks: A Woman's Solo Trek Across 1700 Miles of Australian Outback*

Rory Stewart, *The Places in Between*

Various, *Granta* 10

Format

The first session of the week will be devoted to discussion of the texts with background and contextual information. We will pay attention to themes of exoticism, identity formation, cultural memory, and persuasion. The second session will begin with a student presentation, reporting on a text and developing ideas and themes from the first class. For your Thursday reports you are encouraged to broaden your focus and to include ethnography, museum collections, ethnomusicology, anthropology and other areas to complement the texts under discussion. We meet twice each week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Each week a part of the Thursday class will be devoted to discussion.

Policies

If you are going to miss class because of athletic commitments do not take this class, as I will not be offering make-up work. If you are a student with a learning disability please register with the Student Disabilities Service in the first two weeks of class. SDS will notify me once you have done so. If you become ill or experience an episode of serious hardship please make sure you contact the College Office and your academic advisor.

Plagiarism: In this class you are expected to be honest and to produce your own work. Plagiarism, which involves taking the work of others (even AI) and passing it off as your own, is dishonest. If caught you'll fail and the case will be referred to Penn's Office of Student Conduct. You can find out more about this at <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>.

Attendance: You may miss up to two sessions for any reason—illness, religious observance, sporting events—with no penalty. If a medical issue has a longer impact you need to discuss this with me. You'll be responsible for making up missed work by writing a short paper, after discussing this with me. After your two absences, you risk failing the class.

Electronics: Please don't use electronic equipment in this class. If you have a particular need please discuss it with me.

Late Work: Please submit your work on time. No late work is accepted except under exceptional circumstances.

Contesting grades: If you feel your work has not been fairly graded you are welcome to write a one page explanation of where you feel your work was misconstrued. Following this I will reread your work and discuss your complaints with you.

Generative AI: You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor). Please keep two things in mind: AI frequently gets facts wrong; and using it stunts brain growth.

Outline of Assignments & Assessments

Requirements for the class are as follows:

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| ○ Recitation Participation/Discussion | 10% |
| ○ Term Paper: 8-10 pages | 50% |
| ○ Short Paper: 5 pages (due one week after the oral report) | 20% |
| ○ Class presentation | 20% |