

## **Oysters of Perception – Reflections on Teaching about Walking, Mindfulness and Politics in an Interdisciplinary Setting**



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### **Abstract**

Walking – like eating, breathing, and sleeping – is for many of us an unremarkable part of being alive, something we do without much consciousness or attention. However, if we choose to walk consciously, walking – through its rhythms, rituals, and kinesthetic linking of mind, body, and space – is an activity imbued with many types of personal, political, and cultural meaning. This paper reflects on teaching a class called the Art & Politics of Walking to first-year, first-quarter undergraduates. In doing so, it examines many forms of walking – strolling, wandering, demonstrating, marching, pilgrimage, among others – as mindful ways of being in and moving through the world. The theme of walking serves as a platform to explore interdisciplinary connections between human evolution, health, cognition, creativity, spirituality, place-based knowledge, environmental protection, urban design and wild trail networks, pedestrian rights, citizenship, public space, protest marches, social movements, and more. The paper integrates and analyzes student work from the course to reflect on how course design could be improved to maximize its impact on students transitioning to college life.

But when the door shuts on us, all [of our home life] vanishes. The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughness a central **oyster of perceptiveness**, an enormous eye. How beautiful a street is in winter! – Virginia Woolf (emphasis added)

I look and look.

Looking's a way of being: one becomes, sometimes, a pair of eyes walking.

Walking wherever looking takes one.

The eyes dig and burrow into the world. – Denise Levertov

I can only meditate when I'm walking. When I stop, I cease to think. My mind only works with my legs.

– Jean Jacques Rousseau

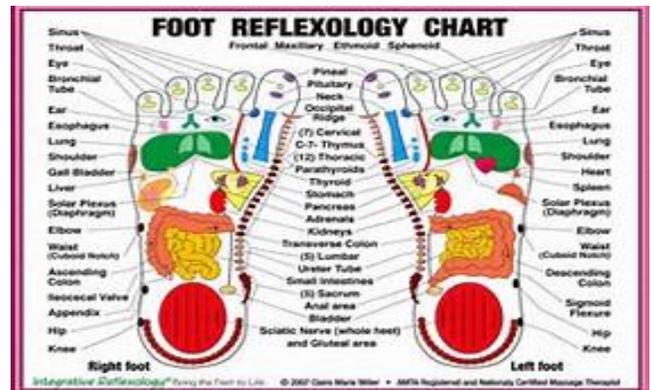
The world is full of magic things waiting for our senses to grow sharper. – W.B. Yeats

Our real home is not a house, but the Road... Life itself is a journey to be walked on foot. Be careful, but don't be afraid. Don't get injured, but don't miss out. – Bruce Chatwin

## Introduction

My students would joke that to be mindful during a walk they'd need to become an “oyster of perceptiveness,” referring to Virginia Woolf’s felicitous phrase of what a walk can do to help us to break the shells of our ordinary selves and heighten our awareness of self and world. How can something as ordinary as taking a walk be good for us? Can it help strengthen our relationships? Does it offer pathways for cultural critique? I think the answer to all of these questions is yes, and a course like this can help round out a student’s education.

The pace of life seems to move inexorably faster. Whether we’re catching up to the speed of technology, blitzed by the stimulation from digital toys, poked by small bits of a fragmentary media, worried about the precariousness of our labor, or frightened by a broken social contract and the privatization of our futures, we’ve created an anxious culture of extreme busyness and short attention spans. Only 23% of workers take their eligible time off. Over 60% of vacationers report working during their vacation.<sup>1</sup> And if we do take vacations, they’re often



dictated by the frenzied logic of doing as much as possible in the time allowed. No wonder people need vacations from their vacations. This is not even to bring up the fact that vacations don't translate to a "gig economy" or that Americans (in particular) have far less time off than workers in other countries. We certainly don't, as Bertrand Russell would say, know how to "praise idleness." Heidegger complains that modern people are compulsive schedulers, almost as if we wouldn't know what to do with ourselves if time opened itself up and forced us to slow down. As Rebecca Solnit writes in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2000):

The multiplication of technologies in the name of efficiency is actually eradicating free time by making it possible to maximize the time and place for production and minimize the unstructured travel time in between... Too, the rhetoric of efficiency around these technologies suggests that what cannot be quantified cannot be valued – that that vast array of pleasures which fall into the category of doing nothing in particular, of woolgathering, cloud-gazing, wandering, window-shopping, are nothing but voids to be filled by something more definite, more production, or faster-paced.<sup>ii</sup>

Given such trends, it's clear why the interest in mindfulness practices has grown in recent years.

Walking is one of the simplest ways to push back against the pressures and speed of modern life. Doing so consciously and regularly brings many physiological, contemplative, social, and political benefits. Walking slows time down. Doing this gives us more capacity to see, hear, feel, smell and take in both nature and the particulars of our communities.

Interestingly, walking also expands space. We experience a space as a *place* much more richly when we are on foot. We are capable of taking more of the world in through the senses. The expansion of time and space makes room for thinking, reflection, and contemplation. Rebecca Solnit agrees. She writes, "I like walking because it is slow, and I suspect that the mind, like the feet, works at about three miles an hour. If this is so, then modern life is moving faster than the speed of thought, or thoughtfulness."<sup>iii</sup>

I've long been a hiker, backpacker, and runner, someone used to moving through the world on two feet (this despite major knee surgery, several broken ankles, and other foot problems). Over time, I thought more seriously about constructing a class centered on the theme of walking. One day, I came across a list of the "10 Coolest College Courses" from the *New York Times*. One class that was highlighted was called "The Art of Walking" at Center College in Danville, KY taught by Dr. Kenneth Keffer. Keffer combines the practice of group walks with a rigorous philosophical syllabus heavy on the study of "being in the world." As Keffer writes, "The tradition is focused on what we know about the world, not how we are being in the world. I want to turn the lamp on 'being.'"<sup>iv</sup> Encountering a course like Dr. Keffer's, with its integration of challenging reading with different kinds of walking practices, inspired me to take my first steps down this path and create a course of my own.

I teach at the University of Washington Bothell. The institution is known for its focus on interdisciplinary education across the humanities and social sciences while offering a rich array of STEM degrees. The institution also has an innovative first-year program called the Discovery Core. The Discovery Core introduces all first year students to "interdisciplinarity" through courses designed by inspired teachers who are interested in a subject or theme that can be examined from many angles. I'd been teaching in the Discovery Core for a couple of years when an opportunity emerged to teach a new class. So I proposed an interdisciplinary course with the theme of walking. After its acceptance, I worked on course design and pedagogy. As an environmental political theorist, I figured I'd approach it from environmental and political angles. I thought to explore the connection between walking and marching, protest, consciousness raising, and active forms of citizenship in public space. I knew I wanted to

explore the relationship between walking and neighborly-ness in an increasingly atomized society. Walking creates unexpected encounters between people and has the potential to close physical and psychological gaps between strangers, social classes, and cultures. Quotidian gestures of humanity experienced on walks puts us in touch with the diversity our communities. Of course, such a place needs a walking infrastructure to make this possible, so I thought I'd look at city planning and the design of walkable communities, which in turn would raise many important environmental questions. Connecting walking to transit and where we live, work, and play has a positive environmental impact in terms of reducing carbon emissions, heightening an appreciation of nature, and improving the built infrastructure, among other things.

The class touches on all of these perspectives, but it quickly turned into something much more. I soon found that I was not just teaching about "walking," but about mindfulness – perception, attentiveness, consciousness, well-being, reverie, nostalgia (which is curiously strong in newly independent 18 year-olds transitioning to college life). I can't say I was surprised by the centrality of the role that mindfulness took in the course, as the phenomenological aspects of walking were implicit reasons why I was interested in developing the course in the first place. But the degree to which the themes of mindfulness permeated the course was astonishing, and the unexpected moments of clarity and self-knowledge my students expressed was inspiring. Such experiences are important to all of us, of course, but are especially so for young people saturated with technology, busy schedules, virtual realities, and dwindling opportunities to *be* in the world and in their communities.

The paper will unfold in the following way. Part I examines rationales for developing a course on walking and explains the course design. It functions as a filter of course texts, primarily Thich Nhat Hahn's *How to Walk*, Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust*, and Alexandra Horowitz's *On Looking*. Part II incorporates student writing from course assignments and sorts them into categories, such as self-knowledge, campus knowledge, wonder & astonishment, connections to others, memories, coping with stress & change, identity and diversity, and awareness of city life.

