

# Migration & Travel

Is it lack of imagination that makes us come  
to imagined places, not just stay at home?  
Elizabeth Bishop, "Questions of Travel"

## Course Description

This course considers questions of travel and migration through travel writing, historical accounts of migration, and film.

From the 1970s onward, academic and popular interest in travel literature increased dramatically. For academics like Edward Said, older accounts of Western and North American travellers moving East and South--such as Gustave Flaubert, or Edward William Lane--revealed the construction of the self and Other in ways that particularly suited a postcolonial project; ideologies of Western expansionism from the fifteenth to the twentieth century could be laid bare. These same academics often took a dim view of contemporary travel writing, considering it to reinforce a "consoling, self-congratulatory message to the privileged middle-class Westerners who are its principal readership. (Thompson)" But to the public, writers like Bruce Chatwin and Ryszard Kapuscinski revealed the literary potential of the travelogue. Travel writing flourished--and continues to do so today. Is travel writing still consoling, still self-congratulatory? And if it is, what are the consequences for how we see the world?

Travel writers might undertake their journeys for a variety of reasons, but the genre is considered quite distinct from the field of migration studies: it is the difference between first world and developing world problems. When we think of travel writing, we do not think of the millions of people who still move for a better job, for disgrace or love, for crimes committed or suffered, who move because of climate or regime change, because they are forced to, or because they felt an almost evolutionary nomadic instinct. Like so many genres, travel writing is not about all forms of travel. Though there are many accounts of travel written by non-Westerners, at your local bookstore you'll see Bryson and Tillman and not Kpomassie or Baldwin shelved under "Travel Writing." Right now, one primary difference seems to be the foregrounding of the self in travel literature; we see Chatwin travelling through Patagonia, rather than Patagonia itself. Migrant studies cannot afford the same luxuries. Should they? Even if the distinction between migration and travel might blur on closer inspection, it does not efface the profound differences in freedom of movement for people today. In an increasingly globalized world, where economic inequality is only growing, the projection of the Other continues. How does one travel far from home, and write about it in way that doesn't reinforce retrograde notions of difference?

## Course Objectives

The aim of the course is to develop students':

- understanding of travel writing and migrant studies as genres / academic fields; their key formal characteristics and ideological concerns;
- knowledge of both historical and contemporary accounts of the movement of bodies through space, and to understand these accounts in a number of frames (postcolonial, phenomenological, feminist, Marxist etc.);
- knowledge of travel and migration studies in order to analyze works that might not conventionally considered examples of the genres;
- Skills of literary and film analysis, use of relevant evidence, construction of a persuasive argument in writing and oral discussion.

## Teaching Methods and Assessment

Twice weekly lectures will discuss the texts listed--whether novel, non-fiction book, essay, or film. If the text says it is a pdf, it will be provided. If the title is just listed, I recommend you buy it. Keep in mind that Oxford expects more reading than many American universities. In general, you will be required to read for 2-3 hours prior to each lecture. Films will be shown independently of the lecture, and all films will be scheduled before the lecture in question.

Ample opportunity will be given throughout the lectures for students to pause and record their thoughts; it is expected that their ability to complete the final exam/essay will be a direct consequence of their note-taking in the lecture and their commitment to documenting their own evolving understanding of the course's key concerns.

A weekly seminar will allow for further discussion of the lecture's central text particularly with regard to the questions laid out in the course description. In general, there will be a focus in the lectures on primary texts, and for the seminars, secondary texts and supplementary reading (see below). The seminar is the chance for students to connect one week's reading to the other's, and to collectively discuss their cumulative understanding of travel writing and migrant studies.

At two points in the course, students will each be expected to give short presentations; for the first (non graded), on a particular migration, and for the second (graded), on a key term or concept they've encountered which they think relates in interesting ways to the evolving course discussion.

Final assessment: An essay of not less than 4000 words (40%), a final three-hour written examination (40%), oral presentation (10%), and participation in seminar discussion (10%).

## Course Schedule

### Week 1

3rd July 8.45-10 (Tuesday)

Lecture 1: Said's "Orientalism"

Reading: "Introduction," to Edward Said's *Orientalism* available [here](#)

Reading: "On the Exotic" by Alain de Botton (pdf)

5th July 8.45-10 (Thursday)

Lecture 2: Robert Irwin and T.E. Lawrence: Eccentricity and Empire

Reading: Robert Irwin's *Orientalism and its Discontents* (Chapter 9) (pdf)

Reading: Chapter 1 of the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by T.E. Lawrence available [here](#)

Seminar 1: FILM: Lawrence of Arabia

Suggested reading: "[Master and Commander](#)" by Anthony Lane

### Week 2

9th July 8.45-10 (Mon)

Lecture 3: Travel as Genre

Reading: Chapter 2 of Carl Thompson's *Travel Writing* (2011) (pdf)

Reading: William Dalrymple *In Xanadu* (1989)

Reading: Tété-Michel Kpomassie *An African in Greenland* (1981)

11th July 8.45-10 (Wed)

Lecture 4: Dalrymple and Kpomassie continued

Suggested Reading: *In Patagonia* (1977) by Bruce Chatwin

13th July 8.45-10 (Fri)

Lecture 5: Contemporary travel writing

Reading: Lauren Collins, Ed. *The Best American Travel Writing* (Mariner Books, 2017)

## Seminar 2: Digesting Said & Orientalism

### **Week 3**

17th July 8.45-10 (Tues)

#### Lecture 6: Forced Migration Studies

Reading: Jerome Elies, "Histories of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies" in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (pdf)

Reading: Stephan Scheel and Vicki Squir "Forced Migrants as 'Illegal' Migrants" in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (pdf)

Reading: [Ten Borders](#) by Nicholas Schmidle (2017)

Suggested Reading: [German Newspaper Catalogs 33,293 Who Died Trying to Enter Europe](#) Alan Cowell (Please read then click on [this](#) link to see pdf list)

Suggested Reading: Keith H. Halfacree and Paul J. Boyle, 'The Challenge Facing Migration Research: the Case for a Biographical Approach', *Progress in Human Geography* 17 (1993): 333-38 ( pdf)

19th July 8.45-10 (Thurs)

#### Lecture 7: Refugees across the twentieth century

Reading: Patrick Kingsley, *The New Odyssey: The Story of the Twenty-first Refugee Crisis* (2017)

Suggested Reading: Lauren Collins, "[Europe's Child Refugee Crisis](#)" (2017)

### Seminar 3: Reading Strategies

Digesting texts, loose ends, essay assignments outlined.

### **Week 4**

23rd July 8.45-10 (Mon)

#### Lecture 8: Taking stock: Digesting key threads so far

Reading: Anne Enright's "[The Hotel](#)" (2017)

25th July 8.45-10 (Wed)

#### Lecture 9: Risk: Women & Travel

Reading: Chapter 14 from Rebecca Solnit *Wanderlust* (2000) available [here](#)

27th July 8.45-10 (Fri)

#### Lecture 10: Ethnographic complications: Gender and Faith

Reading: Excerpts from Maya Deren *Divine Horsemen* (1953) ( pdf)

FILMS: Maya Deren's *Divine Horsemen* (1953), *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) & *A Meditation on Violence* (1948)

### Seminar 4: FILM: Agnes Varda's *Vagabond* (1985)

### **Week 5**

31st July 8.45-10 (Tues)

#### Lecture 11: Framing Narratives

Reading: Dean MacCannell *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* ( 2013)

2nd August 8.45-10 (Thurs)

#### Lecture 12: Final Conclusions