OUT OF EDEN: SLOW JOURNALISM – SPRING 2019
Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00-4:15 p.m.
Weinstein 303
Don Belt
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Office hours: By appointment
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Slow Journalism in a Fast World: The Out of Eden Walk
No prerequisites
Open to students of Journalism, Geography and the Environment, and other departments as space allows.

Course description:
An intensive seminar course, with off-campus fieldwork required, in which students develop multimedia storytelling skills by using the Out of Eden Walk project (www.outofedenwalk.com) as a model.

Students will apply the lessons of this ten-year, round-the-world experiment in “slow journalism,” by two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Salopek, to develop a Walk of their own in the Richmond area. They will learn to build compelling narratives using a full range of skills: story development, research, pitching, reporting, writing, photography, videography, mapping, social media, web design, marketing, and platform building.

Course Objectives:
To build global cultural literacy through engagement with the themes, literary style, and factual content (culture, history, geography, anthropology, environmental science, politics) of the Out of Eden Walk, based on the materials generated during the Walk’s first six years;

To explore the horizons of “slow” journalism in a laboratory and field setting, as students explore the surrounding community, then conceive, design, and implement a multimedia narrative project of their own design, based on the precepts 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 300,000 words) posted by Paul Salopek during the first six years of this multi-year project, all of which is available online at www.outofeden.com.


Equipment:
Even though you’ll be doing field work at the pace of our early human forebears (three miles an hour), you’ll use the technology and tools of a modern journalist/geographer: notebooks, 

This syllabus is subject to change.
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.

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 Don Belt
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” is mainly human geography—vanishing cultures, the Arab world, Islam, South Asia, Middle Eastern history, the effects of global climate change, and the geopolitical trends shaping our world. As Senior Editor for Geography and World Affairs of NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC from 1998 to 2011, I helped to guide the magazine’s post-9/11 coverage ranging from weapons of mass destruction and the use of terrorism to the legacy of colonialism in the modern Middle East.

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 also 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 serve NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC as a lecturer, editorial consultant, contributing writer, and workshop director (including three journalism workshops in India this past year). My Twitter handle is @dbelt50, and my website is www.donbelt.org.

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 Salopek, 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.

Philosophy:
This course, offered exclusively by the University of Richmond, is 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.

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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, to 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 (small groups meet); 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 on paper and in electronic form on the day they are due. Homework will include assigned reading and creative projects.

In-class conduct:
I expect all students to act as adults and professionals. Unless I give the green light (related to an assignment or activity), our classroom is a cellphone-free zone. Laptops are permitted.

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. Ask your classmates or ask me what the assignment was. If there’s a good reason you missed the class, talk to me. But it had better be good. More than one absence will count against your final grade.

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**Punctuality:** Get to class on time. Each class will start promptly. The door will be closed at the start of class and you may not be allowed to enter.

**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 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 in person, 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 very 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 off-campus travel:** To be successful in this course, you should expect to devote 10-15 hours each week, including off-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

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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.

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