I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits unless I spend four hours a day at least – and it is commonly more than that – sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements. – Henry David Thoreau

We do not belong to those who have ideas only among books, when stimulated by books. It is our habit to think outdoors – walking, leaping, climbing, dancing, preferably on lonely mountains or near the sea where even the trails become thoughtful. Our first questions about the value of a book, of a human being, or a musical composition are: Can they walk? Even more, can they dance? – Friedrich Nietzsche

## **Part I: Walking as Mindfulness of Self and Community**

I thought about titling this paper, Teaching About Walking to Sedentary Computer Scientists. According to a student survey I give out on the first day, at least 50% of my students expressed a desire to become a computer scientist of some sort, even though most won't make it through the rigors of the process. An overwhelming majority intend to pursue some kind of STEM major in which using technology and staring at screens will compose a huge part of their education. The average number of hours spent looking at a screen for Americans is now 11

hours a day.<sup>v</sup> My students are definitely not pushing down these averages. For their free time, almost all say they use it up playing video games, watching YouTube or Netflix, or following social media. Some say that they enjoy *hiking*, but no one admitted to *walking* as a conscious pursuit. According to the EPA, 93% of a contemporary American's life is spent indoors (87% inside, 6% in automobiles).<sup>vi</sup> To Rebecca Solnit, we move through a series of disconnected "interiors." This is one reason why walking is so attractive. When we are on foot, all is connected for a time. "One lives in the whole world rather than in the interiors built up against it," argues Solnit.<sup>vii</sup> Given sedentary lifestyles, and a cultural saturation with technology (the phenomenon of Pokemon GO notwithstanding), a class on Walking for 18 year old students is, at the very least, unusual. Add to this, the fact that my course takes place the first quarter of their first year in college. The campus is new to them, and most tread well-worn paths on a "commuter campus" between parking lots or bus stops, classrooms, registration, the library, and advising offices. Much of the rest of campus is a mystery. No wonder my students are perplexed by what the course would be like, or how it could be a real course at all, like calculus or biology.

### *Reasons for walking*

Given these starting points for students, I begin the class with "arts of walking" as a way of linking walking to a mindful experience of self. We start with Thich Nhat Hahn's *How to Walk*. The book is slender, accessible, and practical while also being rousingly philosophical and eloquently simple. He begins with the sheer pleasure of walking. He writes, "When we first learned to walk, we walked just to enjoy walking. We walked and discovered each moment as we encountered it. We can walk that way again."<sup>viii</sup> Students first encounter a very simple

exercise – being aware of walking – as a gateway to much more. Hahn then advises walkers to walk with a deeper awareness. “To be mindful is to be truly present with your body and your mind, to bring harmony to your intentions and actions, and to be in harmony with those around you.”<sup>ix</sup> I have students do a simple walking exercise based on Hahn’s advice about linking breath, walking, and awareness. At this point, students then begin to realize that something so simple is really quite difficult to sustain and cultivate.

Hahn continues to zoom out from the small self to the wider world. He writes about how delightful it is to walk on planet earth. One of the first things astronauts report that they most look forward to doing when they return home is to walk amongst the grasses, plants, flowers, animals, and birds.<sup>x</sup> He then says that he sometimes walks for others – ancestors, the disabled, the sick – cultivating a deep gratitude of his own strength and the ability to walk for others. He advises us to walk in quiet places, in busy places, with children, and with different kinds of intention. Students begin to see that walking opens up a receptivity to the world and others and is not just a way to get from point A to point B. Plus, it’s full of pleasure. Louise Elkin, author of *Flaneuse: Women Who Walk*, comments: “Why do I walk? Because I like it. I like the rhythm of it, my shadow always a little ahead of me on the pavement. I like being able to stop when I like, to lean against a building and make a note in my journal, or read an email, or sent a text, and for the world to stop while I do it. Walking, paradoxically, allows for the possibility of stillness.”<sup>xi</sup> Some students report that after this first exercise, they see how walking can be joyful and that the stillness generated through walking allows for different kinds of experiences to emerge.

I also begin the course with articles from the newspaper that preview various themes in the course. Some are just curiosities. For example, from Foot.com we learn that: Humans have nearly 8000 nerves in their feet. The average adult takes 4,000 to 6,000 steps a day. The average person will walk around 115,000 miles in a lifetime (that's more than 4 times around the Earth!). Feet mirror our general health. Arthritis, diabetes, nerve and circulatory disorders can show their initial symptoms in the feet – so foot ailments can be your first sign of more serious medical problems. The oldest preserved shoe is 5,500 years old and was found in an Armenian cave. Doctors advise that we should walk 10,000 steps a day for our general health.<sup>xii</sup> Another article discusses a study in Japan showed that babies are soothed in a short amount of time by going for walks, and not only with their biological parents.<sup>xiii</sup> I show them clips of jazz funerals where people boisterously walk through New Orleans streets as a celebration for the recently deceased. Walking brings in our first experiences of life as a baby and we walk in some cultural traditions to memorialize the dead.

I also introduce them to the concept of *shinrin-yoku* (Japanese for “forest bathing”) where it has been demonstrated that there is a marked reduction in stress hormones like cortisol by walking/ “bathing” in forests for as little 5-10 minutes. Charles Mudede, writer for Seattle’s *The Stranger*, writes that, “I decide to enter the forest because I am tired of the world. It is under water, it is on fire, its president is getting crazier by the minute, it is detonating mountain-shaking bombs for no good reason.”<sup>xiv</sup> Walking is a way to process emotions. We learn about the Inuit tradition of processing anger and difficult emotions by walking. Lucy Lippard in *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* (1983) tells of a custom whereby, “An angry person (gets) relief by walking the emotion out of his or her system in a

straight line across the landscape. The point at which the anger is conquered is marked with a stick bearing witness to the strength or length of the rage.” Students anxious about the transition to college and worried about the state of the world begin to realize that a walk in the woods can be an effective counter-measure to the whirlwind of experiences they are accumulating. As Kierkegaard says of our problems, “It is solved by walking.”

I also preview the sections of the course that cover hiking, adventuring, pilgrimage, and what I call “epic walks” – extraordinary, eccentric walks done for particular reasons and often including great physical challenges. Other short articles point to explicitly political and environmental reasons for walking. We examine forms of walking like marching and protesting. I urge students to think about why protest often takes the form of a collective walk. What is it about the collective power of human bodies walking together for common cause? We also encounter walking as a history lesson. In Seattle, for example, it’s been possible in the last few years to take walking tours of Seattle’s Red Line of housing discrimination, which helped to segregate the city racially and financially. Many of my students live in parts of Seattle that have been historically red-lined and the majority come from POC and immigrant communities.

### *Walking and thinking*

The class begins to take a more “academic turn” when we begin to read Rebecca Solnit’s *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* and Frederic Gros’ *A Philosophy of Walking*, both core texts on the syllabus. For me, reading Solnit’s *Wanderlust* kindled an early interest in walking as an academic topic. Prior to the agricultural revolution and settled communities, humans were nomadic hunter-gatherers. We have always been creatures who walked. Being bipedal is

distinguishes us from our close biological relatives. Endurance walking (and running) probably distinguished homo sapiens from other animals and gave us an evolutionary advantage. As human hunters, we could simply out-hike other prey. As Alvarez comments,

Hiking is what humans do best. We can't outclimb monkeys or squirrels, and we can't outsprint even an overweight deer. But we can out-hike them all; we are evolution's undisputed champions of endurance. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors, all massive glutes and elastic ligaments not present in apes, walked long distances over golden savannahs, rocky mountain passes, and sandy deserts in pursuit of prey. Humans can bludgeon any animal with our endurance (plus, you know, a rock).<sup>xv</sup>

Walking has been central to the evolution of our species, and therefore been central to human culture.

Walking has also been important to many writers, philosophers, artists, seekers, and mystics. We are *Homo peripateticus*. As Solnit writes, walking is the most pedestrian of activities, but it is also charged with spiritual, erotic, revolutionary, artistic, and liberatory meaning.<sup>xvi</sup> Solnit speaks of walking as an "indicator species" for "various kinds of freedoms and pleasures: free time, free and alluring space, and unhindered bodies."<sup>xvii</sup> Solnit also demonstrates the importance of walking to thinking. But not just thinking as cognition – one's body is intrinsic to the experience of a walk. Many writers, philosophers, and artists need kinesthetic movement to think. Solnit suggests that, "ideally, body, mind and world" are aligned during a walk.<sup>xviii</sup> And the walk produces thoughts, but not only in our head. Our whole body is taking in the world as we move through the it.<sup>xix</sup> Thoreau advises us to, "Walk like a camel, which is said to be the only animal to ruminate while walking."<sup>xx</sup> Personally speaking, kinesthetic movements is important to my own thinking and creativity, so I understand what Solnit and Thoreau is talking about.

