

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**  
<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

2018-2019 LA ST 414: Travel Writing  
(Fall Term)

Instructor: Russell Cobb  
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Time: 9:30-10:50 TR  
Place: HC 1-15  
Office Hours: Thursday, 3:00-5:00  
or by appointment

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**Course Prerequisite:** None

**Course-based Ethics Approval** in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

Yes       No, not needed, no such projects approved

**Community Service Learning Component:**

Optional

**Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available**

- Exam registry – Students' Union  
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exams>
- See explanations below
- Document distributed in class
- Other (please specify)
- NA

**Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)**

Yes       No

**Course Description and Objectives:**

This course will examine travel narratives based in Latin America from the Conquest to the contemporary period. Sometimes travel texts report on colonial subjects, while other times they describe resistance to colonialism. In any case, we often come to know a region better because of its travel literature. We begin with the colonial period and then shift into 19th century travel narratives of Europeans in the newly independent continent. We conclude by examining some contemporary journalistic accounts of Latin America from the Anglo-American perspective. Class presentations, readings, and discussions will be conducted in English. And yes, you, too, will try your hand at travel writing!

**Objectives.** Successful students will have achieved the following:

- Define and discuss key terms and concepts in Latin American Studies like “transculturation,” “contact zones,” and “postcolonialism”
- Recognize the stylistic differences between different genres of travel writing; i.e. *crónica*, memoir, journal, narrative nonfiction, etc.
- Improve writing and research skills in scholarly and popular modes of writing
- Produce a work of depth that showcases your expertise in one aspect of travel writing around a Latin American topic.

**Texts (all required):**

Aguirre, Carmen. *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2011. Print.

Cabeza de Vaca, The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press.

Mark Kurlansky, *Havana: Sub-Tropical Delirium* Bloomsbury Press

Kim McQuarrie, *Life and Death in the Andes, On the Trail of Bandits, Heroes, and Revolutionaries*. Simon and Schuster Press

Giocanda Belli, *The Country Under My Skin: A Memoir of Love and War*. Anchor Press

All other readings will be scanned and held in a Google Drive folder. You **MUST** print them out and bring them to class on the assigned day. Sorry trees, but you can recycle the paper later.

**Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):**

**Term Work 100%**

**Explanatory Notes on Assignments:**

**Quizzes X 4** (5% each, 20% total) 10 straightforward questions in true/false/multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank format about material coming directly from readings and class discussion. See daily work schedule for dates. There are actually 5 quizzes but you can drop one.

**Informal writing x 4** (5% each, 20% total) This consists of 4 short, 500 word response essays, marked out of 10 points. Some will be public posts online, others will be inclass assignments. **Be aware that the median mark will be 8/10.** To achieve a mark beyond that, a student must meet the following criteria in their writing: A). Highly original, B).

Intricately connected to the text at hand, C). Free from any punctuation or spelling errors.

**Class participation:** (10%) Two “free” unexcused absences. After each one after that, this mark decreases by 10% for each absence. Arriving more than five minutes late counts as tardy. Two tardies=one absence.

**Oral presentation** (10%) 20 minute presentation on a topic of interest. Topics to be discussed and assigned the third week of class. Sign up for topics during second week of class. Groups of threes highly encouraged.

**Creative narrative based on travel** (20%). This assignment asks the student to adopt the genre, mood, reporting style, and point of view of a writer studied in class. In the essay, the student will “emulate” that writer while using their own experience as the base material for the essay. Mark will be based on how well the student has incorporated the technics of the writer in question and whether the new material is portrayed in a compelling way. Although this assignment is creative, it must be documented using Chicago Manual of Style. (Expected length of creative portion will be 1000 words, accompanied by a 500 word reflection on the connection to the writer being emulated. Total length: between 1400-1600 words—7-8 pages).

**Due October 25**

**Research essay based on topic of student’s interest** (20%) This will come at the end of the course and will involve either an extended analysis of a classmate’s paper or the analysis of a writer studied in class. This assignment will be marked by evaluating how close the analysis is to the text studied and whether the analysis incorporates themes developed in class discussion. Essay must be documented using Chicago Manual of Style. In either case, the final word count must be at least 1800 words, not to exceed 2000 (Approximately 7-9 pages). **Due December 11**

### **Required Notes:**

Policy about course outlines can be found in the [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) of the University Calendar.

