

## **Inquiry Seminar, Fall 2014**

### ***Adventure, Exploration and Risk!***

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Office hours: There will be a weekly signup sheet on my office door. In general, I'll be there every afternoon.

### **Description:**

We all have adventure stories. Whether it's the stories of the road trip with Mom and Dad in the family car or a trip to some distant part of the planet, we all tell stories about being away from home. We *enjoy* telling stories about the times we have been out of place. And we have been telling these stories for centuries.

This is a course that examines the issues brought to light in the travel and adventure narrative. We will talk about conquest, self-discovery, science, and a good bit more. How much of our cultural background do we project onto a new place? How do our goals (personal, political, etc.) influence how we value what we see and experience? How do we think about the literature of travel and its relation to any kind of accuracy or truth?

We might even embark on an adventure or two ourselves.

As with all courses at this college, we are actively engaged in supporting the mission of the college and upholding the five **Goals for Liberal Learning**.

- Instill a love for learning
- Develop foundational skills and transferable intellectual capacities
- Develop an understanding of disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and intercultural perspectives, and their connections
- Cultivate an examined cultural, ethical, physical, and spiritual self-understanding
- Encourage responsible participation in the world

**The main purpose of the Inquiry Seminars** is to provide an entree into the life of scholarship. Critical Inquiry involves gathering, exploring, and evaluating information, ideas, and assumptions in order to produce clear and reasoned analysis, understanding, and wisdom. This course should develop and hone foundational skills and transferable intellectual capacities which, when practiced, can develop a love of learning.

**Objectives:** Reflecting the Goals for Liberal Learning (especially the first two) and aspects of critical thinking appropriate to the course, these objectives aim to enable students to:

- Read, observe, and listen carefully.
- Write and speak effectively and persuasively.
- Construct, test and articulate sound arguments,
  - analyze and evaluate arguments effectively,
  - organize ideas clearly,
  - and develop ideas thoroughly.
- Apply an effective, efficient, and ethical research methodology,
  - locate appropriate research materials,
  - evaluate information and its sources critically,
  - and use information and sources ethically.
- Submit beliefs, convictions, and perspectives (including their own) to challenge,
  - examine the conditions, assumptions, and values that shape one's identity,
  - acknowledge her/his own limited knowledge and personal bias,
  - take chances that challenge his/her intellectual and creative abilities,
  - and recognize ambiguity and understands its role in decision making.
- Understand the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of the course topic.

**Texts (required):**

Wind, Sand & Stars, Antoine de Saint-Exupery  
Snow Leopard, Peter Matthiessen  
Falling Off the Map, Pico Iyer  
The Right Stuff, Tom Wolfe  
Shadow Divers, Robert Kurson  
West with the Night, Beryl Markham  
The Perfect Storm, Sebastian Junger  
Children's Blizzard, David Laskin  
Into Thin Air, Jon Krakauer  
Sahara Unveiled, William Langewiesche  
Best American Travel Writing 2013

**Movies (all on Netflix):**

Chasing Ice  
180 Degrees South  
Pole to Pole  
The Long Way Around

**Workload:**

*Generative Writing:*

Generative writing is a way to generate, test, and explore ideas. Generative writing is often a response or an attempt at some bridge building between concepts and/or texts. *It is not meant to be a final, revised, polished essay.* (It should, however, be carefully proofread and in MLA form.) This writing is meant to be a kind of sounding board or conversation starter. Every Tuesday morning this semester you need to bring 2-3 typed pages of reactions, responses, questions, opinions, comparisons, whatever, based on the week's reading. (Simple plot summaries, however, are not what I'm looking for.) I am not going to mark or correct these assignments. You will receive a "check" if you have completed the assignment up to expectations. You will receive a "minus" if you seem to have done less, and a "plus" if you have done more. A great deal of this generative writing can be used for your final essay.

*Polished Writing:*

The polished writing of this class is a single, large, research-based essay. This essay will be 10 or more pages, not counting Works Cited and other similar materials. The essay must have a strong thesis, *substantial use of sources outside the required texts for the class*, and a firm grasp of MLA documentation rules. Grading for this essay will follow the grading standards published in *Inquiry Matters*. Note: I am happy to review drafts of this essay in any stage of development.

*Class Participation:*

You are asked to be an active member of this class. More often than not, the class will be based around the questions you bring from your reading. This class is a space where you can and should voice strong ideas as well as uncertainties and questions. I do expect to hear from each of you during every class period. You are asked to listen closely, respect the time and opinions of others, and also fully join the chase we give to whatever problems present themselves.

I encourage you to come to class with questions, with opinions you want to test, with points you hope to make and with stories you wish to share. I expect that you will be current (if not a little ahead) with the reading. We are about to read some very exciting books. I hope that excitement will be present in our mornings together.

**Course Policies:**

*Attendance—*

This is simple. You are asked to be in class every day. If you need to miss class for some reason, please let me know. If you miss class simply because you're not a morning person, get a better alarm. There is no sliding scale in this class that relates absences to grades (in other words, there's no such thing as "miss three and I can still get a B"). However, if you miss so much class that I no longer feel you are a member of the class, I will encourage you to drop the class. Excessive absences are cause for a grade of F.



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16	Symposium, No Class	
18	Best American Travel	
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23	Best American Travel	(Weekly Due)
25	Best American Travel	
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30	Snow Leopard	(Weekly Due)
Oct. 2	Snow Leopard	
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7	Sahara Unveiled	(Weekly Due)
9	Sahara Unveiled	
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14	Wind, Sand and Stars	(Weekly Due)
16	Wind, Sand and Stars	
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	(Midsemester recess 18-22)	
23	No Class (Scotland)	
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28	West with the Night	(Weekly Due)
30	The Right Stuff	
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Nov.		
4	The Right Stuff	(Weekly Due)
6	Perfect Storm	
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11	Perfect Storm	(Research proposal due)

14	Shadow Divers	
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18	No Class (Read Children's Blizzard)	
20	No Class (Read Children's Blizzard)	
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25	Children's Blizzard	(Abstract and bibliography due)
28	(Thanksgiving Break)	
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Dec.		
2	Chasing Ice	
4	180 Degrees South	
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9	Michael Palin	
11	Ewan McGregor	
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(Final exams 15 – 17)  
(Final paper due during class final exam time, tba)