WR 323: Writing as Critical Inquiry

The Idea of North

Instructor: Sarah Marshall (samarsha@pdx.edu)
Class hours: Monday, Wednesday, & Friday, 12:45—1:50 p.m., SRTC 166
Office hours: Friday, 10 a.m.—12 p.m., Neuberger Hall 378
Course Goals

What do we talk about when we talk about “the north”? What images, ideas, and philosophies come to mind when we contemplate Arctic landscapes? Why has the Arctic—hostile, mysterious, pristine, beautiful, fragile, and often deadly—obsessed us for so long? Why does a journey that is meant to result autonomy, contemplation, and self-knowledge so often point the adventurer due north? We will examine these questions, and many others, in this course.

In the next ten weeks, we will attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the Arctic through the writings of Natives, historical and modern-day explorers, journalists, essayists, fiction writers, poets, and scientists, and contemplate not just its past, but its future as well. In addition, we will study film, music, and interactive media, and will emerge from the class having discussed the folklore, wildlife, climate change, people, and landscapes of Canada, Alaska, and Siberia.

Required books:

Barry Lopez’s Arctic Dreams
Jon Krakauer’s Into the Wild
Farley Mowat’s Never Cry Wolf
Jean Craighead George’s Julie of the Wolves

All of these books are available for under a dollar on Amazon.com, and can be found cheaply at Powell’s or any other local bookstore. Other texts and resources will be provided on the class Tumblr, which can be found at:

thecideaofnorth323.tumblr.com (password: north)

Coursework

In this class you will turn in daily freewrites, regular written responses to the course material, and one final paper 10-15 pages in length. In your final paper, you may attempt a factual exploration of an issue related to the class’ focus, a persuasive paper, an analysis of one or several of the texts we discussed, or a piece of journalism.

Grading rubric:

Attendance and participation—40%
Final paper (including first draft and proposal): 30%
Other written assignments: 30%
Class Rules

As we only have a little over an hour per class period, it’s important that we make the most of our time—to write, to discuss, to collaborate, to think. To that end, a few hard rules apply:

**NO** use of cell phones or other electronics in class. Cell phones are to be silenced and stowed—no talking, no texting. There is one exception to this rule, however: if you experience significant discomfort writing by hand, you may use a laptop, by arrangement with me. Speak with me during the first week of classes if this is a requirement for you.

**NO lateness.** Since classes are so short, this is especially crucial. Occasional tardiness is unavoidable, but repeat offenders will see their participation grade go down.

My policy on absences is as follows: you are allowed two unexcused absences during the entire course. Anything more than that will have an impact on your participation grade. That said, life happens, and if you need to miss class due to sickness, personal issues, or unavoidable travel, please let me know as soon as possible (or better yet, in advance).

I will accept **NO late assignments.** Unless otherwise noted, our deadline for all weekly assignments is 11:59 pm on SUNDAY. Anything received after that time will be given a zero. **However, you are welcome to make up missing assignments later in the term.** If you need to do this, contact me as soon as possible, and we can draw up a plan together.

And finally, a few words on plagiarism: plagiarism of any kind—taking another writer’s words as your own, either in whole or in part, without quoting or proper citation—**is an extremely serious offense.** Any paper found to contain plagiarism will be given a zero.

Additional Resources

If you’re having trouble with any aspect of an assignment—whether you’re getting started, finding research materials, or working on adhering to a structure, or if you are simply worried about grammar or citation—feel free to pay a visit to The Writing Center in Cramer Hall 188. It’s free, full of friendly and helpful tutors, and available for both walk-in sessions and scheduled appointments. In addition, **I highly encourage you to stop by my office hours, if you have a question or concern, or just want to discuss your work.**

If you have a disability that will impact your ability to fulfill class requirements, please notify me during the first week of term, and we can work with the Disability Resource Center to find solutions.
**Class Schedule**

**Week One:**

Monday, 1/7 — Homework for Weds: Listen to *The Idea of North* (available on the Tumblr)

Wednesday, 1/9 — Homework: Read *Arctic Dreams*, pp. 1-75 (available on Tumblr)

Friday, 1/11 — Homework over weekend: Read *Arctic Dreams*, pp. 76-151 (available on Tumblr)

**Week Two:**

Monday, 1/14 — Homework: read *Arctic Dreams*, pp. 152-301 (not available on Tumblr)

Wednesday, 1/16 — Homework: finish *Arctic Dreams* (not available not available on Tumblr)
Friday, 1/18—Homework over weekend: Read Never Cry Wolf through Chapter 12, writing assignment due Tues

Week Three:

Monday, 1/21—No class—PSU closed for MLK Day
Wednesday, 1/23—Homework: finish Never Cry Wolf
Friday, 1/25—Homework over weekend: watch Never Cry Wolf

Week Four:

Monday, 1/28—Homework: Watch I Am Inuk, I Am Alive
Wednesday, 1/30—Homework: Watch At the Caribou Crossing Place and read excerpt from Give Me My Father's Body (both available on the Tumblr)
Friday, 2/1—Homework: Read Julie of the Wolves, writing assignment due Sunday

Week Five:

Monday, 2/4—Homework: Read excerpt from Ada Blackjack (available on the Tumblr)
Wednesday, 2/6—Homework: Read Inuit folktale packet (Tumblr)
Friday, 2/8—Homework: Read “The Trials of Nunavut” and “The Very Short History of Nunavut” (Tumblr)

Week Six:

Monday, 2/11—Homework: Read Into the Wild, pp. 1-101
Wednesday, 2/13—Homework: Finish Into the Wild
Friday, 2/15—Homework: Watch Into the Wild, proposal for final paper due Sunday

Week Seven:

Monday, 2/18—Homework: Read “Empire of Ice” (Tumblr)
Wednesday, 2/20—Homework: Read heroic age of Arctic exploration packet #1 (Tumblr)
Friday, 2/22—Homework: Read heroic age of Arctic exploration packet #2 (Tumblr)

Week Eight:

Monday, 2/25—Homework: Read poetry packet (Tumblr)
Wednesday, 2/27—Homework: Read excerpt from *Travels in Siberia* (Tumblr)
Friday, 3/1—Homework: First draft of final paper due on Sunday

**Week Nine:**

Monday, 3/4— Homework: Read modern Arctic fictions packet (Tumblr)
Wednesday, 3/6— Homework: Explore *Welcome to Pine Point* (Tumblr)
Friday, 3/8—Homework: Watch “Seoul Mates” (Tumblr)

**Week Ten:**

Monday, 3/11—Final paper discussion.
Wednesday, 3/13—Paper conferences.
Friday, 3/15—Paper conferences.

**Finals Week**

Your final paper is due to me via email at 11:59 p.m. on **Wednesday, 3/20**