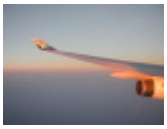

Creative Non-Fiction: Travel Writing

Sandra Jamieson

Spring 2004, Schedule

Course Logistics

Where? B.C. 205
When? Wednesdays, 1:15 to 3:55, Spring 2004.
Where's the Professor? S.W.Bowne 118, sjamieso@drew.edu, or 973.408.3499
When? Tues. & Thurs. 2:00-4:30, Wed. 4:30-6:30, & by appointment (email any time!)
Can I email the class? ENGL-104-001@courses.drew.edu

Course Texts

Bill Bryson, ed. *The Best American Travel Writing , 2000.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000
Paul Theroux, ed. *The Best American Travel Writing , 2001.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001
Michael Bugeja. *A Guide to Writing Magazine Nonfiction.* (Allyn and Bacon, 1998)
Various readings available from me.
Optional:
The Writer's Handbook, 2003. Ed. Elfrieda Abbe. Preface by Elizabeth Berg. Kalmbach, 2003

Course Schedule

January 28:

General introduction to the class, to travel writing, and to each other. We will begin the course with a series of writing exercises designed to heighten your awareness of sensory information--and your ability to describe what you smell, hear, taste, touch, and see.

Reading for next week's class:

From *Best American Travel Writing, 2000:*
"Forward: Why Travel Stories Matter," by James Wilson (xi-xvii)
"Introduction," by Bill Bryson Theroux (pp. xvii-xxvii)
From *Best American Travel Writing, 2001:*
"Forward," by James Wilson (xi-xvi)
"Introduction," by Paul Theroux (pp. xvii-xxii)
"Why We Travel," by Pico Iyer (pp. 142-51) [from *Salon Travel*]

Writer's Notebook:

- Make a list of as many potential topics for travel essays as you can come up with (from the everyday to the outrageous), and then list possible themes within those topics. Explore the ones that seem the most interesting and think about who might be the best audience and what information those readers might need and want.
- Now look through the syllabus at the various kinds of writing I'll be asking of you and match up your topics and themes with them, or generate other potential themes from your list of topics. You are welcome to write several essays on the same place if you like, and you can also interpret the assignments loosely (although the

assignments are designed to help you strengthen multiple aspects of your writing, so don't stray too far)!

- Write a response to Pico Iyer's essay and the forwards and introductions from *BATW 2000* and *BATW 2001* in your Writer's Notebook. You might refer to them directly and respond to something one or more of them says, or you might simply use them as a jumping off point for the real questions you need to consider: "Why do I travel?" and "Why do I write?" This could be a draft for an essay of your own on the topic. Feel free to be serious, philosophical, or humorous as the mood takes you.
- Practice writing descriptive pieces in your Writer's Notebook, and play around with some of the essay topics if you like. If you don't already keep a Writer's Notebook try to get into the habit of doing so.

Writing for next week's class:
Drawing the work you did in your Writer's Notebook, write your first essay for this class in response to the question: Why write about travel? Imagine your audience and then write an essay for them on the topic of travel writing. Think about possible themes, and develop one into an essay. Your style should fit your theme and audience, but this is a draft, and we will be thinking about theme and audience next week, so do not think of this as a finished piece.

February 4:

We will begin the class with a responding and editing exercise using a published essay.
Following that we will discuss the Iyer essay, the various introductions by Wilson, Bryson, and Theroux, and the difference between a topic and a theme. How does one generates topics, develop themes, and consider audiences? We will discuss this in light of your experiences writing the first essay for the course. What did you learn? Then the whole group will get the chance to hear the thoughts of other class members--each student will read his or her essay aloud. We will briefly discuss four at a time (Group A, then Group B, and so on), focusing on the overall effect of the piece, and general issues of style, structure, tone, and cohesion. We will also discuss writers block and how one deals with it and gets started on a piece of writing.