### **Student Responsibilities:**

#### ***Academic Integrity:***

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at [www.governance.ualberta.ca](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca)) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the

University.

All students should consult [the Academic Integrity website](#). If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

***Learning and Working Environment:***

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the [Office of the Student Ombuds](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

***Territorial Statement:***

“The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.”

***University of Alberta Sexual Violence Policy:***

The Sexual Violence Policy was approved by GFC in June 2017. It plays a vital role in ensuring a safe and respectful learning and working environment.

As defined in the policy, **sexual violence** is any sexual act or act of a sexual nature, or act targeting sexuality, whether physical or psychological, committed without consent.

**Sexual violence** is a complex and serious problem in society and on university campuses. Sexual violence can affect individuals of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations, as well as those from all ages, abilities, racial, cultural and economic backgrounds. Through this policy, the University of Alberta recognizes its responsibility to reduce sexual violence in the University community. The university aims to do so by fostering a culture of **consent** and support through education, training and policy. The University recognizes the possible effects of trauma on those who have experienced sexual violence and supports the efforts of individuals to seek support and recover.

To read the policy in more detail, please visit:

<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Policies/Sexual-Violence-Policy.pdf>

***Recording of Lectures:***

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the content author(s) or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

***Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:***

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

Deferral of term work is a privilege and not a right; there is no guarantee that a deferral will be granted. Misrepresentation of facts to gain a deferral is a serious breach of the Code of Student Behaviour.

**In this course**, attendance is evaluated by your presence in the classroom, your active participation in classroom discussions, and presence in online forums. Sleeping, texting, and facebooking in class will reduce your participation grade. Every absence after two unexcused absences results in a 10% reduction of the class participation segment of the course. Participation will also be assessed by preparation for discussion.

***Policy for Late Assignments:***

Students who consult in advance with an instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension once throughout the course with no penalty. **Late excuses will not be accepted for any reason. Assignments handed in late will be deducted 10% per each working day they are handed in late.** For example, if a paper is due on Tuesday, but you hand it on Thursday, that will incur a 20% deduction.

***Disclaimer:***

Any typographical errors in this syllabus are subject to change and will be announced in class and posted on eClass.

**Student Resources:**

The best all-purpose website for student services is: <https://www.ualberta.ca/current-students>.

**Accessibility Resources: (1 – 80 SUB)**

The University of Alberta is committed to creating work and learning communities that inspire and enable all people to reach their full potential. Accessibility Resources promotes an accessible, inclusive, and universally designed environment. For general information to register for services visit the [Accessibility Resources](#) webpage.

**The Academic Success Centre:** (1-80 SUB)

[The Academic Success Centre](#) offers a variety of workshops on effective study and exam strategies. There are in-person and online sessions available for a modest fee.

**The Centre for Writers:** (1-42 Assiniboia Hall)

The [Centre for Writers](#) offers free one-on-one writing support to students, faculty, and staff. Students can request consultation for a writing project at any stage of development. Instructors can request class visits and presentations.

**Health and Wellness Support:** There are many health and community services available to current students. For more information visit the [Health and Wellness Support](#) webpage.

**Office of the Student Ombuds:**

The [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) offers confidential interviews, advice and support to students facing academic, discipline, interpersonal and financial difficulties.

**Grading:**

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student's level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

**“MLCS Undergraduate Grading Scale”**

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	%
<p><b>Excellent.</b> A+, A or A- is earned by work which is superior in content and form and demonstrates an exceptional grasp of the subject matter. The grade of A+ designates work that far exceeds course expectations. Grades in the A range are normally achieved by a small number of students.</p>	A+	4.0	<b>97-100</b>
	A	4.0	<b>93-96</b>
	A-	3.7	<b>90-92</b>
<p><b>Good.</b> B+, B or B- is earned by work that demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the course material and a good command of relevant skills. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students.</p>	B+	3.3	<b>87-89</b>
	B	3.0	<b>83-86</b>
	B-	2.7	<b>80-82</b>

<b>Satisfactory.</b> C+, C or C- is earned by work that demonstrates an adequate grasp of the course material and relevant skills. Grades in the C range designate work that has met the basic requirements of the course.	<b>C+</b>	2.3	<b>77-79</b>
	<b>C</b>	2.0	<b>73-76</b>
	<b>C-</b>	1.7	<b>70-72</b>
<b>Poor/Minimal Pass.</b> D+ or D is earned by work that demonstrates minimal familiarity with the course material. Grades in the D range generally indicate insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the subject matter.	<b>D+</b>	1.3	<b>65-69</b>
	<b>D</b>	1.0	<b>60-64</b>
<b>Failure.</b>	<b>F</b>	0.0	<b>0-59</b>

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## Tuesday, September 4

### Agenda:

Introductions: Imagine you are traveling. You have three words to remember you by.

