

English 9CT

American Road Narrative: Reading and Writing the Journey

(Winter Quarter, MW 1:30-3:20, 3 Credits)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

"The only journey is the one within."
—Rainer Maria Rilke

"Not I, nor anyone else can travel that road for you.
You must travel it by yourself.
It is not far. It is within reach."
—Walt Whitman

From Whitman to Kerouac, Alec Soth to Georgia O'Keeffe, the lure of travel has inspired many American artists to pack up their bags and hit the open road. In this Creative Expressions course we will be exploring the art and literature of the great American road trip. We will be reading and writing in a variety of genres, workshoping our own personal projects, and considering a wide range of narrative approaches.

Assignments will range from reading Cormac McCarthy's novel, "The Road," to listening to Bob Dylan's album, "Highway 61 Revisited." We will be looking at films like "Badlands" and "Thelma and Louise," acquainting ourselves with contemporary photographers, and venturing out on a number of campus-wide field trips. Anyone with a sense of adventure is welcome!

REQUIREMENTS

Attend every class

Complete assignments on time

2 stories/projects for workshop (3-5 pg)

Note: The first workshopped piece will be a short story (fiction or nonfiction), the second workshopped piece will be *either* a short story or multimedia project, your choice.

Attend 3 readings outside of class

Complete take-home journal assignments on time

Written response to every workshopped piece

Journal response to 1 artist per week (from assigned readings)

1 revision or additional project to be handed in at the end of the quarter (with originals and my comments)

GRADES

You will be graded on your attendance, your participation in class, your journal assignments, and your eagerness to improve. I will grade your development as a writer/storyteller and the extent to which you are engaging with the material. You will receive an unofficial midterm grade and a final grade for the course. Grades will be roughly imagined as follows:

40% homework / 10% revision or add. project / 50% participation

ATTENDANCE

Attendance in class is mandatory. You are allowed to miss one day of class without it affecting your grade. I expect you to be on time and to complete the assigned readings. Three or more tardies will result in an unexcused absence. It is imperative that you attend all the days of class in which your work is being workshopped. Failure to do so may result in a failure of the class.

TEXTS

The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip—David Campion

The Road—Cormac McCarthy

Deepstep Come Shining—C.D. Wright

Highway 61 Revisited—Bob Dylan

Course Packet (from Copy America)

Blank Journal

STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL:<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae>).

HONOR CODE

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:

The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
3. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.
4. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

All work must adhere to the University's policies on academic integrity. Failure to cite work that is not your own constitutes plagiarism.

TIMELINE

January 4	In the American Grain: Why We Tell Stories
January 6	Storytime (bring snacks)
January 11	The Open Road: Travel Narratives and What They Offer <i>from</i> Song of Myself—Walt Whitman American Poetry—Louis Simpson Introduction to Photography and the American Road Trip (photo book)
January 13	Going Forth: Where to Begin The Lake Isle of Innisfree—W.B. Yeats <i>from</i> On the Road—Jack Kerouac
January 18	(no class)

- January 20 **Origins: Understanding Place**
- Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?—Joyce Carol Oates
 Vacation Sex—Dorianne Laux
 The Americans—Robert Frank (photos)
 MOCK WORKSHOP
- January 25 **Perfect Strangers: How to Create Conflict**
- A Good Man is Hard to Find—Flannery O’Connor
 Sleeping By the Mississippi—Alec Soth
 Counterpoint Characterization—Charles Baxter
 WORKSHOP
- January 27 **The Crossroads: Moral Dilemmas**
- Highway 61 Revisited—Bob Dylan (album)
 The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock—T. S. Eliot
 American Pictures—Jacob Holdt (photos)
 WORKSHOP
- February 1 **Landscapes: The Power of Metaphor**
- Badlands—Terrance Mallick (film)
 American Prospects—Joel Sternfeld (photos)
 WORKSHOP
- February 3 **Are We There Yet?—Cities, Towns, Destinations**
- Goodbye to All That—Joan Didion
 Aboriginal Landscape—Louise Gluck
 Degrees of Gray in Phillipsburg—Richard Hugo
 Grays the Mountain Sends—Bryan Schutmaat (photos)
 WORKSHOP
- February 8 **American Beauty—The Importance of Contradiction**
- Mississippi Drift—Matt Powers
 Wild Geese—Mary Oliver
 WORKSHOP
 CONFERENCES
- February 10 **Encountering the Unknown—Defamiliarization**
- Total Eclipse—Annie Dillard
 On Defamiliarization—Charles Baxter
 WORKSHOP
 CONFERENCES

- February 15 (no class)
- February 17 **Post-Apocalypse: Myth and Imagination**
The Road—Cormac McCarthy (novel)
Highway Kind—Justine Kurland (photos)
WORKSHOP
- February 22 **Thrill of it All: How to Write Action**
Thelma and Louise—Ridley Scott (film)
Car Crash While Hitchhiking—Denis Johnson
The Journey is the Destination—Ryan McGinley (photos)
WORKSHOP
- February 24 **Transformation: Making Your Characters Change**
from Wild—Cheryl Strayed
The Cremation of Sam McGee—Robert Service
Streetwise—Mary Ellen Mark (photos)
WORKSHOP
- February 29 **Rolling Nowhere: The Importance of Not Getting What You Want**
Desert Breakdown, 1968—Tobias Wolff
Streetwise—Martin Bell (film)
A Brief Period of Juvenile Prosperity—Michael Brody (photos)
WORKSHOP
- March 2 **Off the Map: Surrealism**
Deepstep Come Shining—C.D. Wright (poetry collection)
The Long Road From Selma to Montgomery—Steve Schapiro (photos)
WORKSHOP
- March 5 **(Class Road Trip to Big Sur)**
- March 7 **Homeward Bound: Reflections**
Smoke Signals—Chris Eyre (film)
This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona—Sherman Alexie
WORKSHOP
- March 9 **Pizza Party**
FINAL REVISIONS DUE