

OUT OF EDEN: SLOW JOURNALISM – SPRING 2021

Tuesday and Thursday, 2:30-3:45 p.m.

Boatwright Library Room B1-20

Professor: Don Belt

Office: 424 Weinstein Hall

Office hours: By appointment (Zoom or in-person)

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dbelt@richmond.edu

SLOW JOURNALISM IN A FAST WORLD

No prerequisites

Open to students of Journalism, Geography and the Environment, and other departments as space allows.



JOHN STANMEYER

Course description

An intensive seminar course, with on-campus, COVID-careful fieldwork required, in which students develop multimedia storytelling skills using the Out of Eden Walk project as a model. You will apply the lessons of this round-the-world experiment in “slow” journalism, by two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Salopek (above), to narratives of your own while building conceptual and practical skills in story development, research, pitching, reporting, writing, photography, videography, mapping, social media, web design, and platform building.

Course Objectives

- To develop global cultural literacy through engagement with the themes, literary style, and factual content (culture, history, geography, anthropology, environmental science, geopolitics) of the Out of Eden Walk, based on the materials generated during the Walk’s first seven years;

Syllabus subject to change

- To explore the horizons of “slow” journalism in a classroom and field setting, as you explore our surrounding community, then conceive, design, and implement multimedia narrative projects of your own design, based on the concepts and example of the Out of Eden Walk.

Textbooks

The main text for the course will be the extensive body of written and multimedia work (totaling more than 500,000 words) posted by Paul Salopek during the first seven years of this multi-year project, all of which is available online at www.outofedenwalk.com. We will also be using *On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser (required; in the bookstore).

We may also be reading selected chapters from *On Looking: A Walker’s Guide to the Art of Observation*, by Alexandra Horowitz (2013. New York: Scribner) and *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*, by Jonathan Gottschall (2012. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt & Co.) Other readings may be required as we go along.

Equipment

Even though you’ll be doing field work at the pace of our *Homo sapiens* forebears (three miles an hour), you’ll use the technology and tools of a modern backpack journalist/geographer: notebooks, smartphone (or equivalent camera, video recorder, and audio recorder), GPS, computer, sneakers or walking shoes, face mask, etc.

Social media accounts

To participate, you’ll need a Facebook and Twitter account (Instagram optional). If you’re not comfortable using your personal accounts to participate, you’ll need to create a second one for this class. I’ll also be creating a private Facebook Group for the use of our class.

Key links and Follows

Your #1 bookmark is the Out of Eden Walk site (www.outofedenwalk.com). You should begin exploring the site immediately, and sign up for project email alerts. I will also create a closed Facebook Group for our class, where I’ll post announcements, assignments, and special readings. You should also visit and Like the project’s Facebook page, and Follow its two Twitter feeds: @paulsalopek and @outofedenwalk. You can also follow the Walk’s Instagram account: <http://instagram.com/outofedenwalk>.

About me

I’ve traveled to more than 80 countries over the past three decades, working as a writer and editor of articles for National Geographic magazine. My “beat” has been mainly human geography—vanishing cultures, the Arab world, Islam, South Asia, Russia, Middle Eastern history, the effects of global climate change, and the geopolitical trends shaping our world. As Geographic’s Senior Editor for Geography and World Affairs from 1998 to 2011, I helped to guide the magazine’s post-9/11 coverage ranging from weapons of mass destruction and terrorism to the legacy of colonialism in the modern Middle East. I also authored some two dozen feature stories for the magazine, and had a guiding hand in hundreds of others.

Syllabus subject to change



PAKISTAN 2007

REZA

I got my start as a freelance magazine writer and joined National Geographic's editorial staff as a writer in 1985. I later became a senior editor, managing a staff of 15 writers and researchers responsible for all non-feature text in the magazine. I ran Geographic's Expeditions department for three years and served as its Foreign Editor and chief foreign correspondent from 2003 to 2011. Since my retirement in 2011, I've continued to work for National Geographic as a lecturer, editorial consultant, contributing writer, and workshop

director (including a series of week-long journalism workshops in India co-taught with Salopek in 2018).

My connection to the Out of Eden Walk is that of a senior strategist and member of the board of directors. Since 2012, I've worked closely with Paul, a former writer on my staff, on many aspects of the Walk including design and text of his website, educational partnerships, and social media strategy and curation. I also serve as director of the Walk's University Outreach program, in partnership with the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. My Twitter handle is @dbelt50, and my website is www.donbelt.org.

