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JRNL 191A.01: From Homer to HeroCams - Adventure Narrative through the Ages

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From Homer to HeroCams: Adventure narrative through the ages

A Global Learning Initiative course, Autumn 2014

Class meets: Tuesday and Thursdays
 9:40-11:00 a.m.
 Don Anderson Hall Room 009 (in the basement.)

Faculty: Nadia White, associate professor of Journalism,
 with Emeritus Professor of Classics Jim Scott

Introduction

You are far from home, facing new demands and hardship. You anticipated some challenges, but others test you beyond your wildest imagination. You've got to stay calm and focused in order to make progress and achieve your goals, but it is going to take new friends, some creative thinking and the willpower to resist some very attractive distractions to get you through. It doesn't take long before you are exhausted, and a little bit homesick. You miss your mom. But you push on. The way you embrace the challenges you meet defines you as an individual and a member of the human race; it changes the way you see the world and the way the world sees you. Your struggle makes you think differently about what really matters – your core values and how they help you navigate the challenges life puts in front of you. You are either a freshman in your first semester at The University of Montana, or Odysseus.

This GLI freshman seminar will explore the human condition as it is revealed through classical and contemporary stories of outdoor adventure, and through experiencing adventure itself. It will consider the conceptual themes of shared human experience within the stories as well as the state of the art of storytelling, historical and modern. The course will encourage students to think about the boundaries between known and unknown, both geographical and personal. Modern and classical maps and simple mapping technology will demonstrate tools for locating oneself in space and defining territory to be explored. Trust games will be used to safely explore the physical sense of self in place and the mind-body connection to adventure.

The class experiences will culminate in the creation of a multi-media presentation that explores the potential for exploration and reflection, using Missoula's many trailheads as a jumping off point for storytelling. The best of these Trailhead projects will be made available to the public through a partnership with MakeltMissoula.com, a local website.

Course objectives

This course proposes addressing the GLI themes of “Body and Mind” as well as “Story, Communication and Interaction.” It satisfies the goals of UM’s General Education Expressive Arts perspective through a series of creative assignments that result in a collage of multiple media – creative non-fiction writing, photography, drawing and simple cartography – intended for public use. The class will blend interdisciplinary readings and discussions with creative mixed-media storytelling techniques, combining the analytical experience of the classics, with the writing and research processes of journalism and creative non-fiction.

Readings

“Odyssey” by Homer
“True Spirit” by Jessica Watkins (Selections)
“To Timbuktu” by Mark Jenkins
Assorted readings distributed in class or on Moodle

General course outline

Part I	The original. As we read The Odyssey we will explore the oldest existing written adventure story and consider the storytelling patterns employed that continue to emerge in modern literature. Professor Jim Scott will lead discussions the Tuesday of every odd week (Week 1, 3, 5, 7).
Part II	Paying attention to life’s adventures. We will explore the skills needed to share an experience with an audience. Work focuses on outdoor experiences centered on a local trailhead and its trails and exercises that ask students to blend objective and subjective facts; facts of research and facts of experience.
Part III	The Trailhead Project. We will practice active and engaging writing and will use a variety of simple tools to create a storytelling portfolio. The resulting collections of individual works will form an online project: Missoula Trailheads, the best of which will appear on the MakeltMissoula.com website.

Students will gain (Outcomes) :

- The broad consideration of three big questions: How do we know the physical world? What does that knowledge and the process of gaining it teach us about ourselves? How does exploration affect us, and the way we move through the world?
- Familiarity with adventure writing as a discreet genre of writing, from classical antiquity to today.
- An introduction to college-level writing with an emphasis on active voice, engaging syntax and narrative drama.
- An introduction to college-level critical thinking skills that encourage the extension of academic learning to explicitly inform personal awareness and the ability to connect the global condition to the personal and the personal to the global.
- An ability to critique writing in small groups, providing respectful, helpful feedback on writing assignments in class.

- A critical awareness of the difference between fiction and non-fiction adventure storytelling and the ability to distinguish journalism from journaling, analytic, and personal essay writing.
- A practical, hands-on exposure to the creative potential of modern storytelling technologies.
- A kinesthetic connection to the literature through controlled outdoor experiences.

For students. What we hope you learn and how we'll know you're learning:

- By studying the stories of historical and modern adventurers you will gain a general appreciation for the ways that what we know about our world shapes our ability to engage in creative decision making.
You will demonstrate this through class discussion informed by personal journal keeping and small-scale exploration in and near Missoula.
- You will become familiar with the breadth of the adventure-writing genre and be able to identify archetypal characters, themes and challenges in assigned readings.
Your reading comprehension will be demonstrated through class discussion and study guide questions as well as the midterm and final exams.
- You will develop your ability to use observation and research to write first-person narrative.
This will be demonstrated through a writing assignment in which you write from personal experience in an outdoor setting.
- You will improve your basic research skills. These include the critical use of the Internet as a source of information, use of Mansfield Library and historical research materials and maps, first person interviews and reference guides.
This will be demonstrated as confirmed factual information is used to add context and depth to the writing exercises.
- You will develop your ability to critique the work of your peers and to have your own work critiqued by others.
You will demonstrate this in small-group sessions for the review of select student work, as well as in full class discussions of the contents of the Trailhead presentations.
- You will improve your ability to engage yourself honestly outdoors; to listen, record and articulate your own reactions to changing physical and emotional impressions.
This skill will be developed as you participate in intentional outdoor play and trust games in class, and engage in outdoor experiences that you choose. It will be demonstrated through the maintenance of a personal journal and contributions to a class social media platform, as well as evidenced in your personal writing assignment.
- You will learn to use basic online mapping software to build simple maps that define the boundaries and identify information about the place.
You will demonstrate this by creating maps that might accent your Trailhead project.
- A final class project, the Trailhead assignment, will bring together elements of these points. All of these assignments will be critiqued and revised by your classmates and your instructor. *They will include:*
 - *A personal trail experience. 500 words.*
 - *A new user's guide to your trail. Bullet points to meet a template.*
 - *Impressions of your trail. Five select cell phone photographs.*
 - *Bio. A two-sentence description of yourself as the guide to your trailhead, plus a selfie on your trail.*