Reading for next week's class:

From *Best American Travel Writing, 2000:*
"Lions and Tigers and Bears," by Bill Buford (pp. 9-18) [from *The New Yorker*]
From Bugeja's *Guide*:
'Sensory Data" (pp. 65-72)

Writer's Notebook:
Continue to practice journaling. Try simple description exercises. Write for five minutes on a sound, taste, texture, smell, or color. Sit by a window and stare out until you see something of interest, or write about the very first thing you see, hear, feel, or smell. Write as if you were in a foreign land experiencing this object for the first time and trying to describe it for those who would never see it. Look at the space around it to get a sense of its shape and the way it sits within its environment. Compare a smell with what you smelled before and the way new smells crowd in as it starts to fade. Try rotting fruit if you should come across any (lemons in the mid stage of mould have an amazingly complex smell—and are really interesting visually as well). Take the most familiar objects in your life and see them as if for the first time. Don't overwhelm us with fancy adjectives; try to keep it simple so that the thing you are describing remains central rather then being overwhelmed by the words used to describe it. Try describing by association, indirectly as well as directly. Your goal is to let us see, hear, feel, or smell the same thing.

Writing for next week's class:
Local color article I--making the familiar strange: In the reading sample, Buford juxtaposes what many people believe about Central Park (its danger) with what many people value about it (the "wilderness"). In so doing, he

tells us a lot about the park, its history, its geography, and himself. Does he make you want to sleep out in Central Park? If not, his essay might at least make Park users stop and imagine how it looks at night.

Your task in this first of two local color articles is to take a place that you know well (one that seems ordinary to you) and make it seem strange and interesting to your readers. Try to select a place that at first glimpse might seem uninteresting—a place that you take for granted. Consider your street, the mall, a library, a grocery store or book store, your church, your children's school, Drew, Madison, your home town, or any other place with which you have some familiarity. You don't need to tell us how you got there, or even where the place is until the end if that is your preference: just drop us down in the middle of this place and let us see, hear, smell, feel, and even taste it. Your goal is to make readers give this place a second look, and maybe even make them want to visit! Ideally they will learn something about a place they thought boring or about themselves and their ways of seeing--and not seeing--things around them. So your larger goal, then (there's always a larger goal) is to help your readers relearn the art of finding the fascinating within the seemingly mundane. As we workshop these essays and suggest ways you might revise, we will be paying particular attention to your use of description (remember that most of us have five senses!) and the words you use to make the place come alive to us.

February 11:

We will begin the class with a brief writing exercise to get warmed up.
Following that we will discuss the Buford essay, Bugeja's comments, and your experiences writing the first travel essay for the course. What did you learn? As a group we will then workshop the essays written by **Group A** members. Do we have a clear sense of what fascinates this person and why he or she thinks we should write about travel (viewpoint)? How does the author use description and specific word choices to help make readers equally convinced? We will respond to the essays in general and discuss them in terms of the principles of unity I will outline at the beginning of class. We will also think about who is speaking in these essays. To whom is he or she speaking? Do we have a clear sense of what fascinates this person and how he or she is able to see what others miss? How does the author use description and specific word choices to help make readers equally fascinated?

Reading for next week's class:

From *Best American Travel Writing, 2000:*
"Lard Is Good for You," by Alden Jones (pp. 107-20) [from *Coffee Journal*]
From *Best American Travel Writing, 2001:*
"Is Just Like Amerika!," by Brad Wetzler (pp. 366-79) [from *Outside*]
The essays written by your classmates in **Group B** and sent via email by midnight Monday.

Writing for next week's class: *Local color article II--making the strange familiar:* These two readings both focus on day-to-day life in a place that might seem strange to the traveler. Jones' conversations about food and her desire for one more cup of coffee give us a point of entry into her world, and the ironic debates between "the tourist" and "the traveler" on her shoulders open up her internal dialogue to us and invite us to join it. Wetzler also struggles with local food, and with understanding a pastime that seems totally natural to the participants and totally alien to him. By "tramping" with the *vandrak* he allows readers a glimpse into the motivation behind this activity that we might be more able to identify with than tramping itself. The movement itself might remain strange, but the people participating in it seem not unlike some people we might meet in our own everyday lives.

