

**On the Road Again, More or Less...**  
**LLC Course Syllabus**  
**Summer 2025**

**Time and Location:**

Mondays, 1:00- 3:00 p.m.

International House of Rhode Island

8 Stimson Ave. Providence, RI 02906

**Please feel free to park in IHRI's parking lot behind the building, or on the street in front!**

**Coordinator:**

Heidi LaVine

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**Course Description:**

As gas prices soar and airfares skyrocket, more American families are opting for “staycations”—vacations spent indulging in the pleasures afforded by one’s own backyard. In this class, we will join the swelling ranks of armchair travelers, exploring the limits and advantages of the narrative as a vehicle for travel. While reading a selection of journalistic reports, travel diaries, fake guidebooks, and creative non-fiction, we will take up a number of important questions: What are the ethical responsibilities and environmental impacts associated with tourism? How valid is the stereotype of the “Ugly American” tourist abroad? To what extent does immersing ourselves in unfamiliar locales and cultures alter the way we think about and understand ourselves? What is the relationship between identity and place? How does embarking on a journey affect our definition and view of home?

While examining the politics of tourism with Jamaica Kincaid, boarding the cruise ship from hell with David Foster Wallace, and exposing the seamy underbelly of American history with Sarah Vowell, we will help each other navigate these and other important questions.

**Format:**

Each participant is encouraged, but not required to create a brief presentation. Presenters will do additional background research and lead a class discussion about a topic relevant to that day's reading material.

**Resources and Expenses:** This class will require the purchase of two slim volumes:

1. Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (available for about \$9 on Amazon)
2. Alain de Botton's *A Week at the Airport* (available for between \$12 and \$18 on Amazon).
3. Additional short readings will be provided as email attachments by the coordinator.

## Schedule of Readings and Presentations

### Week One (6/16)—Setting Off!

**1<sup>st</sup> Hour:** Introduction to the Course and Each Other

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hour:** Steves, “So, Are Americans Still Welcome in Europe?”

### Week Two (6/23)— In Transit: The In-Between Space of the Airport

**1<sup>st</sup> Hour:** Presentation: Novelty and Adventure in the Era of Instagram, Trip Advisor, and, Google Maps

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hour:** de Botton, *A Week at the Airport*, Part I (“Approach”) & Part II (“Departures”)

### Week Three (6/30)-- From Borat to Bermuda Shorts—The “Ugly” Tourist Abroad

**1<sup>st</sup> Hour:** Presentation: The Manners and Mores of International Engagement

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hour:** de Botton, *A Week at the Airport*, Part III (“Airside”) & Part IV (“Arrivals”)

### Week Four (7/7) —Where Am I and What Am I Doing in This Handbasket?

**1<sup>st</sup> Hour:** Presentation: The Happiest Place(s) on Earth?

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hour:** Wallace, “Shipping Out”

## **Week Five (7/14)—Paradise Lost**

**1<sup>st</sup> Hour:** Presentation: The Tourism Industry and its Place in National and Global Finance

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hour:** Kincaid, from *A Small Place*

## **Week Six (7/21)—Can it Be Regained?**

**1<sup>st</sup> Hour:** Film screening: *Life and Debt*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hour:** Kincaid, from *A Small Place*

## **Week Seven (7/28)—Off the Beaten Path**

**1<sup>st</sup> Hour:** Presentation: Historical Tourism and the Search for Cultural Oddities

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hour:** Vowell, from *Assassination Vacation*

## **Week Eight (8/4)—Arrivederci!**

**1<sup>st</sup> Hour:** Iyer, “Why We Travel”

**2<sup>nd</sup> Hour:** Group Lunch and Discussion of Our Journey Together!