Robert MacFarlane in *The Old Ways* suggests that the Greek idea of *metis* and the Chinese concepts of *nei heng*, which both refer to a method of gaining knowledge through experience, are immensely appealing to walkers.<sup>xxi</sup> Walkers move through the world as embodied minds to experience the world. Knowledge of outer and inner worlds are conjoined through experiences and the pursuit of forms of truth charged with personal authenticity.

In a *Philosophy of Walking*, by French philosopher Frederic Gros, the author skillfully weaves personal anecdotes about walking with short essays on famous philosophers and the role of walking in their lives as thinkers and writers. Leave it to the French to develop a *philosophy* of walking. On one walk, Gros hikes in the Alps with an old Italian mountain climber named Mateo. On their hike they are passed by a group of young hikers who speed past them up the trail. Mateo comments that they walk in such haste that they're afraid they won't get there. Gros speculates that authentic walking can't be hurried or rushed. Slowness is essential to its revealing powers. He writes, "The illusion of speed is that it saves time... finish something in two hours instead of three, gain an hour.... But haste and speed accelerate time, which passes more quickly."<sup>xxii</sup> The impact of slow walking also impacts our experience of space. Gros comments, "This stretching of time deepens space. It is one of the secrets of walking: a slow approach to landscapes that gradually renders them familiar. Like the regular encounters that deepen friendship... the landscape is a set of tastes, colors, scents which the body absorbs."<sup>xxiii</sup>

William Hazlitt's essay "On Going on a Journey," for instance, has been called the foundation of the walking genre.<sup>xxiv</sup> In it he tells the walker to walk in silence (to cultivate thinking and pleasant sensations). Hazlitt continues, "The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do, just as one pleases. We go on a journey chiefly to be free of all

impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others.”<sup>xxv</sup> The essay ends up with a list of do’s and don’ts when going for a walk. While writers in the primarily English genteel walking genre often prescribe *how* to walk, as if they were giving sermons, walking is a kind of liberation because you don’t have to be told how to do it – you just do it, with your own style. As Gros comments in *A Philosophy of Walking*, “Walking, as they say, empties the mind. In another way, walking fills the mind with a different sense of purpose. Not connected with ideas or doctrines, not in the sense of a head full of phrases, quotations, theories: but full of the world’s presence.”<sup>xxvi</sup> As students beginning to seriously think for themselves and their life plans for the first time, the sense of independence and the encouragement to think for themselves is important. The invitation to do this through walking for some opens up some cracks in the oyster’s shell.

### *Walking and paying attention*

The utility of linking walking, attention, and perception will become the theme of many walking exercises students will undertake throughout the quarter. These assignments can be seen in the Appendix section and will be discussed in Part II. We start to read Alexandra Horowitz’s book, *On Looking: A Walker’s Guide to the Art of Observation*. In this book, Horowitz, a professor of neuroscience at Columbia, takes walks around NYC with different experts – a geologist, sociologist, artist, physician, sound designer, and many others. Her aim is to illustrate how much we *don’t perceive* about the world because we haven’t trained our powers of observation. Walking as technique of paying attention is the focus of Alexandria Horowitz’s *On Looking*. She goes on twelve different conscious walks whose intention is heighten awareness, perception, and knowledge of self and surroundings. What is attention?

Is it an ability, tendency, or skill? What is the connection between attention and evolution?

Horowitz concludes that, “Attention is like a system we have for filtering information from the outside world. It asks for our vigilance, but also our selectivity... So, paying attention is making a selection from all the stimuli bombarding you at any moment.”<sup>xxvii</sup> Indeed, what we attend to shapes our experience and becomes part of our mind-body “self.” William James says that experience is “what I agree to attend to.”<sup>xxviii</sup> Horowitz writes, “These walks re-awakened in me a sense of perpetual wonder in my surroundings – a perceptual skill typically available to experts and the very young (not yet expert in being people).”<sup>xxix</sup> I use various walking exercises in the course to play with sharpening attention to our surroundings and to be mindful of the different ways our senses experience the world around us.

### *Pastoral and wilderness walking*

In theory, public lands are open to all. Public lands – the forests, trails, and wilderness – are owned by all. About this egalitarian principle, Nicholas Kristoff writes,

In contrast to many advanced countries, we have a vast and spectacular publicly owned wilderness, mostly free and available to all. In an age of inequality, the affluent have gated neighborhoods, private schools, backup generators and greater influence on elected officials. But our most awe-inspiring wild places have remained largely a public good to be shared by all, a bastion of equality.<sup>xxx</sup>

Thoreau concurs. In his classic, *Walking*, he declares, “No wealth can buy the requisite leisure, freedom, and independence which are the capital in this profession.”<sup>xxxi</sup> For Thoreau, as a critic of the commodifying tendencies of material civilization – the turning of people and nature into things that become units of exchange – walking is a technique of progressive renewal. Nothing is bought or sold, one’s time isn’t measured according to utility, productivity, or efficiency. It is in this essay that Thoreau famously declares that “in wildness is preservation of the world.”

This is not to say that threats don't lurk from the *privatization* of the wild by early industrial civilization. Thoreau comments, "At present... the best part of the land is not private property; the landscape is not owned, and the walker enjoys comparative freedom. But possibly the day will come when it will be portioned off into so-called pleasure grounds, in which a few will take narrow and exclusive pleasure only."<sup>xxxii</sup> Gros comments on Thoreau's *Walking*, "What he saw... he made his own: he meant that one stores when walking vivid feelings and sunny memories, for the winter evenings. Our treasure, our real property, is the quantity of representations that we have taken in and conserved."<sup>xxxiii</sup> And further, Gros observes, "Thoreau walked not to find himself, but to always be in a position to re-invent himself."<sup>xxxiv</sup> In class, when we discuss how Thoreau thought that part of each school day should include a long walk in order to spend time on the self, many students think this is a great idea and wonder why in so many classes they just sit in desks learning about the world but not themselves in the world. They also begin to wonder why education is so sedentary.

Walking on the land can also generate a deep awareness of history. For Raja Shehadeh, author of *Palestinian Walks*, walking in the Palestinian countryside is a way to keep history alive. Walking the trails of his youth, even under Israeli occupation, brings for him a mix of nostalgia, politics, and bearing witness. Similarly in the Australian aboriginal "songline" tradition, walking connects people to their ancestors. Bruce Chatwin writes in *The Songlines*,

The melodic contour of the song describes the land over which the song passes ... certain phrases, certain combinations of musical notes, are thought to describe the actions of the ancestors' feet. An expert song man ... would count how many times he has crossed a river or scaled a ridge – and be able to calculate where, and how far along, the songline he was ... A musical phrase is a map reference. Music is a memory bank for finding one's way about the world.<sup>xxxv</sup>

One of the aboriginal elders, Nganyinytja, explained the songlines this way:

We have no books; our history was not written by people with pen and paper. It is in the land; the footprints of our Creation Ancestors are on the rocks. The hills and creek beds they created as they dwelled in this land surround us. We learned from our grandmothers and grandfathers as they showed us these sacred sites, told us the stories, sang and danced with us the Tjukurpa (the Dreaming Law). We remember it all; in our minds, our bodies, and feet as we dance the stories. We continually recreate the Tjukurpa.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Examples of rural and wilderness walking in these cases teach students that walking is also a way to discover history and preserve culture. For pre-literate civilizations, walking the landscape is a powerful way to code important stories and myths.

### *Walking, pilgrimage and epic walks*

A Pilgrimage is often a long walk with a spiritual purpose. Most major religions and many spiritual traditions have a version of a pilgrimage, and I want to show students the importance of walking to the world's religions. The Pilgrim, as Gros points out, is a metaphor for the human condition. For the itinerant monks of early Christianity – the Gyrovagues – our condition on earth is a ceaseless journey of wandering and transformation in both body and soul. Christ himself advised disciples to abandon businesses and social positions to humbly walk among the poor. In class we watch a film about the Camino de Santiago in Spain. We also look at The Hajj in Islam, where pilgrims follow the route Muhammed walked.