Your task in this second of two local color articles is to take an extraordinary place (or one that seems extraordinary to you) and make it seem familiar to your readers. You might select a place you have visited in the US or abroad, or you might visit a local town with which you are unfamiliar. A market where vendors do not speak English, a restaurant serving food you have never eaten--or think that most American's have never eaten--or even a residence hall party would all work. The locker room of a gym can seem pretty strange to those unfamiliar with gym locker rooms! You don't need to tell us how you got there, or even where the place is until the end if that is

your preference. What you need to do, once again, is drop us down in the middle of this place and let us see, hear, smell, feel, and even taste it. Your goal is to make readers see what is different about this place and yet find a point of entry so that they can imagine going where they might not have gone before (or at least imagine what it was like for you to go there). Ideally you will teach them something about this place and make them less suspicious of the unfamiliar. Your larger goal is to help your readers practice the art of seeing beyond their comfort zones. Once again, as we workshop these essays and suggest revisions, we will be paying particular attention to your use of description (more than two of the five senses!) and the words you use to make the place come alive to us. We will also be thinking about the unities we discussed last week and the insights and strategies you came up with in that discussion.

February 18:

We will begin the class with another exercise in description.
Following that we will discuss the articles you read and your experiences writing the second local color essay. Was it harder or easier than the first? What did you learn? What do you still need to learn? As a group we will then workshop the essays written by **Group B** members and sent to us by email. We will again refer to the principles of unity discussed last week, but we will also pay particular attention to ways that the descriptions might be strengthened to help readers feel as if they were actually there too. As with last week's essay, we will be looking for the "voice" that governs the essay. Who is speaking here? Do we get a sense of the author and how he or she was able to see beyond the unfamiliarity of this place? How does the author use description and specific word choices to help make readers equally able to enter into the life of this place? Is the author writing as a tourist or a traveler? Does this matter?

Reading for next week's class:

From *Best American Travel Writing, 2000:*
"Inside the Hidden Kingdom," by Jessica Maxwell (pp. 134-44) [from *Audobon*]
From *Best American Travel Writing, 2001:*
"A Dream of Glorious Return," by Salmon Rushdie (pp. 254-75) [from *The New Yorker*]
From Bugeja's *Guide*:
"Time Elements" (pp. 103-121)
"Beginnings and Endings" (pp. 153-158)
The essays written by your classmates in **Group C** and sent via email by midnight Monday.

Writing for next week's class: *Narrative I--a physical narrative of a journey:* Your task in this first of two narrative essays is to take us on a physical journey with you. Tell us how you got from point A to point B (if indeed you ever reached point B). You need to be quite methodical in travel narratives, but that does not mean you should ignore the details, indeed, the details other travelers might have missed along the way make travel narratives come alive. The journey might have been difficult or easy, long or short, familiar or foreign, but by the end of your essay we should feel as if we have moved from one place to another. Your larger goal is less fixed in this kind of essay. Certainly the essay might make us want to leap up from our chairs and follow the path you describe, but it might equally well make us glad we only had to read about this experience instead of actually living through it.
The trick in a narrative essay is to find a hook (a theme) that will make us really care about the journey and stick with the narrative of that journey to the end. While Rushdie's "hook" is obvious (we want to see what happens when he is finally permitted to return to India), Maxwell's is less direct. Perhaps we want to see if Bhutan really does remain unspoiled. Perhaps we want to see the country through someone else's eyes as so few visitors are permitted there each year. As you read these essays think about what makes you keep reading--or if you are bored, think about what is missing, what hook might have captivated your attention. As we workshop your essays we will be looking for cohesion, of course, and for moments when we were lost or bored, but we will be

paying particular attention to this matter of the theme and the opening few paragraphs of the essay (the "lead").

February 25:

We will begin the class with an exercise in writing and revising leads.
Following that we will discuss the articles you read and your experiences writing the first narrative essay. Was it harder or easier than you expected? Was it fun? What did you learn? As a group we will then workshop the three essays written by **Group C** members and sent to us by email, paying particular attention to the ways the author "hooked' us at the beginning with a strong lead paragraph and developed a theme throughout the narrative. Where was this most effective? Why? Where did you get lost or feel confused about the sequence of events or the relationship of one part of the journey to another? Where was the connection most effective? Where did your attention wander ever so slightly? What do you learn about the author by accompanying him or her on this journey? Do you need to learn more (or less)?