Philosophy

This course, offered exclusively by the University of Richmond, was the first university-level course devoted to the Out of Eden Walk's ground-breaking experiment in digital journalism. Our class, like the Walk, is designed to explore the creative frontiers of Slow Journalism, a movement away from the super-fast, superficial coverage that dominates modern news media, and towards a more in-depth, deliberate, mindful approach to narrative journalism using the very latest tools of digital technology.

Salopek and his Walk partners (including the Knight Foundation, National Geographic, the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, the Nieman Foundation, Harvard's Graduate School of Education, MIT MediaLab, and Harvard's Center for Geographical Analysis) have set out to change the way digital journalists cover the world—and you will be pioneers in that effort, applying the lessons of slow journalism to your work, your academic specialty, and your personal life journey, Out of Eden, into the larger world beyond.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Weeks 1-5 (Module 1: Themes and Interactions)

Class Week 1: Introduction and Orientation/What is Slow Journalism? Out of Eden Walk Strategy and Local Inquiry

Class Week 2: Out of Africa: Origins and Out-migrations

Class Week 3: Holy Lands: Saudi themes, Jordan and Israel

Class Week 4: Autumn Wars: Global Themes, War in Syria, refugees

Class Week 5: The Silk Roads and Riverlands (term paper due)

Weeks 6-10 (Module 2: Planning and Reporting)

Class Week 6: Creating A Walk of Your Own; elevator pitches, class review

Class Week 7: Written Pitch due; Mapping a Route

Class Week 8: Field Reporting and Writing Strategies

Class Week 9: Field Reporting and Visual Strategies

Class Week 10: Web Design, Multimedia, Social Media

Sessions 11-15: (Module 3: Walking Richmond)

Class Week 11: A new way of seeing (Skype with special guest)

Class Week 12: Mid-course corrections

Class Week 13: New Storytelling Tools/Review

Class Week 14: Final project due; TED Talks

Class Week 15: Final Thoughts and Evaluations

Written assignments

All written assignments must be typed and submitted in electronic form (Word doc or pdf with photos) on the day they are due. Homework will include assigned reading and creative projects.

COVID precautions and flexibility

As you know, the number of COVID cases in the US is on an upward trajectory right now, so we will plan to meet the class virtually via Zoom and adapt to changing circumstances as the semester unfolds. Because of technology needs, I may teach from our physical classroom in Boatwright, but I won't expect you to attend in person unless you wish to do so or public health circumstances change.

If so, all COVID protocols will be strictly followed. These include wearing a mask that covers your mouth and nose at all times, physical distancing, and no eating or drinking in class. If we do meet in person, you'll have assigned seats and some responsibility for cleaning your desk. If you are ill, **do not come to class** or try to gut things out. Seek medical care as needed.

This semester will be an adventure in many ways, and I urge all students to keep an open mind and embrace a spirit of improvisation as we move forward. As in life, journalism is about managing the unexpected. I have structured the course in a way that will allow us to accommodate remote learning, in-person learning, or some combination of the two. In any case, we'll all need to be extremely flexible and creative, both in and out of the classroom.

No recording

One of the hallmarks of a University of Richmond education is small classes where faculty and students engage in robust discussions. The goal is always to encourage students with varied perspectives to be heard respectfully. At the same time, it must be understood that students are generally prohibited from copying, sharing, publishing, and/or posting on social media any recordings (audio or audio/video) or captured images of the class during a Zoom session or images of students or faculty in the course. Any violations of this policy may be referred to the Honor Councils and the Westhampton and Richmond College deans with the possibility of sanctions, including suspension or expulsion.

Attendance

We will be covering a lot of ground in every class, so any absence will leave you at a significant disadvantage and require extra effort to make up. Missing a class is not an excuse for failing to do the work assigned in that class. You're responsible for contacting your classmates or asking me about the assignment. If you need to miss a class, please let me know in advance. More than one unexcused absence will count against your final grade.

Punctuality

I expect you to be on time. Each class will start promptly at 2:30, and end at 3:45. Most days I can stay for a few minutes after class if you'd like to continue the conversation.

Deadlines

Journalists and professionals in all fields work on deadline. In this course, you must turn work in on time. Plan ahead, organize your time, and do not procrastinate. As in the 'real' world, if you miss a deadline or due date there are serious consequences. If your assignment is late, a full letter grade is automatically deducted; thereafter, for every day that passes another letter grade will be deducted.

Contacting me

You may call me on my cell at 571-490-4692 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. If I'm not available, leave a message. If you need to meet privately, that can be arranged by appointment. You may e-mail me at dbelt@richmond.edu. A special note about e-mails to me: Treat them as the business communications they are. Begin with a conventional salutation (Dear Prof. Belt) and end with a polite closing (Sincerely, Jane Doe). Write in clear, complete sentences with proper capitalization and punctuation. No emoticons or text messages.