Look at assignments: emphasize two papers, one analytical, one creative. Quizzes.

Why study travel writing?

Spiel about safe spaces

### To be read/completed by class time

N/A

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## Thursday, September 6

### Agenda

1. Lay out some critical terms regarding travel writing.
2. Emphasize the analytical and creative
3. Turn to creative narratives

### To be read/completed by class time:

- Carl Thompson, Travel Writing, Part 1
- Write a short (1-2 page) travel narrative of a place people should know about

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**Tuesday, September 11****Agenda**

1. Recap terms from Thompson
2. Discuss colonial traveling in the context of Latin America...crónicas, relaciones, etc.

**To be read/completed by class time**

- Read introduction to Cabeza de Vaca, pp. 1-41
- Prepare thoughts to this discussion question: How should we read C de V's narrative: objective account? Subjective? Fiction? How do we know when he's exaggerating?

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**Thursday, September 13****Agenda**

More on colonial travel writing.

Discuss informal writing, presentations.

**To be read/completed by class time**

- Read up to at least p. 80 in C de V..
- Prepare thoughts for this: What is C de V.'s agenda?

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**Tuesday, September 18****Agenda**

Presentation: Spanish colonialist ideas about the indigenous and how Cabeza de Vaca resisted or reinforced them: (special note, the group that volunteers for this slot gets a bonus 10% added to their mark because they have bit the bullet and gone early)

Names:

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**To be read/completed by class time**

- Read up to at least p. 134 in C de V.

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**Thursday, September 20**

## **Agenda**

Final thoughts on Cabeza de Vaca.

Discuss Contact Zones and the idea of the colonized writing back.

Quiz #1

### **To be read/completed by class time**

- Finish C. de V., including appendix.
  - Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, required reading: "Criticism in the Contact Zones," pp. 1-11.
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## **Tuesday, September 25**

### **Agenda**

Intro to Carmen Aguirre and *Something Fierce*

### **To be read/completed by class time**

- Informal writing assignment #1 due: Can one person be a contact zone? Why or why not?
  - Read chapters 1-2 of *Something Fierce*
- 

## **Thursday, September 27**

### **Agenda**

- Historical context lecture by professor
- The "bad mother" dust-up....

Presentation: What are the stereotypes of a Latina woman? How do the characters in *Something Fierce* resist or reinforce those ideas. What kind of feminism does Aguirre argue for?

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

### **To be read/completed by class time**

- Read up to Chapter 7 in *Something Fierce*
- 

## **Tuesday, October 2**

### **Agenda**

Discuss Aguirre

Go over guidelines for creative narrative

**To be read/completed by class time**

- Make sure you've finished Parts 1& 2 (p. 186) by class time
- 

**Thursday, October 4**

**Agenda**

Finish Aguirre

Free writing exercise: Next rewrite the same episode from an omniscient point of view. Share.

Quiz #2

**To be read/completed by class time**

- Finish *Something Fierce*, including "Afterword"
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**Tuesday, October 9**

**Agenda**

**To be read/completed by class time**

- Read at least first four chapters from Mark Kurlansky, *Havana: Subtropical Delirium*, pp. 1-50

**Thursday, October 11**

**Agenda**

**To be read/completed by class time**

- Kurlansky, up to Chapter 7, p. 87 at least
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**Tuesday, October 16**

**Agenda**

- Discuss Kurlansky

Presentation on how travel and or tourism has shaped and continues to shape, Cuban culture:

Names:

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**To be read/completed by class time:**

- Read up to Chapter 10, p. 158 in Kurlansky

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**Thursday, October 18**

**Agenda**

- Kurlansky
- Orientalism.
- Cuba: race, gender, and modernity.