In the Himalayas, Tibetan Buddhist, Bonpo, Hindu, and Jain pilgrims circumambulate Mt. Kailash, which is said to be the axis mundi or center of the world – Mt. Meru. Four major rivers originate here – the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Indus, and Sutlej. Evidently, Buddhists and Hindus go clockwise, while Bonpos go counter-clockwise. As MacFarlane explains in *The Old Ways: Journeys on Foot*, extreme pilgrimage of the *kora*, which involves prostrations over entire

length of circumambulation whereby pilgrims bend, kneel, lie face down, mark earth with fingers, rise, pray, shuffle forwards to finger marks, and repeat for the length of the journey.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

We look at the famous trails connecting temples on Shikoku island as an important feature of Buddhism pilgrimage in Japan. We also read the 17<sup>th</sup> century haiku poet Basho's classic travelogue through the wild and uncivilized terrain of Northern Honshu in Japan, *A Narrow Road to the Deep North*. To Basho, walking exemplifies the dual nature of experiencing both external and inner worlds simultaneously. He writes, "The past remains hidden in clouds of memory. Still it returned us to memories from a thousand years before. Such a moment is the reason for a pilgrimage: infirmities forgotten, the ancients remembered, joyous tears trembled in my eyes."<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The section on pilgrimage segues into a section on "epic walks." We look at people who have walked across continents, thru-hiked in the USA's major long-distance trails – the PCT, AT, Continental Divide, and PNW trails – and people who walk for various causes, including a paraplegic who walked a marathon with a contraption called an exoskeleton. We encounter an Army vet who walks to raise awareness for PTSD amongst veterans and Canadian teens who walk across the country to call attention to missing and murdered indigenous women. We read about the first documented walk of the Great Wall of China in the early 1980's and Maria Abramovic's art project with her lover in 1988 that involved each walking from different ends of the Great Wall only to break up in the middle. We watch the film *Wild*, featuring Reece Witherspoon, and talk about how her epic walk helped her come to terms with trauma and poor choices made earlier in life. I encourage students to imagine different kinds of epic walks

as an expression of the terrain of human psychology and invite them to think about an epic walk they might like to do someday. See Appendix 7.

*Urban walking , anonymity, subversion*

Urban walking is about being in public space. Solnit insists that while, “Both rural and urban walking has been about freedom and pleasure... but Urban walking has always been a shadier business, easily turning into soliciting, cruising, promenading, shopping, rioting, protesting, skulking, loitering ... activities that hardly have the higher moral tone of nature appreciation.”<sup>xxxix</sup> At the same time, the presence of people, what the urbanist Jane Jacobs calls “eyes on the street,” helps to deter crime.

Though one is visible on an urban walk, walking is also about being lost in the crowd, the shadows, the liminal spaces that cities create. We can leave home to take a walk to get outside of ourselves, to observe, to break free from the subjectivity we typically find comfort in. Virginia Woolf writes, “We are no longer quite ourselves. As we step out of the house on a fine evening between four and six, we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one’s own room. For there we sit surrounded by objects which perpetually express the oddity of our own temperaments and enforce the memories of our own experience.”<sup>xl</sup> In “shedding ourselves” of the familiar, urban walking becomes a form of discovery and connection. Solnit writes, “Cities have always offered anonymity, variety, and conjunction, qualities best basked in by walking.”<sup>xli</sup> Solnit makes good work of this idea of conjunction. Different entities are conjoined in the organic development of a city – businesses, spaces,

cultures, communities. Conjunction is opposed to homogenization, segregation, or gentrification. In a city, like San Francisco – or old San Francisco, pre technological gentrification – “Every building, every storefront, seemed to open onto a different world, compressing all the variety of human life into a jumble of possibilities made all the richer by the conjunctions – Zen centers, Pentecostal churches, tattoo parlors, produce stores, burrito places, movie palaces, dim sum shops.”<sup>xlii</sup> If the rural walker is about deep, unhurried *breathing* of a body in rhythm, the urban walker is interrupted by fragments, open to myriad *visual* and *symbolic* impacts of human culture.

The urban stroller is also subversive. To Gros, unlike the walker or trekker of wide open spaces (Kerouac, Gary Snyder) who has made a “clean break with civilization,” the urban walker is more “ambiguous.”<sup>xliii</sup> This kind of subversion is not opposing but “evading, deflecting, altering with exaggeration.” Urban walking undermines solitude, speed, business flows, consumerism.<sup>xliv</sup> The crowds of modernity are hostile. Everyone is in a hurry, in each other’s way, “transforming everyone into a competitor.”<sup>xlv</sup> In crowds, one is anonymous. This is different from crowds of people who have an identity, a purpose, such as people marching, demonstrating, or displaying a collective will or energy.

At this point I introduce the class to the *flaneur* and *flaneuse*. The flaneur is the modern solitary figure living in public, in the shadows. The flaneur observes urban life but is never quite a part of it. As Gros write, “The flaneur has better things to do: re-mythologize the city, invent new divinities, explore the poetic surface of the urban spectacle.”<sup>xlvi</sup> Walter Benjamin was inspired by Baudelaire’s poetry of urban modernism and the flaneur as cultural figure. Benjamin associates the *flaneur* with leisure, crowds, alienation, detachment, observation,

walking, and the arcades. To Benjamin: “The flaneur goes botanizing on the asphalt.” As Gros writes, “The *flaneur* appeared at a time when the city had acquired enough scale to become a landscape. It could be crossed as if it were a mountain, with its passes, its reversals of viewpoint, its dangers and surprises, too. It had become a forest, a jungle.”<sup>xlvii</sup> As for capitalism, to Benjamin, “capitalism designated the moment when the concept of merchandise extended beyond industrial products, to include art works and people. The mercantilization of the world: everything becomes a consumer product, everything is bought and sold, available on the great market of endless demand. The reign of generalized prostitution, of selling, and selling yourself.”<sup>xlviii</sup> The *flaneur* was there to take in this bewildering spectacle. But by being a walker capable of stepping outside these exchanges, the flaneur offered the possibility of subversion and critique.

Walking is also comically subversive. The Situationist movement encouraged people to create “situations.” One “discipline” was called psychogeography. Guy Debord defined psychogeography as, “(1) The study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.” (2) Diverse activities that raise awareness of the natural and cultural environment around you, (3) Attentive to senses and emotions as they relate to place and environment, (4) Serious fun, (5) often critical of the status quo.”<sup>xlix</sup> Techniques of psychogeography included the *derive*. The *derive* was a kind of wandering stroll that paid close attention to forces of attraction and repulsion of the people and places one encountered on a walk. Other *derives* were more conceptual. Some famous psycho-geographic projects included walking through a city with the map of a different city or drawing a circle on a map, then recording the experience with film,

photos, stream of consciousness, collages. Contemporary psychogeographic projects include\*\*\* The idea was to scramble our ordinary wayfinding to discover something new about the city and ourselves. In my Walking course, students go on several *derives* and are asked to come up with a few of their own. See Part II.

Louise Elkin in *Flaneuse* argues that the perspective of the flaneur has always been that of the solitary *male* wandering the streets. Elkin thinks it important to get images of cityscapes that are not male. This is not easy, for there are challenges for *flaneusing*: it is hard for women to be “invisible” in public the way men are, including the ever present “male gaze” and threats to safety.<sup>1</sup> Of course, being in public space can be hazardous for anyone, and certainly for people due to gender, gender presentation, race, and other features of embodiment. Brent Staples flips this experience around in his classic essay about “walking while black.” He speaks of the racialization of even something as quotidian as walking down the street.

My first victim was a woman – white, well dressed, probably in her early twenties. I came upon her late one evening on a deserted street in Hyde Park, a relatively affluent neighborhood in an otherwise mean, impoverished section of Chicago. As I swung onto the avenue behind her, there seemed to be a discreet, uninflamatory distance between us. Not so. She cast back a worried glance. To her, the youngish black man – a broad six feet two inches with a beard and billowing hair, both hands shoved into the pockets of a bulky military jacket – seemed menacingly close. After a few more quick glimpses, she picked up her pace and was soon running in earnest. Within seconds she disappeared into a cross street.<sup>li</sup>

When a white student of mine who saw this happen to a POC friend as part of a walking exercise in downtown Seattle, the experience of Staples’ walking while black was made real to him in a visceral way.

We also talk about Islamophobia in public space, particularly for Muslim women who wear the hijab. Several students in my class are Muslim and wear the hijab. They have many

stories to tell and the class as a whole is very interested to hear about their personal experiences of discrimination. Bazian writes:

Islamophobia has many manifestations, but one of its most persistent and increasingly aggressive forms is directed at Muslim women since headscarves and clothing act as visible markers. Existing data and studies on Islamophobia point to increasing levels of hostility directed at Muslim women with more violent incidents being experienced. Muslim women bear the brunt of attacks more than Muslim men who can melt into the society by wearing Western clothing and fit into the crowd. Muslim men are a type of Clark Kent in Western society while Muslim women are visible markers of Islam in public.<sup>lii</sup>

One of the walking exercises I ask students to do is to walk with a POC – or with a non-POC if one is a POC – and talk about the racialization of public space. See Appendix 1 for this assignment and Part II for examples of reflections about what this experience was like for students.

