ENGLISH 261
ARCTIC ENCOUNTERS

Summer Session II, Rhode Island College
Dr. Russell A. Potter

http://eng261.blogspot.com

There are few places left on earth where simply going there seems extraordinary – but a trip north of the Arctic Circle still seems to signify the experience of something astonishing. This course takes up the history of human exploration and interaction in the Arctic, from the early days of the nineteenth century to the present, with a focus on contact between European and American explorers and the Eskimo, or Inuit as they are more properly known today. We read first-hand accounts and view documentaries that recount these histories, both from the Western and the Inuit side of the story.

Each week, we’ll have new readings both in our books and online, and a response to one of that week’s blog posts is due. There will also be a final paper of 4-6 pages on a topic of the student’s choosing relative to our course subjects. Aside from Jon Krakauer’s Into the Wild, all texts will be made available via links on our class blog.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK I. Monday: Introduction to class. Wednesday: Why go? Reading, Krakauer, Into the Wild, chapters 1-6 (pp. 1-60).

WEEK II. Note: Monday’s class will meet on Tuesday due to the July 4 holiday. Tuesday: Into the Wild, chapters 7-16. Wednesday: Into the Wild, Chapters 17-18 and Epilogue; Potter, “Exploration and Sacrifice: The Cultural Logic of Arctic Discovery” (blog link).

WEEK IV. The Inuit Knew It. Reading: Eber, Encounters on the Passage, Introduction and chapters 3 and 4. In-class film, scenes from John Walker’s Passage.

WEEK V. Representing the Native. Monday: Nanook of the North (Robert Flaherty); Wednesday: “Kunuk Uncovered.” Readings: “How I Filmed Nanook of the North,” “Nanook and Me” (blog links).