**To be read/completed by class time**

- Finish Kurlansky
- Read introduction and first chapter of Edward Said, *Orientalism*.

Presentation: What exactly is Orientalism and does Kurlansky engage in it when he writes about Cuba?

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**Tuesday, October 23**

**Agenda**

**Quiz #3**

**Talk about paper #1**

**Deadline for informal writing #2**

**To be read/completed by class time**

- Read Dean MacCannell, “Staged Authenticity”
- Informal writing assignment #2 take a picture of an “authentic” Mexican, Chinese, Indian, etc. restaurant. Discuss in writing using some of MacCannell’s terms how do you think its staging authenticity?

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**Thursday, October 25**

**Agenda**

Professor away at conference. Use class time to polish up paper #1 and send by 5:00pm

**To be read/completed by class time:**

Email or share draft of paper #1 by 5:00pm

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**Tuesday, October 30**

**Agenda**

MacQuarie, Day 1

Reporting methodology, point of view. Thompson Travel writing terms.

**To be read/completed by class time:**

- Preface and Chapter One of Kim MacQuarrie, *Life and Death in the Andes*.
  - Question to discuss: How does MacQuarrie tell the story of Escobar? How does he know what he knows?
- 

**Thursday, November 1**

**Agenda**

Machu Picchu and the Western Gaze

Cultural appropriation

**To be read/completed by class time**

- MacQuarrie, “The Rise and Fall of Hiram Bingham, ‘Discoverer’ of Machu Picchu” pp. 153-176
  - Ricardo Salvatore, “Local vs. Imperial Knowledge”
- 

**Tuesday, November 6**

**Agenda**

MacQuarrie, day 3

Presentation:

**To be read/completed by class time**

- MacQuarrie, “The Kon-Tiki Voyage, White Gods, and the Floating Islands...” pp. 233-285
  - John Connell, “Island Dreaming: The Contemplation of Polynesian Paradise”
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**Thursday, November 8**

**Agenda**

Quiz #4

Workshop on final paper topics

Deadline for informal writing #3

**To be read/completed by class time:**

Informal writing assignment #3: We’ve talked a lot about exoticism, staged authenticity, imperialism, and orientalism. Is it even possible for a Western subject to write about

subjects in the Global South without falling into these traps? If so, how so? If not, why not?

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## **November 13-15: Reading Week**

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### **Tuesday, November 20**

#### **Agenda**

Gioconda Belli and Nicaragua.

Lecture on Nicaragua

#### **To be read/completed by class time**

Belli, *The Country under My Skin*, up to Chapter 20, p. 149 at least.

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### **Thursday, November 22**

#### **Agenda**

#### **To be read/completed by class time**

Read to Chapter 31, p. 212 at least in Belli

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### **Tuesday, November 27**

#### **Belli, Day 3**

#### **Agenda**

Presentation: Gender and Travel Writing: How Does Gender Affect (or not) Travel Writing?

Reading:

Susan Bassnett, "Travel Writing and Gender"

Belli, up to Chapter 32 at least, p. 225

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#### **To be read/completed by class time**

Read to at least p. 277 in Belli

Read this interview with Belli in Bomb Magazine. Think about the idea of privilege.

<https://bombmagazine.org/articles/gioconda-belli/>

How does privilege shape how we think about travel writing:

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**Thursday, November 29**

**Agenda**

**Quiz #5 (remember you can drop one)**

**Belli, day 4**

**Informal writing #4:** How does privilege shape how we think about travel writing?

**To be read/completed by class time**

Finish Giocanda Belli's *The Country Underneath My Skin*

Hand in informal writing #4.

**Tuesday, December 4**

**Agenda**

**Workshop final papers.**

Rules: Bring two hard copies of your paper. Exchange with a classmate twice. I will bring a worksheet to help you work through the peer review.

**To be read/completed by class time**

Rules: Bring two hard copies of your paper. Exchange with a classmate twice. I will bring a worksheet to help you work through the peer review.

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**Thursday, December 6**

**Agenda**

1. Class party: bring something or some food from a place you have travelled and be ready to discuss it.
2. Final questions about final papers
3. Go back to the three words that define you. Would you change them now.

**To be read/completed by class time**

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**December 11:** Submit final papers via Google Docs/Word/Pages electronically by 5:00pm.