Reading for next week's class:

From *Best American Travel Writing, 200:*
"One Man and his Donkey," by David Wallis (pp. 277-82) [from *The St. Petersburg Times*]
From *Best American Travel Writing, 2001:*
"Into the Heart of the Middle Kingdom," by Kathleen Lee (pp. 152-63) [from *Condé Nast Traveler*]
From Bugeja's *Guide*:
"Capturing Viewpoint" (142-145)
"On Endings" (pp. 158-160)
The essays written by your classmates in **Group D** and sent via email by midnight Monday.

Writing for next week's class: *Narrative II--a psychological narrative of a journey:* Your task in this second narrative essay is to take us on a psychological journey with you. Several authors have claimed that "we moved to be moved" and this might very well be true, but it does not explain why we write about that movement. In describing her first visit to China, Lee says that she was "really just in transit. China hardly figured in my imagination" (153), but as her journey progresses we see the country figuring larger and larger in that imagination until by the end we can understand how it had taken her "by the throat." Wallis is working with a different figure of imagination: himself on a mule trekking the Atlas Mountains. If he had taken enough money with him to pay for this vision, he would have failed to really see what he had wanted to see: Atlas Mountain culture from a "mule's-eye" perspective.
In your narrative you should tell the story of a journey (the same one as last week if you like) with the goal of taking us through the process of your emotional development. This learning process does not have to be profound--although one person's mundane can be another's profundity. What it should be is honest. This does not mean that everything you write should be "true," but that you need to be honest about the interior journey you were on. Perhaps it didn't rain *every* day, but the gloom you were feeling inside can best be shown by a physical reflection in the weather (of course, there is more irony in feeling depressed on a beautiful sunny day...). Your choices about what to describe and what words to use in that description will shape the way we experience the interior aspect of your journey, so try to relive the experience and feel what you want us to feel as you are writing. Your larger goal in this essay is to teach your readers what you learned, or to help them come to a realization of their own about themselves, their attitudes, or the place you describe.

March 3:

We will begin the class with an exercise in writing and revising to create different "moods."
Following that we will discuss the articles you read and your experiences writing the second narrative essay. Was this kind of writing harder or easier than you expected? Was it harder than last week's narrative? What did you

learn (about yourself or your writing)? As a group we will then workshop the three essays written by **Group D** members and sent to us by email, paying particular attention to the ways that these essays move us as readers, or show us how the writer was moved. We will also pay attention to the descriptions and word choices that make each essay work--and the ways that they could be strengthened.

Reading for March 17 class:

From *Best American Travel Writing, 2000:*

"The Nile at One Mile," by Mark Hertsgaard (pp. 59-71) [From *Outside*]

From *Best American Travel Writing, 2001:*

"This We Came to Know Afterward," by Susan Minot (pp. 199-227) [from *McSweeney's*]

From Bugeja's *Guide*:

"Research Methods" (69-81)

The essays written by your classmates in **Group A** and sent via email by midnight Monday.

Writing for March 17 class: *A backgrounder:* This kind of essay can take different forms and serve different larger purposes, but the primary role of a travel backgrounder is to place a journey into a larger context and allow readers to see it as part of something more than just itself. The "something" is what provides the hook for such an essay. By setting up his journey as a dialogue with Winston Churchill's descriptions of the same journey, Mark Hertsgaard is able to place what he is seeing into a historical and geopolitical context. His decision to retrace Churchill's journey acts as a hook and allows him to make the points he wants to make about colonialism and technology in ways that he could not if he had simply described his own journey. The background information holds the essay together. Susan Minot uses background information very differently, although her narrative is also in many ways a dialogue between what she sees, hears, and experiences as she travels and what she "came to know afterward" (although that phrase itself refers to the events that she hears, rather than the research that she intersperses in the essay). One might argue that this essay is not travel writing as we have been defining it here because Minot's interior journey is less present--her purpose is to tell us what she believes we should know and care about, not to tell us what she learned as she traveled; however, this is a very complex essay involving many journeys that criss cross each other and the narrative, and as readers we come to share Minot's shock that so few people know of or seem to care about the plight of these girls. The end of this essay ("Two years later") might be the most powerful in its poignancy, though. We will talk about "the art of ending" as we discuss background essays next week.

