

**Journalism 5606W**  
**Nancy Roberts**

**WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2A**  
**TRAVEL**

I'd feel better about assigning a travel piece if I could give each of you enough money to visit New York City, Japan, or Italy. But not to worry. This doesn't require any travel out of town. In fact, I think travel in town will work much better.

In general, I want you to write a piece about a travel experience. This should be something recent, not last summer's vacation. You can concentrate on your own surroundings, and how you experience them. As usual, five or six pages should be enough.

Travel writing focuses on the symbolic qualities of observed experience. Generally, you can open doors to a culture by concentrating on some detail. Joan Didion, for example, observes radio news broadcasts in Los Angeles and concludes that Californians live in a world without narrative connections. John McPhee gives us another view of Georgia life by concentrating on the travels and offbeat diet of Carol, the naturalist.

This assignment may contain three or four parts, depending on what you decide to write about. First, you have to observe from the point-of-view of a traveler. Secondly, you may need to do some research about the details you have observed. For example, if you're writing about the flour-milling district in Minneapolis, you may need to find out when the Pillsbury "A" Mill was built or the history of Nicollet Island. Thirdly, you need to think about the personal feelings or memories that your observations trigger. Lastly, you might look for the symbolism of observed detail. Does something you have observed say something about the world? Look for those things that, as the anthropologist Clifford Geertz put it, say something to someone about something.