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, workshopping 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/oea).
**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

from 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  
from 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)

**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