Finally, claims to public space have long been associated with democracy and revolution. Despite talk of our new era of Twitter and social media “revolutions,” people still need the existence of public space to embody protest and resistance. Revolutions in the Egypt, Ukraine, Hong Kong, and elsewhere have public spaces that serve as physical and symbolic demands for liberation. Walking protests in the USA post Trump – Women’s March, March for Science, others – still take place in the streets. As Solnit rights, “The democratic and liberatory possibilities of people gathered together in public don’t exist in places where they don’t have space in which to gather.”<sup>liii</sup> At the same time, Horowitz writes that, “Cities are filled with a variety of private and public spaces, spaces where one can enter and spaces where one must be invited into.”<sup>liv</sup> We reflect on this mix of public and private in a city and how walking allows us to experience these differences viscerally.

### *Walking as marching and political expression*

The section on walking and politics focuses on famous marches. We examine historical marches, like the March of the Suffragettes, Gandhi's Salt March, Bataan Death March, Mao's Long March, the March on Washington for civil rights, Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo (Argentina women and mothers for *desaparecidos*), and the 1999 Seattle WTO protests. We also look at contemporary marches such as pride parades, the 2017 Women's march, the March for Science, People's Climate marches (350.org as an organization began as a walk), and Refinery Corridor Healing Walks in the Bay Area.

The class also lightly encounters the political philosophy Deleuze & Guattari's "nomad politics," with its distinction between smooth and striated landscapes.<sup>lv</sup> Smooth "scapes" are where people and critters can move freely, striated are ones that contain natural, social, and political barriers to movement. We connect nomad politics to contemporary global migration issues. We ask how nomad politics relates both to *people* dealing with borders and rising xenophobia, but also *critters* dealing with fragmented habitats and island biogeography.

### *Walking, environment and urban planning*

This portion of the course looks at city design that incorporates walking into urban planning. To be a pedestrian in the city can be unsafe due to poor infrastructure (and also because of inattentiveness due to staring at phones. We talk about the Dutch "naked street" concept. Streets are safer if we get rid of distracting signs and force people to look at each other... walker to walker, walker to driver, driver to driver. Evidence that cars, bikers, and walkers are safer under such conditions and traffic moves smoothly.<sup>lvi</sup> We watch a TED talk by Jeff Speck about walkable cities and study the Walk Score that rates cities on their walking

infrastructure. The City Repair in Portland, OR works to rehabilitate intersections and make space for communities in intersections formerly dangerous to pedestrians.

The main event in this section, however, is a visit to class from John Stewart, VP of Feet First Seattle/Walkable Washington. This non-profit pedestrian advocacy groups lobbies the city and state on behalf of pedestrian issues. Feet First advocates for connections between different modes of transportation, conducts walking audits of certain neighborhoods, supports walking ambassadors that connects people to community, strategizes about safe routes to schools, and gets young people involved with mapping walking routes and telling stories about street culture. Students prepare for his visit to class by studying up on Feet First's activities and composing questions for the Q&A that follows John Stewart's presentation. Having someone whose work involves pedestrian rights visit our class is a treat. It demonstrates to students that it's even possible to get employment in some of the issue areas that intersect with the theme of walking. They find this somewhat surprising, as all the messaging they're getting from their parents and the wider culture is that they'll only get jobs if they pursue STEM or technical fields.

It is good to collect things, but it is better to go on walks. – Anatole France

In every walk with nature one receives more than one seeks. – John Muir

Even a child was in love with the world after he got a new pair of shoes. – Flannery O’ Connor

There’s a difference between knowing the Path and walking the Path. – The Matrix

The journey of 1,000 miles begins with one step. – Lao Tsu

## Part II

### The Art & Politics of Walking – Assignments and Student Work

This section of the paper documents student responses to the various walking exercises done throughout the course. Many of the walks in these assignments simply ask students to pay attention to their surroundings and the experience of a walk. But intention is a close cousin of attention. Other walks are therefore more intentional and employ some sort of technique or goal. The assignments that generated student writing include, the Walking Journal (Appendix 1), Campus Walk (Appendix 2), Thich Nhat Hahn exercise (Appendix 3), Psychogeography derive exercise (Appendix 4), Moods & Energies walk (Appendix 5), Sensorial Walk (inspired by David Abram) – Appendix 6, and the STAR Library and Group Project (Appendix 7), and the Critical Book Review (Appendix 8). Each of these exercises can be found as appendixes the end of the paper.

In what follows, I’ll document student responses according to eight broad categories. These categories are an attempt to classify responses from written feedback about doing walking practices in the course. The categories include: **Self-knowledge, campus knowledge, wonder & astonishment, connections to others, memories, coping with stress & change, identity and diversity, city life.** Obviously, student responses often touched on several

categories simultaneously, so it is hard to code these categories with precision. Also, student responses haven't been edited for clarity or grammar.

## 1) Self-knowledge

*This category captures the sense in which walking allowed time for oneself. Many students nowadays rarely experience solitude. What little time they have between events is often filled by scrolling through their phones. Moreover, nearly all of my students go to school and work full time. The opportunity to slow down, break from the ordinary, or see a bigger picture of themselves are themes I saw across various exercises. It was also enjoyable to see some students becoming nascent peripatetic philosophers.*

### **Student responses**

Every time I noticed how fast I walked, I slowed down and that also slowed down my breathing. Every deep breath I let out made me feel like I was letting out all the stress I had for the day. It felt like my mind, breathing, and steps were all connected and if one of them was going too fast, all three of them would be going at the same pace. Ashley, Hahn's Walking exercise

It was nice to walk for enjoyment instead of rushing to the next destination. The longer I walked the clearer my head was, I knew exactly how I felt, the mood I was in and where I was going. This walk made me feel calm and less stress about my college assignments that I hadn't even begun or even looked at for that matter. It gave me a chance to plan out where I was going to start. This walk also gave me a chance to step away from my electronics and disconnect for the cyber world and reconnect with nature. Georgia, 1

I feel carefree and enjoy the peace and security of being alone. I don't understand why others always say that they have to have friends. I only knew that I am fine to be solo. Didn't feel any discomfort. I only felt that I was free and could do whatever I wanted. I won't be disturbed by everything outside, immersed in your own world. Gary, 2 (student from China)

I had time to catch up with old friends that I haven't seen in a long time. At first I walked really fast, wishing to get it over it, but once I calmed myself down I took my time walking at a generally slow pace. Once the walk concluded after forty five minutes I felt very relaxed feeling ready for what the world is going to throw at me. Walking helped me calm down and develop plans for the week. I'm really enjoying these weekly walks feeling at ease with myself, whenever I have a stressful week. Just pushing myself to go outside whenever times get hard can help me relieve stress, instead of being lazy. Jarin, 2

Overall I have learned to enjoy most walks nowadays no matter where I'm at. Any walk I take now just helps me take a breather from the work I get from school. I also do notice that on these walks I am more observant of my surroundings as well. Hopefully after this class I am able to continue the habit of just walking around at least once a week to help just take a breather from things that are going on in my life. This walk in specific was nice because it was after my midterms so if anything it was relaxing letting me breathe before I start to stress about my finals that are coming up in the coming weeks. Pablo, 8

Another thing I noticed was that many people were staring at their phones as they were going from store to store. It seemed to me as if people tended to be more absorbed with what was on their phones than their surroundings. I frequently saw people look up from their phones just to make sure they didn't run into anyone, and after they passed them, they would go back to staring at their phone and continue to walk. This happened to me as well when I was walking past some of the stores. Experiencing this made me feel oddly alone, even though I was surrounded by many people. It made me think about how often we as people can tend to be absorbed by what is going on in our own lives that we forget to pay attention to the people and environment that surrounds us. Going into this walk, I didn't expect to contemplate something like feeling alone. Austin, 8

Being a student at UW will bring what into my life was one of the questions I had brought up while reflecting. Walking had allowed me to see that we as humans are complex and simple at the same time. Each individual carries their knowledge of the world and how their environment impacted on them. Humans have been walking since the time of the first human, yet after centuries of modern technology evolutionizing, we still are the bipedal species that was put onto the Earth's grounds. Other than my reflection on myself and nature alike, I did not encounter and strangers or walk with someone. This was a solitary reflection, which fit hand in hand when walking in the rain. While on my around this forest, I finally exited the small natural environment to a built, man-made, full of civilization environment. A large Costco took the entire block with dozens of retailers, gas stations, restaurants, and home improvement stores surrounding it. This made me reflect on the difference of untouched land versus bustling city land, where civilians spend most of their lives. Overall, I believe this walk in the rain was most reflecting out of all my previous walking journals. This walk allowed me to understand the nature of our kind, and why we were as simple, but complex creatures that change every single day. Numan, 9

