ENGL 5530: Creative Nonfiction Workshop
Walking
Mejia
W 4:35-7:30
LNCO 3870, etc.

This course is an advanced workshop concerning the craft and production of creative nonfiction, specifically the personal essay, considering this as a form encompassing researched inquiry as much as personal self-reflection. Additionally, we'll be considering and experiencing the act of walking as one that mirrors those of thinking, writing, and reading. Beginning with some considerations of what a personal essay is, has been, or might be—how it may manifest as form, style, content, and media—we'll play with a number of approaches to the relationship between essaying and walking, examining how these have combined and might combine into a process that is aware of and curious about a mind-body in space and in motion, about the nature of the spaces through which we pass (natural, urban, actual, virtual), and about the forces or pressures that shape or guide us (or seem to) through personal, public, and political geographies. How, we might wonder, does walking both stimulate and simulate writing? How do the spaces in which we may (and may not) walk embody (in landscapes and populations) the subjects about which we want to write? Is it possible to think, write, and walk simultaneously, to transcribe the thought and experience of our body? How does the street-level observation of others, the path-level observation of other species, provide illuminating opportunities for reflection on and elaboration of memory and speculation and/or of our personal and general motivations, fears, desires, etc.? Readings will include essays, prose, and poetry by Patrick Madden, Kevin Holdsworth, Rebecca Solnit, Henry David Thoreau, W.G. Sebald, Sophie Calle, Virginia Woolf, Charles Baudelaire, Cole Swenson, and Robert Walser. Also, as schedules and transportation allow, we'll strive each week to take our workshop into the landscape, walking and talking in the natural and urban spaces around us.