You can select any place or journey as the focus for your backgrounder. If you are working on a series of essays about one place the decision is obvious, but if not, you may want to revisit a place or journey you wrote about earlier and tell us how you decided to take that journey, what you learned as you traveled, etc. The background information you include could be historical, geographical, geological, political, sociological, or whatever seems appropriate. Have any novels or poems been written about the place you are writing about? If so, you might adopt a version of Hertsgaard's strategy. Or you might intersperse research you have conducted in the library or on-line (remember to check your sources and the dates of your sources carefully). You might find it helpful to review the reading assigned on January 29 (Ramsey's "Ideas and Research: Finding Inspiration, Gathering Information" [pp. 22-37])

March 10: Spring Break. No classes. Remember: If you travel, WRITE!!

March 17:

We will begin the class with an exercise in writing and revising endings and a discussion of the role of closure in an essay--and the decision not to provide real closure.

Following that we will discuss the articles you read and your experiences writing your backgrounder. How did you decide what to write about? How did you decide what background/context to include? What did you hope to

teach your readers? And what did you learn when you discovered your goal? Did writing this essay make you think differently about travel writing in any way? As a group we will then workshop the three essays written by **Group A** members and sent to us by email, paying particular attention to endings and ways to achieve a sense of closure, or to end without closure. We will also consider organization and think about the ways that the organization and structure he or she selects can help an author incorporate background information while still keeping the reader's attention and interest.

Reading for March 31 class:

From *Best American Travel Writing, 2000*:.

"Weird Karma," by P. J. O'Rourke (pp. 145-57) [from *Men's Journal*]

"Writing Humor" from *Fact and Artifact* by Lynn Z. Bloom (pp. 176-205)--copy available from me.

The essays written by your classmates in **Group B** and sent via email by midnight Monday.

Writer's Notebook:

Explore humor and how you feel about writing and reading it. Practice some short humorous sketches if you like, or list moments that were amusing to you and try to decide why.

Writing for March 31 class:

An essay using humor: The essay for this week could be written primarily to entertain and amuse readers, or it could use humor to enable you to tell a story that is too painful, too difficult, or too complicated to tell "straight." Even the former kind of essay should give us pause to think, though. Humor can include irony, and may not actually amuse readers the way comedy does. Irony may make us laugh, or it may make us smile at the clever way it forces us to see something anew. To some extent an essay writer who uses humor always does so to make a point that can not be made directly -- although that point may be more or less profound. Humor does not only entertain, then, it also draws us into an essay and allows us to see things that we otherwise might not have seen, or been able to see. If P. J. O'Rourke had simply described what he was seeing we would have had to turn our minds away from the death and danger he described, but his use of humor and irony allows him to distance himself from what he was seeing and therefore helps us to see how he gained the "reverse enlightenment" he describes. He does not intend readers to laugh at the suffering he describes, but I think he does want us to learn to see things in a different way and he uses humor to do that.

You should feel free to select any place or journey as the basis for your humor essay, but you will find that it is easiest to select a situation that you tend to tell to others as a funny story. Humorous travel essays do not have to take you to the Grand Trunk; you might find a wonderful essay in your journey to Drew the first time, or in your room mate's journey here or home. Spring break trips also make wonderful stories because even if readers did not attend college, they were teenagers once and the "spring break story" is recognizable by most North Americans. Remember that your story will also teach us something about the journey you took, the place you arrived at physically or mentally, or human nature in general. Even if you find humor difficult, give it a shot. (You only have to hand in four essays for a grade, so take a risk!)

March 24: I will be out of town for an academic conference, so we will not meet this week. Use this time to reread what you have written, revise the essays you like, and write a lot in your Writer's Notebook.

March 31:

We will begin the class with an exercise in timing and the ways that it can help writers to accomplish humorous or other effects. We may also discuss tone and irony if students believe this will be useful. Following that we will discuss "Weird Karma" and your own experiences writing humor. Was it harder or easier than you expected? Was it fun? What did you learn? As a group we will then workshop the three essays written by **Group B** members and sent to us by email, paying particular attention to the effectiveness of the humor the author used. How

might the author use careful attention to timing to strengthen that humor? We will also discuss the persona the author created in his or her essay and the audience the essay seems aimed to amuse. To what extent should we consider how readers from the place we have written about might react to our essays? (How do you think someone from India would react to what P.J. O'Rourke wrote? Who do you think her imagined audience was?) As with all the essays we read this semester, we will also revisit issues we have already discussed such as unity, tone, word choice, description, leads, hooks, themes, and endings.