## 2) Campus knowledge

*The campus footprint at my school is relatively small. But it is a "commuter school." The vast majority of students do not live on campus and zoom in from the conjunction of two freeways that sit right at the edge of campus above its famous wetlands. There are relatively few places on campus for students to hang out, and even fewer places to eat. As a result, students often don't know about parts of campus that aren't part of an efficient route between car, class, and a few other places. For first year-students in their first quarter of instruction, a new campus is already intimidating. Walking exercises that permitted students to explore the campus and discover something new. This helped some students to absorb student life as an observer, investigate labs, classrooms, professor's offices, and become familiar on their own with where things exist on campus. Some students report that the exercises helped them envision themselves and their pathways through college in the future. The embodied walks through campus helps to put their own plans for college into provisional perspective. It also gave them insights into their fellow students and how others seemed to be coping with stress.*

### **Student responses**

I was left more knowledgeable of this place. I was beginning to familiarize myself with the rooms and could navigate throughout easily. From the big bright colors of the ARC, to the quiet and peaceful library, these many areas all were unique and served their different purposes. Brandon,  
Psychogeography walk

To familiarize myself more with the campus, I went on a psychogeography exercise walk. First, before going on this walk I thought it was important to understand what psychogeography is. I learned that it's the awareness of the environment around you and how you feel in that environment. While walking, I focused on where I was walking and why. With just wondering around, certain things pulled me in... This exercise not only made me accept the school I hope to be spending the next 3 years in, but it made me feel accepted. I had worked hard to get here and now I see that I fit in here. This was a very calming experience. I noticed that every place that pulled me in had one thing in common, each place I went on this walk was an adventure that I never really thought about in high school. Georgia, PsychoG

I noticed that I walked the path that had the least amount of people. I guess that has to do with what I prefer when I walk. Me and my partner realized that we both like isolated and narrow pathways. When I walked past the beach volleyball area and the basketball court, I saw that nobody was there, and the sidewalk was sort of in a way that forced me and my partner to go straight since there were barriers preventing us from walking in different directions. This seemed a little more pleasant to me because it helped my body gain a constant rhythm while I was walking, so it made my mind think less about movement and had me focus more on my mind, and things going on in my head, and also my surrounding environment. The places that I did not feel comfortable in was the parts with a lot of people and cars. I guess my body felt uneasy due to the constant change in direction due to people walking past you and also cars turning in front of you. This caused my mind to think less and have some short term stress over the smallest things going on in front of me. So walking next to people and in populated areas caused stress, while narrow pathways and quiet and isolated areas created more creativeness in my mind and more peacefulness. Jugadh, PsychoG

As I walked around the Bothell campus, spaces that drew me in were mostly aesthetically pleasing like the W at the front entrance and the glass windows of the makerspace. Maybe it was because I was in the headspace of interior designing. It is just very pleasing to me. I began to critic the makerspace sign and thought it would look much better if it was in block letters on the outside. The overall architecture of the building was somewhat okay, but I felt brown and yellow do not go together. I headed into the only classroom big enough to sit 200 people, as I look around I noticed the layout was pretty impressive, it almost felt like some of the classes at University of Washington Seattle. I turned around and noticed that there weren't many places to eat here either. They also did not have very many options on what to eat, the only restaurant was Subway but what if I didn't feel like eating Subway? I would have had to go out by car to some other restaurant and I cannot drive yet. I was thoroughly repulsed. As a food lover, this was really disappointing to me. Maahera, PsychoG

This time I was compelled to head towards the UW2 building. I don't know why but there was something drawing me towards the middle of the two ominous large UW buildings. Something about walking in between large structures created by other people is a humbling experience. You think about how small you are compared to things such as these which are created by the teamwork and money of so many people. Thinking about this makes you respect the collective mindset of society in a way because of what we can achieve when we work together. I was then drawn in towards the library because of the presence of so many people and the small but inviting doorway. I was intrigued by the things on the wall and saw that they were video games. Then I walked around the library in a circle around the shelves and thought how each person had their own little personal space bubble which was a force of repulsion right next to all the comfy seats which were forces of attraction. It is the new force of these attractions that decides where I go. Then after heading down the aisle toward the computer area my timer went off, so I began writing my experience. Ethan L, PsychoG

By the end of my walk, I felt like I walked around the whole school and I was aware that I wanted to explore places people never went. I was attracted to the wetlands, the empty hallways, the fields. These places gave me time to fully take in the world without any distractions. Before all my walking exercises, I was scared to be alone and consciously aware of things I wanted to ignore but giving it the chance it makes me at peace with myself and with the world around me. Ashley, PsychoG

I'll admit this is not the first time I've gone people watching (nor will it be the last). Behavior is just so fascinating to observe. I found that a lot of people seemed busy and had somewhere to be. As I walked out of the classroom to do this assignment, I immediately started observing people. I found that a lot of people here seems to be busy and or preoccupied with something they had to do. A lot of people here give off a stressed out energy to me. I mean, that would make sense at a college, and not everyone is exactly like that, some people did give off a joyful sort of energy, unfortunately I feel like they were the minority. I think overall this reminded me that friends are a good thing to have. Ethan S, moods & energies

Overall, a main takeaway that I got from this exercise was that the students are so busy and preoccupied with their lives that they don't even have the time to look around and smile, or maybe even interact with other students. Maybe the stress that college brings to a student causes them to have a tunnel vision and only focus on the future and worry about certain things such as their classwork. Jugadh, moods & energies

### 3) **Wonder & astonishment,**

*This category captures fragments of wonder and astonishment as students tune in to aspects of nature, beauty, and themselves as they heightened their perception and attention.*

#### **Student responses**

It's crazy that I lived my whole life, walking damn near every day, yet never gave walking a moment of my time. And I think back to what the professor was saying about how walking is everywhere. It really is. Not only does mostly all humans perform the act but, it plays a significant role in all aspects of life. Ryan, 1

After going on this walk, I realized how refreshing watching the sun rise was. I have not watched the sun rise in a while and this experience allowed me to see nature's beauty once again. This walk was the first activity I did during the day. The walk helped me wake up and get prepared for the day. When I began the walk, I was tired and wanted to go back to bed. After the walk I was awakened and ready for school. I mostly paid attention to the sun and the clouds around the sun during the walk. I was more focused on them than the trees and shrubs around me. Overall this walk in the morning allowed me to wake up and enjoy nature's beauty while being prepared for the day. After this experience I definitely would consider another walk in the morning to watch the sunrise. Ryan M, 8

Sunsets are really fascinating, yet no one really pays much attention to them anymore. Everyone is always doing something, there seems to be no time for most people to observe a simple sunset. I also don't think anyone takes the time to consider what a sunset is. It's the end of the earth's rotation, the sun's light being shown slowly on another part of our planet. I considered this as I walked down the street. It put things in perspective. We live on a spinning rock that is also spinning around a ball of gas

and without that ball of gas, we would cease to exist. Thinking about this kind of thing really makes a lot of our daily tasks seem trivial. Work seems almost strange once you consider what the universe really is. I was definitely locked into strange philosophical thinking on this walk, but I don't think that is a bad thing by any means. Ethan S, 6

Being in Seattle it was very loud and there were a lot of others walking right around us. It was nice to see my sister after a few weeks of her being gone. We talked about this walking class and how she finds it unique and like no other class she has ever heard of. She attends the University of Washington Seattle and doesn't think they offer a class like this, there. She thinks that this class is a good way to step away from school work and have a chance to breathe and step away from school work and relax. I thought it as interesting that she saw it the same way I did. As we walked, we watched all the other people around us. Somewhere with friends and family and others were alone on their phones texting and walking. A little while into the walk I noticed that my sister and I have the same. Everyone walks a little different, but it seemed like she walked in the exact pattern and way I walked! Knowing that we a sister, I still found it weird that we walked the same when we barely even look related and have completely different personalities. I find it so interesting that almost everyone has a different walk, but we all know "Walk" as the same thing. Trying not to freeze completely we ended our walk a little early for some tea and hot chocolate at a near buy coffee shop. My favorite way to end cold November walks. Georgia, 8

I was walking in bare feet, which was different from my other walks, and felt much better. The cold feeling of the grass rejuvenated my mood, as I smelled the fresh air. Where the garden ends, a scenic landscape begins with the most breathtaking view of Mount Rainier and trees. It was as if time stood still in that exact moment, in that exact space. I stood mesmerized for a few minutes; the view never ceased to amaze me. I couldn't be more grateful that this was my home because now I could see the scenery as much as I could. Maahera, 3

Each of my shoes has a story which creates an illusion that I went back in time and are walking with them. I felt like I was walking into a wardrobe that took me to Narnia. Numan, 4

Overall, it was a great experience to observe other people and assume what going on with their lives. Eric, moods & energies

