

Assignment

Travel writing is an especially compelling kind of place-based discourse. Typically, the travel writer recounts in narrative form his or her experiences in an unfamiliar place. Some travel writing, of course, is baldly commercial, intended as a guide (or even advertisement) for tourists: where to dine, stay, visit, shop, etc. But much travel writing is more like narrative nonfiction: the story of a person's adventures away from home. In travel writing at its best, we get an unforgettable voice, an unpredictable journey, an unusual setting – all combined into a narrative that makes readers wish they were there.

For your fourth paper, you need to visit a place you've never been before and write about the experience. You won't have time, of course, to take a long-distance trip, and I don't want you to incur any expenses. But the trip needs to be an adventure of some kind, if only a small one. Ideas? Travel to the Sunwheel on the UMass campus, tour the Emily Dickinson house in Amherst, climb Mt. Sugarloaf in South Deerfield, take the PVRTA bus to Mt. Holyoke College, pack a lunch and walk around South Amherst, ride your bike to the Book Mill in Montague . . . you get the idea. You can have one or more companions with you – or you can go alone; but please be safe!

As models, we'll look at a brief excerpt from Patrick Leigh Fermor's *A Time of Gifts*, as well as Nathaniel Rich's "How to Spend 47 Hours on a Train and Not Go Crazy" (*New York Times*, February 28, 2013), David Fleming's "The Lost Meadows of Northampton" (*Massachusetts Review*, Spring 2013), Emmy Carver's "The Efforts of Elevation" (from my fall 2012 English 350 blog), and Melissa Mahoney's "Traversing Traboules" (from her summer 2013 blog "As the Honeybee Flies"). I'll send email with links to these pieces.

Your first draft might do little more than get down the basic facts of your adventure: what you did, when, where, and how. But for the final draft, you'll need to craft an *essay* for us, something with interest, energy, detail, voice, and style. The final paper should be around 1,250-2,000 words (about 5-8 pages typed, not including visuals, with double line spacing, 12-point font, and one-inch margins) and needs to be revised substantially through at least two drafts. Generative writing will be assigned to help spur ideas, and peer response will be used to help you hone your composition. Visual elements (photographs, maps, drawings, etc.) are strongly encouraged.

The key due dates for this assignment are:

- M 10/28: reading response due (write about any 3 of the 5 above)
- M 11/04: initial draft of essay due (bring 2 copies to class);
- W 11/06: revised draft of essay due (bring 1 copy to class);
- M 11/13: final, copyedited version of essay due, along with a reflective cover letter that you'll write in class.

See the syllabus for policies regarding attendance and due dates.