

**ENG 240-01: Topics in American Literature**  
**—Literature of the Open Road—**

Spring Semester, 2008  
Meetings: Tue & Thu 12:00 – 1:15 pm  
Office: Parker 4  
Office Hours: Tue & Thu 10:00 – 11:00 am

Instructor: Dr. Lorianne DiSabato  
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<http://www.pedestrianthoughts.com>

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)  
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from the woods,  
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,  
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,  
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,  
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,  
My left hand hooking you round the waist,  
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the public road.

Not I, not any one can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it for yourself.

—Walt Whitman,  
from Section 46 of *Song of Myself*

**Description:** What is in it our bones that itches to be moving—what is it that makes our hearts thrill at the words “road trip”? Influenced by the legacy of Pilgrims and pioneers and by the conventions of Romantic quest narratives, American literature is filled with self-reliant, often rebellious individuals who shoulder a pack and take to the open road in search of adventure. In this course we will read a selection of relevant texts and discuss the ways in which travel serves as an emblem of self-exploration.

**Required Texts:** John Muir, *The Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*  
Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*  
Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*  
Marilynn Robinson, *Housekeeping*  
Bill Bryson, *A Walk in the Woods*  
Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild*  
Short text reading available online at <http://www.pedestrianthoughts.com>

Be forewarned: this class requires a great deal of reading. If you’re looking for an “easy elective,” you’re probably in the wrong class!

**Requirements:** Attendance and active participation in class sessions

- You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings.
- Come to class on time! I will count three late arrivals as one absence.
- Perpetually unprepared students may be counted absent.
- I expect you to show respect for others’ opinions. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated; you will be asked to leave and marked absent.

Timely completion of assignments

• Due dates are listed on the syllabus, so plan accordingly. POPs and other assignments are due at the BEGINNING of class. **I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE ASSIGNMENTS.**

• If you are going to miss a class, arrange to have your work delivered to me or turn it in early. You may also email your assignment if you are going to be absent (see next point).

• In the case of absence or printer malfunction, you may submit your assignment via email as long as I receive your emailed assignment by 5:00 pm on the day it is due. If you perpetually submit assignments via email, I reserve the right to deduct 1 point per emailed assignment.

**Paper Format:**

• All assignments must be word-processed (or typed). Print hard copies of all work you word-process, and be sure to backup your work. **Computer mishap is not an acceptable excuse for late or “disappeared” papers.**

• Papers must be double spaced, in standard (10 or 12 point) font size, and with one-inch margins.

• When appropriate, essays must follow MLA documentation guidelines.

**Point Values:**

Fourteen 1-2 page POPs, 5 points each.....70 pts  
Take-home midterm essay exam .....15 pts  
Take-home final essay exam.....15 pts

**Grading:**

Out of a total 100 points, your semester grade will be calculated according to the following scale:

90 – 100 points ..... A  
85 – 89 points ..... AB  
80 – 85 points ..... B  
75 – 79 points ..... BC  
70 – 74 points ..... C  
65 – 69 points ..... CD  
60 – 64 points ..... D  
59 or fewer points ..... F

**POPs:**

“POP” stands for “page on a page.” A POP is a 1-2 page (typed, double-spaced) paper that discusses a single page from an assigned reading. Instead of making global generalizations about what a particular essay is about, your POPs will point to what you think is interesting or intriguing about a *specific passage* (i.e. a single page) in that reading. Since we will use POPs to generate class discussion, you should focus on whatever passage you think is the most interesting, intriguing, or problematic. If you are particularly confused by one page of a given reading, for instance, you might write a POP which points out why this passage is confusing or contradictory.

**Extra Help:**

If you need assistance or accommodation with any aspect of the class, please see me immediately so we can work together to address your situation.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to make an appointment with Jane Warner or Jessica Bigaj in the Office of Disability Services (x2353). Please contact me in person or via phone or email so that we can collaborate with the Office of Disability Services to provide the appropriate accommodations and support to assist you in meeting the goals of this course.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone else's words and ideas as your own. Penalties for plagiarism range from a failing grade on the paper to possible expulsion from the course and/or college.

Please note that "intentional" and "unintentional" plagiarism carry the same penalty. In ALL assignments, you must properly cite and document ANY material that is not your own original idea, including information from books, articles, websites, etc. Any phrase, sentence, or passage copied verbatim from a published source must be enclosed in quotation marks and followed by an identifying parenthetical citation. Likewise, if you paraphrase an idea from a published source, you must cite that source parenthetically. **If you have questions about how or whether to cite specific material, PLEASE ASK ME in person or via email.**

**Inclement Weather:**

To find out whether class has been cancelled, check my voicemail message. Dial 8888 (from campus) or (603) 358-8888 (from off-campus), then dial my voice-mailbox number (4167) and the # key. A voicemail message will announce if class has been cancelled; if there is no such message, we will have class.

## Course Calendar:

Wk 1: Jan 22, 24

Course intro  
Whitman, "Song of the Open Road" (online)  
POP 1 on Whitman due Thu, Jan 24

Wk 2: Jan 29, 31

Thoreau, "Walking" (online)  
POP 2 on Thoreau due Tue, Jan 29  
Austin, "The Walking Woman" (online)  
POP 3 on Austin due Thu, Jan 31

Wk 3: Feb 5, 7

Muir, *The Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*, Introduction and ch. 1 through 4  
POP 4 on Muir due Tue, Feb 5

Wk 4: Feb 12, 14

Muir, *The Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*, chapters 5 through 9  
POP 5 on Muir due Tue, Feb 12

Wk 5: Feb 19, 21

Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, chapters I through XXI  
POP 6 on Twain due Tue, Feb 19

Wk 6: Feb 26, 28

Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, chapters XXII through Chapter the Last  
POP 7 on Twain due Tue, Feb 26

Wk 7: Mar 4, 6

Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, chapters 1 through 17  
POP 8 on Kerouac due Tue, Mar 4

Wk 8: Mar 11, 13

Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, chapters 18 through 34  
POP 9 on Kerouac due Tue, Mar 11  
MID-TERM EXAM due Thu, Mar 13

Wk 9: Mar 18, 20      Spring Break: no classes

Wk 10: Mar 25, 27

Robinson, *Housekeeping*, chapters 1 through 6  
POP 10 on Robinson due Tue, Mar 25

Wk 11: Apr 1, 3

Robinson, *Housekeeping*, chapters 7 through 11  
POP 11 on Robinson due Tue, Apr 1

Wk 12: Apr 8, 10

Bryson, *A Walk in the Woods*, chapters 1 through 12  
POP 12 on Bryson due Tue, Apr 8

Wk 13: Apr 15, 17

Bryson, *A Walk in the Woods*, chapters 13 through 21  
POP 13 on Bryson due Tue, Apr 15

Wk 14: Apr 22, 24

Krakauer, *Into the Wild*, Author's Note and chapters 1 through 9  
POP 14 on Krakauer due Tue, Apr 22

Wk 15: Apr 29, May 1

Krakauer, *Into the Wild*, chapters 10 through Epilogue  
Extra Credit POP 15 on Krakauer due Tue, Apr 29  
Semester review

**Finals' Week Schedule:**

Reading Day: Monday, May 5 (office hours to be announced)  
Final exam due: Tuesday, May 6 from 1:00 – 3:00 pm

**—SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE BY THE INSTRUCTOR—**