Grading

Evaluating creative work is difficult. I'll grade fairly, but will be using a high professional quality standard to determine your grade. In general terms:

A = Compelling and substantially error-free; ready for publication or posting

B = Solid effort; minor errors need fixing before publication or posting

C = Average work; needs reorganization and rewrite/re-edit

D = Major problems; not ready for publication or posting

F = No story submitted by final deadline

I will grade tests and quizzes according to the standard, 100-point scale:

A: 90-100 B: 80-90 C: 70-80 D: 60-70 F: 59 and below

Workload and Field Time

To be successful in this course, you should expect to devote 10-15 hours to it each week, including on-campus field assignments. For those, you'll be responsible for arranging your own transportation, ride-sharing, parking, etc.

Plagiarism

It is unethical to use someone else's work without permission or attribution. It is also an honor code violation. You may use material from other sources as long as you attribute them. Never present fictional interviews or quotes as factual material. If you are involved in any form of plagiarism, you will automatically fail this course. This has taken on new significance in recent years with the ease of obtaining information from the Internet. If you have any questions, please check with me before handing in assignments.

Several points on plagiarism

- You may not borrow words, phrases, quotes, headlines or even ideas from another source without attribution.
- You must clearly tell readers where all of your information comes from. All information obtained from interviews must be attributed to those sources. Any descriptive writing must be based on personal observation or attributed to a source. Any piece of information that is not obtained from first-hand reporting must be attributed to a specific secondary source.
- Quotes are always presumed to be the result of a face-to-face interview, unless otherwise stated. If a quote in your story is lifted from a press release or website without attribution, that is plagiarism.
- Even if you are present at an event, such as a press conference, you may not use a secondary source or fact-check your information against another source without attribution. For example, if you attend a press conference but you are not confident about the quotes you

obtain, you may not pull those quotes from another publication, broadcast or a classmate/reporter without attributing them to that secondary source.

- Because your stories will be published, it is even more important that you understand the boundaries and follow them meticulously. Your work, as well as all reporters' work, represents a public trust, not just your own private responsibility.

Finally: If you experience difficulties in this course, do not hesitate to consult with me.

There are also other resources on campus that can support you in your efforts to meet course requirements:

- Academic Skills Center** (<http://asc.richmond.edu>, 289-8626 or 289-8956): Assists students in assessing their academic strengths and weaknesses; honing their academic skills through teaching effective test preparation, critical reading and thinking, information conceptualization, concentration, and related techniques; working on specific subject areas (e.g., calculus, chemistry, accounting, etc.); and encouraging campus and community involvement. Hours at the Center are:
Sunday through Wednesday 3:00-9:00 p.m. and Thursday 3:00-7:00 p.m. On-call tutors are also available.
- Boatwright Library Research Librarians** (<http://library.richmond.edu/help/ask/> or 289-8876): Research librarians assist students with identifying and locating resources for class assignments, research papers and other course projects. Librarians also provide research support for students and can respond to questions about evaluating and citing sources. Students can email, text or IM or schedule a personal research appointment to meet with a librarian in his/her office on the first floor Research and Collaborative Study area.
- Career Services** (<http://careerservices.richmond.edu/> or 289-8547): Can assist you in exploring your interests and abilities, choosing a major or course of study, connecting with internships and jobs, and investigating graduate and professional school options. We encourage you to schedule an appointment with a career advisor early in your time at UR.
- Counseling and Psychological Services** (<http://wellness.richmond.edu/offices/caps/> or 289-8119): Assists currently enrolled, full-time, degree-seeking students in improving their mental health and well-being, and in handling challenges that may impede their growth and development. Services include brief consultations, short-term counseling and psychotherapy, skills-building classes, crisis intervention, psychiatric consultation, and related services.
- Disability Services** (<https://disability.richmond.edu/students/index.html> or 289.8032) The Office of Disability Services works to ensure that qualified students with a disability (whether incoming or current) are provided with reasonable accommodations that enable that student to participate fully in activities, programs, services and benefits provided to all students. Please let your professors know as soon as possible if you have an accommodation that requires academic coordination and planning.
- Speech Center** (<http://speech.richmond.edu> or 289-6409): Assists with preparation and practice in the pursuit of excellence in public expression. Recording, playback, coaching and critique sessions offered by teams of student consultants trained to assist in developing ideas, arranging key points for more effective organization, improving style and delivery, and handling multimedia aids for individual and group presentations.
- Writing Center** (<http://writing.richmond.edu> or 289-8263): Assists writers at all levels of experience, across all majors. Students can schedule appointments with trained writing consultants who offer friendly critiques of written work.