Reading for next week's class:

From *Best American Travel Writing, 2000:*

"Marseille's Moment," by Amy Wilentz (pp. 283-95) [from *Condé Nast Traveler*]

"The Truck," by Ryszard Kapuscinski, trans. Klara Glowczewska (pp. 120-7) [from *The New Yorker*]

Extract from Janet Ramsey, "Profiles" (pp. 154-72)--copy available from me.

The essays written by your classmates in **Group C** and sent via email by midnight Monday.

Writer's Notebook:

You might find it helpful to complete Ramsey's Exercise 1 (p. 172) as a Writer's Notebook exercise.

Writing for next week's class: *A profile:* Profiles, like backgrounders, can really help us to get a sense of place--after all, it is the people who make a place what it is, and understanding them can give us insight into the customs and habits that they take for granted but that we do not quite comprehend. In a travel essay, you might include a brief profile (a sketch or a thumbnail) of one person, or of several people (as Alden Jones does in "Lard is Good for You"), perhaps including dialogue to give us a real sense of the people (as does Brad Wetzler in "Is Just Like Amerika!"). In "Marseille's Moment," Wilentz presents several profiles—both of the people who speak of Marseille and of the city itself. Each profile enriches the other. In contrast, Kapuscinski does not know the person he profiles, but has every reason to try to understand his character and his lack of understanding adds to the tension of the essay. Many travel profiles focus on what we don't understand about the people we meet as we travel, and this openly articulated lack of understanding often teaches readers much more about the place, the people, and the traveler him or herself, than anything else. When the writer is honest about his or her fears, such profiles can also help readers to confront their own stereotypes and xenophobia. The most important aspect of the travel profile, though, is that it must give readers a sense of the journey or a place along the way. As a secondary goal, a profile can be written to give readers a sense of the author's reaction to the place and/or the people in it and to serve as a commentary on them (but beware of the spiteful or belittling profile--ask yourself how people who know the person you are writing about would react to what you have written if you want to get a sense of what is appropriate. They might not like it, but would they recognize it as "true": would they recognize the person you are writing about if you did not name that person? The fact that someone who knows the person may never read our essays does not mean that we owe people "abroad" less respect than those at home).

You might decide to tell us about a place primarily by telling us about the people there, or you might select one person and write a more extended profile, but either way your goal is to use the profile(s) to help us get a sense of the place to which you traveled or your experience traveling there. At the end of the essay we should feel as if we have been there with you and met some of the people (if you want to read an essay that uses very brief sketches of people to emphasize the transience of traveling, read Dave Eggers' "Hitchhiker's Cuba" in *BATW 2000*, pp 37-49, which uses these thumbnails to give us a sense of the very basic ways that people find to overcome limited resources; if you want to read an extended profile that unfolds as the journey progresses, read "The Toughest Trucker in the World," by Tom Clynes in *BATW 2000*, pp 27-36).

April 7:

We will begin the class with an exercise in character sketch and dialogue. Following that, we will discuss the articles you read and your experiences writing profiles. Did you focus on brief sketches of someone to help us

know them as you do, or on your own ignorance about the person? What strategies did you reject before coming up with the right one? What was the hardest part of writing this essay? If you used dialogue, did you try to capture the accent of the speaker or "translate" into unaccented English? What motivated your decision? Was it harder or easier than you expected? Was it fun? What did you learn? Do you agree with my observation about what is appropriate? If not, why not? As a group we will then workshop the three essays written by **Group C** members and sent to us by email, paying particular attention to the choices the author made, the way the profile fits into the larger essay, and the ease of transition between the parts of the essay. What does the profile add to the essay? Do you want more of that (or less)? Do you feel that you have "met" the person being profiled? If so, what was the most effective technique the author used? If not, what do you need to help you?

Reading for next week's class:

From *Best American Travel Writing, 2001:*

"View from the Bridge," by Peter Hessler (pp. 132-41) [from *The New Yorker*]

Janet Ramsey, "Human Interest Stories" (pp. 267-79) --copy available from me.

The essays written by your classmates in **Group D** and sent via email by midnight Monday.

Writer's Notebook:

You might find it helpful to complete Ramsey's Exercise 1 (p. 279) as a Writer's Notebook exercise.

