

# Wandering and the Creative Practice

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## Course Description

This course examines the relationship between non-teleological activities and the creative process. More specifically, we will examine the process of wandering, a non-teleological activity with a spatial component. In other words, we will explore new spaces and places outside of the classroom, document our activities, and consider how these activities can lead to creative projects. The shape these projects take will be informed by our experiences.

In this class, we will read critical and philosophical texts on the concept of wandering as well as read the work of poets and writers whose process involves wandering. In addition, we will learn about contemporary artists who privilege exploration. Finally we will conduct wandering experiments, both as individuals and in collaboration with one another.

Central questions for this course include: How is wandering defined and how is it distinguished from artistic experiments using randomized content generation? How do we understand wandering in a digital age? How have individuals and artistic collaborators seen wandering as a political activity? How does the idea of wandering take on different significance for women, queer individuals, and people of color? How does our relationship to outdoor spaces inform our worldview? What happens to our own artistic practice if we privilege exploration over composition?

In this class, we will practice traditional research techniques as well as consider other paradigms of researching. We will write collaboratively and on our own, reflect on our creative practice, and keep a journal. In addition, we will practice reading widely and well, including reading texts that may at first seem strange and inaccessible. Together we will discuss how to engage with a text that asks us to read it in a new way. Finally, we will collaboratively engage in some sort of public event that will encourage the audience to participate in a wandering experiment.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- ...articulate how theorists from a variety of disciplines have argued for the value of wandering.
- ...understand, appreciate, and apply new compositional strategies to your own writing.
- ...make an argument about how the idea of wandering can take on political significance in artists' work
- ...articulate strategies for successful collaborations
- ... use wandering as a way to create a sustainable artistic practice that does not rely assignments from a professor.

**Assessment****Grading Criteria**

15% Reading Responses  
25% Participation  
25% Documentation  
35% Final Project

**Reading responses (15%)** You will keep a journal responding to the reading. Each week you will receive a prompt to help you focus your response. Although formal assignments—that is, they must be typed and turned in—these are “write to learn” assignments. They are a way to try to understand the readings and reflect on class discussion and activities.

**Participation (25%)** Much of this class will involve class discussion, workshop, small group work, and collaboration. You will be responsible for being prepared to ask concrete and specific questions related to the reading and the class activities and to offer feedback on your peers’ work. In addition, you will need to suggest wandering activities in our online course notebook.

**Documentation (25%)** In projects with a conceptual element, documentation is an important part of the process. In order to demonstrate that you participated in a good-faith way in the wandering activities, you will be required to document those activities. We will discuss various documentation strategies including blogging, video-, audio-recording, and logbooks.

**Final Project (35%)** The course will culminate in a final presentation requiring you to work collaboratively in a small group to 1) offer a critical response to the readings and/or visual materials we studied and 2) present the results of your wandering experiments. The type of product you create should be determined what happens when you wander.

**Possible Readings/Films**

Sarah Jane Cervenak. *Wandering Philosophical Performances of Racial and Sexual Freedom*. Duke University Press, 2012.

Edward Hersh. “My Pace Provokes My Thoughts.” *American Poetry Review*, March/April 2011.

Marina Galperina. “The Art Bot That Bought 100 Pills of Ecstasy: An art project by !Mediengruppe Bitnik channels the “randomized consumerism” of an illicit digital marketplace.” *Fast Company*, November 12, 2014.

Rebecca Solnit. *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. Penguin Books, 2007.

Margot Anne Kelly. "Local Treasures: Geocaching Across America." Center for American Places, 2006.

CA Conrad. *Ecodeviance: (Soma)tics for the Future Wilderness*. Wave Books, 2014.

Virginia Wolf. "Street Haunting: A London Adventure." 1930

Karen O'Rourke. *Walking and Mapping: Artists as Cartographers*. MIT Press, 2013.

Dawn Lundy Martin. *Life in a Box is a Pretty Life*. Nightboat 2014.

Fred Moten. *The Little Edges*. Wesleyan University Press, 2014.

#### *Films*

Agnès Varda. *Cleo from 5 to 7*. Left Bank Films, 1962.

Cynthia Beatt. *The Invisible Frame/Cycling the Frame*. Icarus Films, 2009.

John Curran. *Tracks*. Transmission Films. 2013

#### *Video Games*

That Game Company. *Journey*. 2012

### **Possible Assignments**

Spend two hours riding public busses and document what you see.

Locate ten escalators in Pittsburgh. Write ten poems, each to be composed in the length of time it takes to ride from the bottom of the escalator to the top.

Half the class will take a virtual public art tour on-line using Google Streetview. The other half will take an actual public art tour. During the tours both groups will write text in response to their experience. Together we will combine the texts into a collaborative poem.

The class will be divided into two groups. Each group will create a series of geocaches for the other group to find. Each geocache will contain a writing assignment for the group that finds it related to the location of the cache.

Each student will choose a used bookstore and purchase the first book they can find that costs under one dollar. Write a poem that has the same title as the book. Swap books with classmates. Or together, we will collage passages of our books to create a text to return to the bookstore.

Write a tourism guidebook to this area that does not include major tourist attractions, but that instead directs tourists to spots you found on a day where you wandered without destination.