This weekend my mom and I decided to take a walk together in our local park. At first I was really intimidated to take a walk with her, but it turned out really well. It was sunny this weekend, so we got to enjoy the weather together. Ever since fall quarter started we never got to see each other because of our different schedules. Although we live in the same house it was a rare occurrence that we would cross paths. The talk I had with my mom and my surroundings gave me a sense of peace in my chaotic college life. The smell of the new bark in the playground, the leaves on the ground that changed colors, the radiating sun on my skin with the crisp cold air and talking with my mom calm all my nerves. I got the chance to catch up with my mom after these long couple of weeks. She told me a lot about her work and we just talked about my classes. It was eye opening to just have a talk with her because we never talk about our lives as much as we should that's why I was so intimidated going into this walk. This was my favorite walk so far because of the experience I had with my mom and the surroundings we enjoy. This season is my favorite season because of the leaves changing and the cold weather. Ashley, 6

#### 4) **Connection to others,**

*This category documents important connections, or reconnections, students had with family, friends, and even strangers.*

### ***Student responses***

After the walk with my sister, my mind was clear and relaxed. I think this walk gave me the opportunity to slow down and really consider what is important in life. So often I tend to go off and do things for myself and for myself, that I forget all the things my family does for me as well as things that may be bothering them in their own lives. After this walk, I feel like I have a better appreciation not only for my sister, but for my whole family. Austin, 1

As I was walking down this path, a car pulled up to me and the passenger seat window rolled down. It was a male and a female who I assumed were husband and wife. The driver (the male) asked me if I was Habesha (Ethiopian/Eritrean), and I replied yes. He asked if I live around here because he didn't think that any other Habesha has lived in the area. I told him that I live on the other side of 148th. We talked a little bit about school and other things before they headed off. I began thinking of this interaction as I continued walking and how it really isn't considered weird to talk to a stranger like that due to us both being Habesha. It's kind of common courtesy to say hi to any Habeshas you see around. But it struck me that they stopped driving just to converse with me. I thought I was crazy how all that just happened out of the ordinary just because I took that turn. Anteneh, 1

I walked down my neighborhood in Bothell from class while facetimeing my mom. I wanted to walk with a family member but since I moved to Washington state purely for University, I didn't bring any family members with me. This walk was required but my family lives halfway across the world in Japan. I chose this route because I wanted to take the long way home, and since I wanted to show my mom the beautiful autumn leaves. In Okinawa, there are two seasons, Summer and colder summer. She was amazed by all the different colored leaves and how colorful the scene was. It was a sunny and warm day, so I felt a lot happier. I could smell the leaves and in the neighborhood, multiple houses were cooking some delicious smelling foods. I occasionally had to stop because my mom wanted to see the scene... many times. I walked pretty fast, and on my walk, I talked to my mom about my stress and the mishaps in my life. It was nice hearing my mom's insight and advice. I thought I wouldn't miss it coming to University, but I felt back in my place and at home again. I walked fairly fast and a lot of my thoughts cleared up because I could talk to my mom about it. I walked with an empty mind and light heart since I was finally talking to my mother again. We talked about my classes, how I'm getting settled into University, and how to handle all the stress coming my way. Starting the walk, I was in a nonchalant mood, but seeing an incoming facetime call from my mother instantly brought my day up. I realized that I'll always be able to turn to my mother and she'll always catch me when I fall. It's nice coming back to this reassuring mindset that everything will be okay. I've been needing that for a while, and I finally feel like I can tackle things one at a time and absorb the environment around me. Rebecca, 6

So, for the Thanksgiving vision of walking journal. I decide to walk with my family. However, because my parents are all in China, I want to use Skype as a communication tool between us. The path I chosen is the way I going to Safeway, which is an old path I familiar with. I am basically not talking to my parents when I in the United States. Even there we are chatting; the chat would be about credit cards and booking flight tickets. Because it was Thanksgiving, I talked to my father about shopping. My dad is not a person who likes to buy things, so the conversation about shopping is basically he is asking what I brought over the black Friday. He told me that on Black Friday, buy more shoes, pants and clothes, because it is difficult to buy clothes that fit my size in China. I also agree with this point. We also talked

about the driver's license. I don't have a driver's license yet, but my dad is eager to get a driver's license. Because he believes this is useful. Of course, I am not ready to take the exam now, because I am a bit busy. This makes him angry (maybe), but he also understands that the first quarter of the university is difficult. Gary, 9

This week I made the conscious decision to walk somewhere rather than drive... During this time span I was living on my own when I was only 16. I am forever in debt to RJ because he showed me kindness in my darkest hour. And now that I reflect on it, I feel that him showing me kindness allowed myself to embrace and show others kindness. During this time in my life, every day was a struggle. I was utterly lost in the superficiality of myself and society. I was consumed by all the worldly things that really have no meaning. I remember so vividly the love that was and is present in my relationship with RJ. This walk helped me remember the importance of that stage in my life, for me to become who I am today. This walk also helped me recognize and appreciate the people I have in my life every day. Ryan, 9

For this walk I walked with my dad. I see my dad on a frequent basis, but I don't really just go for a walk with him, we are always on our way to some sort of activity. My walk with my dad was not only enjoyable but gave me an opportunity to catch up with him. My parents got divorced when I was about 3. They got along pretty well throughout the rest of my childhood, which was good for me, but I have never gotten to spend as much time with my dad as with my mom. My dad has had a series of a jobs and cars throughout the years and sometimes I forget to ask him about what's going on in his life... It was nice just having some time with my dad with no activity to rush to. I forget that my dad has been through a lot, at least now I am living a little closer to him than before. Ethan L, 5

We didn't have a destination and this walk was more of a stroll since Z (her friend's dog), stopped every few steps to either mark her territory or sniff someone else's. This walk helped the both of us to slow down and connect with each other. We both left our phones at home and gave each other our full attention. Georgia, 2

We went to take a walk somewhere in Woodinville at an abandoned gulf course. The entire field was amazing. Even though it was very close to the city, we couldn't see a building in sight. My friend told me a bunch of stories he had in this place. He told me that the man made hills were great for sledding, the tall grass in the summer was pretty to walk through. The weather that day was very warm and welcoming. It felt nice to be able to be brought to this place because I really got to know this person. He cared a lot about this place, and I loved seeing it for the first time. I imagined all the stories that he talked about, by the end of the walking trip I thought I knew the place. This walk was more relaxed and slower compared to my first walk because I knew what I wanted to do and having someone there with me was a lot more comforting. I really enjoyed it. Ashley, 2

While walking this path, I did multiple things to keep aware that I was in fact walking with a purpose. I took deep breaths at a slow manner. I also changed my posture and walking style to be more straight up and not sway side to side. I also indulged into different conversations with my brother. I talked to him about his high school experience so far and how he was holding up at home. We also had a deep talk about our favorite video game, Fortnite. After completing this walk, I reflected on it. I thought about the city of Shoreline and in what ways it was similar or different from other cities I have walked in. I also noticed a couple of restaurants that I haven't noticed before. Numan, 2

My mother and I were discussing her autoimmune disease which has been very problematic. Although recently she had gotten some new Brooks and medication which allowed her to go on walks again. Me and her both were grateful to be able to just be walking again because of my sprained ankle and a

hairline fracture. My ankle did hurt a little bit a couple of times; however it is slowly improving. Ethan S,  
3

During my walk this past weekend, I got the opportunity to walk to a grocery store with my grandmother who recently just came here from India. I went on the walk because my mom was cooking my favorite Punjabi dish which is called "phao bhaji". It basically is a sandwich with mashed potatoes and vegetables of all kinds. This walk was different in the fact that I had to slow down my pace in order to walk with my grandmother, who has obviously lost some speed on her steps. It did create for less of a rush, and I felt like I focused more on the nature around me and also had the opportunity to talk frequently, in contrast to the walk I did last weekend with my friend, since both of us were pacing ourselves at a fairly high pace. I got the opportunity to talk to my grandmother about how things are back in India. She told me that it was the same boring life back in India and that nothing exciting is ever going on. She said the difference between India and America was that people are always busy here (similar to what we talked about in class) and that although it is good, you always have to make sure you have quality time to spend with your family. We continued our talks about what we've both been up to since our time away from each other. I also asked her how different it is walking in India compared to the United States. The first thing she said was that over here, not many people walked on the sidewalks, so there is the idea that you can just walk at whatever pace you want. She said that in India the sidewalks are always packed, and there are many things on the ground that cause a roadblock, so she said that she has to walk at a set pace and that she has to always look around at the ground to make sure that she doesn't accidentally walk over something. In America, I realize that we have the opportunity to take in the nature around us and focus on the more important things around us due to less distractions. Overall, this walk was really good for my mind and my relationship with my grandmother. Jugadh, 4

