

Travel Literatures

A Course Outline

This course would introduce students to the genre of travel literature through critical readings of travel works from diverse cultures of both the East and the West. The travel narratives would range across historical time-periods to enable an understanding of the way the genre has evolved from the medieval to the contemporary and how every travel narrative as a discourse is impacted by the socio cultural condition of its production. Students would be made to develop a contextual understanding of travel writing's relation with the processes of European colonialism and post-colonialism and travel writing's position in the present context of globalization. The genre of travel literature shows various innovations in forms and narrative strategies, especially twentieth century onwards. Through the readings students are expected to develop an appreciation of the aesthetics of the genre and its traditions, the points of continuities and departures.

Unit 1

Concepts/Theories

- The emergence of travel writing as a genre through a historical overview of travel works produced in Europe and in the East, especially in South East Asia and India
- The discourse of travel writing and the beginnings of 'Orientalism' – the 'imperial gaze', the binary of 'the self and the other'

Texts

- Mandeville's *Travels* (1356) (excerpts)
- *Nicolo de Conti's Early Fifteenth Century Travels in the East*. Tr. John Frampton (1579) (excerpts)
- Ibn Battuta's *Travels – Rihla* (1304-1369) (excerpts)

Unit 2

Concepts/Theories

- Travel writing in the era of European colonialism
- 'Travel' as experiences of colonial encounters - travel works of colonial masters, travel writing by colonial subjects, women travellers of colonial India
- Discourses of difference - travel writers of the metropolitan centre of the empire/ travel writers of the periphery

Texts

- Henry Morton Stanley - *In Darkest Africa* (1890) (excerpts)
- B.M.Malabari – *The Indian Eye on English Life* (1893) (excerpts)
- Keshab Chander Sen – *Diaries*, on his travel from Calcutta to England (1870)(excerpts)
- Pandita Ramabai – *Pandita Ramabai's American Encounters : The Peoples of the United States* (1889) Tr. and Ed. Meera Kosambi (excerpts)

Unit 3

Concepts/Theories

- The inter-war decades in Europe – the socio-political context
- Political ideologies and the travel works of the time
- Travel writing in the era of imperial dissolution
- Travel works with new aesthetics – a turn in the genre from the utilitarian to the literary

Texts

- George Orwell – *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937)
- Christopher Isherwood and W.H.Auden – *Journey to a War* (1939) (excerpts)
- Smedley, Agnes. *China Fights Back: An American Woman with the Eighth Route Army* (1938) (excerpts)

Unit 4

Concepts/Theories

- Travel literature and post colonialism
- Concepts of 'transculturation', 'counter-travel' or 'reverse travel' and 'writing back'

- Counter-flows to colonialism - travel narratives from the descendants of colonized subjects

Texts

- Vikram Seth – *From Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet* (1983)
- Amitav Ghosh – *In an Antique Land* (1992)

Unit 5

Concepts/Theories

- Travel writing in the era of globalization
- Travel in 'the Petrol Age' and the age of technology - globetrotters vs. armchair travellers
- Travel writing and the postmodern issues of exile and loneliness
- Innovations in narrative strategies - interiorization of 'travel' / representations of 'places' as 'spaces'

Texts

- Paul Theroux – *The Old Patagonian Express: By Train through the Americas* (1979)
- Pico Iyer – *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls and the Search for Home* (2000)

Suggested Readings

- Youngs, Tim. *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Hulme, Peter, and Tim Youngs, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Korte, Barbara. *English Travel Writing: from Pilgrimages to Post-Colonial Explorations*. Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd., U.S.A: St.Martin's Press, INC., 2000.
- Mills, Sara. *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. London: Routledge, 1991

- Ghose, Indira. *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Sen, Simonti. *Travels to Europe. Self and Other in Bengali Travel Narratives, 1870 – 1910*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005.
- Moraes, Dom ed. *The Penguin Book of Indian Journeys*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2001.
- Bhattacharji, Shobhana ed. *Travel Writing in India*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2008.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Blanton, Casey. *Travel Writing: the Self and the World*. New York: Twayne Publishers. London: Prentice Hall International, 1997.
- Fussell, Paul. *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Kaplan, Caren. *Questions Of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Schweizer, Bernard. *Radicals on the Road: The Politics of English Travel Writing in the 1930s*. Richmond: University Press of Virginia, 2001.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, ed. *New World Encounters*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Marvelous Possessions. The Wonder of the New World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Hadfield, Andrew. *Literature, Travel and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance. 1545-1625*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Huggan, Graham. *Extreme Pursuits: Travel/writing in an Age of Globalization*. USA: University of Michigan Press, 2009.