General Education requirements

This course proposes designation as a General Education course in the Expressive Arts perspective. The criteria of that perspective are:

Courses guide students, whether in individual or group settings, to acquire foundational skills to engage in the creative process and/or in interpretive performance. Through direct experience (for example, attendance and involvement with live performance, exhibitions, workshops, and readings), they will engage in critical assessment of their own work and the work of others.

The learning goals of that perspective are as follows and will be demonstrated by specific activities as indicated below:

Upon successful completion of this you will be able to:

1. Express yourself in the making of an original work or creative performance;
This will be demonstrated through the written essays, journals and ultimately in the creation of the Trailheads online resource.
2. Understand the genres and/or forms that have shaped the medium;
This will be demonstrated by comparing and contrasting Classical adventure literature to modern adventure story telling; through in-class discussion of readings, the development of journals and a public, online information site using multiple media.
3. Critique the quality of your own work and that of others;
This will be demonstrated through in-class discussion of the readings and of each other's writing, illustrative work, and project presentations.

Grades

This course is offered only for standard grading; it is not available credit/no credit.

Grades reflect the following:

Attendance, quizzes and class participation:	15 percent
Submitted written or visual assignments:	25
Midterm exam:	15
Final Trailhead project (and all of its parts):	35
Final exam:	10

The grade scale is:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	Below 59

The grades you earn on written and visual assignment will reflect how well you follow directions for each assignment; your ability to clearly communicate your ideas with a reader or viewer; accuracy in the presentation of factual material; the proper use of grammar and spelling.

Submissions that contain factual errors or misspelled proper nouns will be marked down one grade step for each such error. So, a submission that would have earned a B but contains one factual error becomes a B-, an addition misspelled proper noun, and it becomes a C+.

Academic honesty

We expect you to be honest in presenting your own work for this course. Academic misconduct at The University of Montana is subject to an academic penalty ranging from failing the assignment to expulsion from the university. Students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321>.

Plagiarism

As defined by "The University of Montana Student Conduct Code" plagiarism is: "Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own." This is strictly prohibited in this class and is a very serious violation of journalistic ethics. Any case of plagiarism in this course will be subject to the penalties outlined in the student code of conduct.


Students with disabilities & excused medical absences

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable modifications in this course. Your responsibilities are to request them from Prof White with sufficient advance notice, and to be prepared to provide verification of disability and its impact from Disability Services. Please speak with Professor White after class or during her office hours to discuss the details. For more information, visit the Disability Services for Students website at <http://life.umt.edu/dss>.

If you become ill or have a medical emergency that affects your ability to succeed in this class, please let Professor White know the specifics of your situation immediately via email, text or a phone call if you cannot meet her in person. Do not just disappear and tell us later you were sick.

Time management

You will have to be working on several things at once, but it's nothing you can't handle if you manage your time well. Here is a checklist to help you keep track of what is due, when, and what you have finished.

	Assignment	Due
	Odyssey questions: Books 1-8	9/6 @ 2 p.m.
	Adventures past, 400-500 words*	9/9 @ midnight
	Odyssey questions: Books 9-16	9/20 @ 2 p.m.
	Odyssey questions: Books 17-24	10/4 @ 2 p.m.
	Midterm	10/9 in class
	Trailheads	
	Trailhead: Users' guide	10/14
	Trailhead: Photos & other visuals*	10/21
	Trailhead: Adventure narrative*	10/28
	Trailhead: Bio brief and trail selfie	With presentation
	Final exam	12/10 @10:10

* These assignments will be returned for revision. Revisions are due by your final presentation date or as assigned.

GLI lecture schedule

Remember, GLI Students must attend TWO lectures selected from the list below.

News in the Age of Snowden: What investigations of leaks to reporters tell us about the World

William Glaberson, former New York Times reporter

Monday, September 29 at 7pm in the UC Theater

It's the Oil, Stupid: The Oily Aspects of the Current Wars in Iraq, Syria and Other Hot Spots on Five Continents

Michael Schwartz, founding director, College of Global Studies, Stony Brook University (SUNY)

Wednesday, October 22 at 8pm in the Dennison Theatre

First-Year Reading Experience Book, "The Things They Carried"

Tim O'Brien, author

Tuesday, October 28 at 8pm in the Dennison Theatre

Do Words Kill? Hate Speech, Propaganda and Incitement to Genocide

Elizabeth White, Research Director of the Center for the Prevention of Genocide

Wednesday, November 5 at 7pm in the UC Theater

The Riddle of Sustainability: A Surprisingly Short History of the Future

William Cronon, Professor of History, Geography, and Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Monday, November 17 at 8pm in the Dennison Theatre

Ukraine, Russia and the West: Crisis, Causes and Consequences

Robert D. English, Professor and Director, School of International Relations, University of Southern California

Monday, December 1 at 8pm in the Dennison Theatre

In the Pavilion of Snow Oxen – Big Animals in an Increasingly Peopled World

Joel Berger, Professor of Wildlife Conservation

Tuesday, December 2 at 6pm in the UC North Ballroom