Writing for next week's class: *A human interest story:* Your task is to capture something about human nature as part of a larger travel essay or as the focus of your essay. Your readers should in some way identify with the people or situation you write about and in so doing feel a sense of human connection to the people or the place. Your larger goal is to "humanize" the people and places you describe so that readers empathize with people they initially thought unlike them and, perhaps, learn something about themselves as well. An excellent human interest story makes readers rethink some of their assumptions or beliefs about human beings, human nature, or what it means to be human. You may do this by capturing our emotions in some way, but the essay does not have to be a "tear jerker," and the best human interest essays are quite subtle.

Peter Hessler captures something essentially human when he describes the way the Chinese tourists "buzz" the Korean shore "simply because it was the closest they'd ever get to a foreign country" (138). It is this same fascination with what is foreign and feeling of having to somehow triumph over it that motivates many travelers (and tourists). How much traveling is really just "buzzing" a foreign shore with similar "pause for photographs"? When we get a little closer to the people we want to see we might find, as Hessler does, that we get more than we bargained for, and in his experience of the robbery and his desire to understand who the thief might be, he learns a lot about himself and the North Koreans. Readers might identify with several different aspects of this essay, from Hessler's violence or attitude toward the thief (moving from anger to guilt) to the behavior of the various travelers and tourists he describes. Ryszard Kapuscinski's "The Truck" could also be considered a human interest story. What would you do in that situation? (Could you imagine getting into that situation in the first place?)

April 14:

We will begin the class with an exercise in "showing and telling." At the end of "The Last Safari" (*BATW 2000*, pp. 289-204) Mark Ross tells us the effect of his experience, Russell Banks does the same thing at the end of "Fox and Whale, Priest and Angel" (*BATW 2001*, pp. 20-8). We will talk about the balance of showing and telling and the ways one can use each in a human interest story. Following that, we will discuss the articles "A View from the Bridge" and other essays from the collections that could have been listed as "human interest" essays. Did you find this kind of writing easier than some of the other essays? What was the hardest part of writing this essay? What did you learn? What did you hope your readers would conclude about the human conditions? Or, what questions did you hope they might ask? As a group we will then workshop the three essays written by **Group D**

members and sent to us by email, paying particular attention to the human elements of the story, the way the author shows and or tells his or her "lesson," and the development of theme, and authorial persona. Did this essay "work"? What did it make you feel? How did it do that? What might it have done more or less of? What do you wish you had done now that you see this writer doing it?
At the end of class we will discuss how you would like to organize the last three weeks of the class so that they are most useful to you as you revise your work.

Reading for next week's class:
Whatever you decide! You might decide to work on your essays alone and then bring them to class for your classmates to read, or you might share essays with each other before class via email.

Writing for next week's class: Revise one essay for your final portfolio and bring it to class along with the other essays you have written this semester.

April 21:

Okay, you get to decide how we work in these last two weeks. You will use class time to revise essays and ask for and provide feedback to your fellow workshop members. We can work in one large group or you can break into smaller groups (in the former you get more feedback, but in the latter you can cover more material). Feel free to discuss problems you are having deciding which essays to include, how to deal with feedback, or how to solve technical problems. We will discuss the different skills of revision and line editing, and brainstorm strategies for whatever you are facing. I will also give you a brief lesson in line editing. Bring some colored pens or pencils if you have any. You should bring at least the four essays you intend to include in your final portfolio, although if you are not sure, bring all eight.

Reading for next week's class:
Whatever you decide! You might decide to work on your essays alone and then bring them to class for your classmates to read, or you might share essays with each other before class via email.

Writing for next week's class: Revise one essay for your final portfolio!

April 28:

Last class. Continuation of last week, and a discussion of the final portfolio, layout, content, expectations, and so forth. We will work on your papers to resolve any final problems or respond to questions, and you will fill out class evaluations.

FINAL PORTFOLIO:
The final portfolio containing four wonderful travel essays of your choosing and a brief "metacognitive essay" discussing your writing, travel writing, the experience of being a writer, and so forth (we will discuss this in class and you can use part of what you wrote in your Writer's Notebook after the first class if it seems useful), is **due on May 12** (graduating seniors may need to hand their portfolios in earlier, I will confirm that claim when I know if it is true).