We walked over to the general area where it used to be and talked about our time in fifth grade. Owen and I caught up during the walk. We talked about college and the future. We also talked about our high school days since we went to different high schools. Owen also talked about the company he wanted to work at. He told me that he really wanted to work at Boeing mainly because his dad worked there. Over the course of the walk, Owen and I never encountered any strangers. The walk was quiet and peaceful. After the walk, I felt happy and refreshed. I was able to connect with a friend I haven't seen in a long time which made me feel good. The walk itself also helped me calm down and refresh my mind. Overall the walk was a very positive experience and allowed me to reconnect with an old friend. Ryan B, \*

For this journal entry I wanted to discuss the walk that I took along with my cousins around our neighborhood after our dinner. We had such a fulfilling and joyful Thanksgiving that evening, majority of our family members attended, we had great food, and everyone was genuinely happy. It was the first time in a long time we had seen so many of our cousins and family members until that day. I could tell from my mother's eyes as she looked afar she was so happy and thankful to be seeing everyone. After our meal we are so full and desperately needed to walk it off and get some fresh air. I mentioned my walking class and the need to have a walking journal every week and they were all so interested in hearing more and being a part of one. Thus we all went together and walked along the neighborhood and started to not only discuss this class but as well as all my other classes and how my school life was going. I mentioned how my first quarter could've been so much better without all the issues back home, but I learned through the words of my professors in both my math and walking class that life will come at us it how we handle it that makes the impact, nothing else. Through the walk we all started to reflect on the end portion of this year and the goals we have set for next year. Discussing the upcoming year was so motivating. I was so ready to move on and take my next classes because I knew I was better prepared now, and I knew how to handle small problems when they come up. This quarter was almost

like a prep-quarter as a freshman so that I could get a feel for the real deal and what was actually up next. Luley, 9

## 5) Memories

*This category records some insights students had when reflecting on their past, be it past selves, relationships, or places.*

### **Student responses**

After stepping into the forest and walking on the trail, I immediately felt nostalgia. I remember the cold mornings with multiple layers on my body walking to school, stepping over twigs and fallen tree trunks. The last time I walked on this trail was 2 to 3 years. I stopped walking through the forest when I received my driver's license. After that, I always took my family's van to school. 5 minutes into the walk, I encountered a stranger walking with her dog. I walked by saying hello and complimenting the dog, even though I do not like dogs that much. Numan, 3

I was not fond of change because I have had to change many times in my life, and no matter how cliché it sounds, change IS necessary, and you don't have to like it. I started remembering about eating at the Dominoes by there for the first time and riding the bus home and wished things could be the same again. Nostalgia for me, is sometimes a bitter enemy, I thought as I walked slowly and steadily. I longed to visit my old high school again and then I settled upon a strange feeling that there would come a better time for that, and that day was not day. I smiled as I remembered the fun times with my best friend, our jokes, and drama. And then came the dark thoughts, I don't want to share them too deeply but the immense sadness which overwhelmed brought a tear to my eyes. How could something so joyful also bring that much pain? Maahera, 6

It was so weird to walk in that neighborhood again. It was very foggy, and I loved it. The fog made me take things in one at a time and look at my surroundings. I wandered the area and didn't have a destination. Walks without destinations are the best walks to me because the purpose is solely on the journey. When I went further into my walk, I began to feel nostalgic. All my friends that I lived so close to, moved all across the country for college. Memories of us just walking and talking was all coming back to me and it made me super emotional. It was crazy to think that it wasn't so long ago that I was on this road not knowing that this would be our last times together. All the rustling leaves on the ground, pumpkins rested on porches, sign I saw, all reminded me of certain memories I had. Ashley, 4

Over the weekend, my cousin and I decided walk around our old high school in Kirkland named Lake Washington High School. Looking back on my high school, I realized this is where I made my best memories and friends at. Especially all the wins and losses on the turf field for lacrosse. Since the school was closed, we couldn't walk inside so, before we started our workout on the field, we walked around the campus and the track. Coming into this walk, I felt like I was in high school again because it has only been about four months since I graduated. It's crazy to think that I'm already in college making it seem high school was a blur... My walk was full of memory flashbacks while walking around the campus because high school had such a big impact on my life. My cousin and I walked a normal pace where our breathing was kept calm and relaxed before our workout. I feel like walking and clearing my mind before a workout helps me focus and give my fullest effort on what I need to get done. Quang, 4

A bit further into my walk, the feeling finally hit, so I stopped and looked around me, and saw the dreary sky. I was on my own as well which only made me feel more alone. The coldness and darkness (relatively to daytime) was not only physically surrounding me, but mentally plaguing my mind and thoughts as well. During this time, I reflected on a lot of the bad things I have done in my life, and I kept on asking myself "What was the point of doing that?" The answer usually always being for my own personal gain. I also thought about the times people had done me wrong, and typically it was for their own personal gain too. It got me thinking, why do we as humans have the tendency to believe we deserve everything we get/have on top of more? Were we always like this? Is this some sort of survival instinct? Is it just in our nature to be like this? At the end of my walk, I would say I had a more realistic POV on Homo sapiens, not all of us are out here to harm one another or this world, but the idea that some people hold, that human beings are the greatest thing to ever happen to this world is nothing but a fallacy. Abraham, 6

This week I took a journey to my local beach. The closest beach to my home is a beach called Mukilteo Beach. This beach has a lighthouse, dock, Ivar's, playground, picnic area and beach area. This week I went by myself. I feel that my walk actually started before I was walking. While I was driving there, I had a thought about how it's crazy that I was driving a car to the Mukilteo beach. I remembered countless times where I walked, took a bus or got a ride from someone. But now, I drive a car. I feel that the differences of me when I didn't have a car to when I had a car are so vast in so many facets. It's crazy how I'm the same exact person in the same exact body but at completely different stages of life and mindsets. It was pretty amusing to think about all the trivial reasons why I've been to that beach before. It made me miss a part of my life that I'll never get back. The freedom of having no cares or responsibilities. But, as that part of my life closes a new one opens. One that I've been preparing my whole life for, I just didn't know it until a year or two ago. I hit the sand and was flooded by nostalgia. Not distant nostalgia but recent and intense nostalgia. The sun was setting on a clear day and I was relaxing at the beach. This situation flooded my conscious thoughts with memories of my recent trip to Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. I had so many mind-numbing feelings of ecstasy on my trip, especially around sunsets and the beach. I hold so much value on those experiences because I think it is the first time I felt that I was exactly where I was supposed to be. In those moments, I didn't want to be anywhere else, doing anything besides what I was doing. It helped me realize the reality of my life and the ecstatic joy that comes with waking up alive anew every independent day. Ryan, 8

It was surprising to me that the stream was exactly like I had remembered. I thought since that I had aged a lot more since I had visited the stream it would have lost its sparkling effect on me. I have never been more wrong in my life. As a matter of fact, after going on this walk, I'm going to make it at least a monthly occurrence where I spend a little bit of time reminiscing at the stream. Chase, 10

## 6) **Coping with stress**

Students have all sorts of stressors. How they deal with them will determine whether stress incites positive changes or negative behaviors. Students report that walking helped stress response in various ways.

### *Student responses*

Our conversation flowed like lava. Prior to the walk I was completely drained; I had just taken a chemistry test and a calculus at school about an hour before my walk. The walk and conversation gave me a nice mental reset and set the tone for a great weekend. After around 45 minutes of briskly walking the dog around the neighborhood, we finally had completed the route. I was surprised by how much fun I genuinely had during this walk. After this walk I feel as if I have fully realized how beneficial weekly walks can be. Walking is simple yet revitalizing. It is a peaceful way to calm the mind of any negatives like stress and anger. Chase, 3

I chose to walk with one of my new friends around campus to have a completely new and raw experience. Neither of us know the campus nor do we really know each other that well for that matter. If I sit here and write about how smoothly our conversation went the whole time, it simply wouldn't be true, I'm naturally an awkward/shy person, so a 1 on 1 conversation with someone I don't know very well is not where I shine. The conversation was rough in the beginning but as we walked more and more I began calming down, which allowed for our exchanges to become longer and formulate into a meaningful conversation. The topic we spoke about which I enjoyed the most was about our futures, I was genuinely speaking from my mind and it must have affected him since the next day he told me he was planning on possibly changing majors, due to our conversation. I'm glad I was able to help see my friend through a new perspective and got to know him better. Abraham, 2

As I walked, I had no thoughts running through my head. All I took in was the beautiful scene that I couldn't believe was real. I never take advantage of the sun setting or rising because it was normal to me. I shouldn't have taken advantage of how wonderful peaceful it is to just walk and appreciate all my surroundings. I really love the Pacific Northwest; it is so beautiful. My pace was very slow so I could process everything. Everyone I passed would greet me with a smile and it is so refreshing to have that kind of interaction with strangers now. You don't see drivers just smile at you when they pass you or make eye contact. By the end of this walk, my mood completely changed. I wasn't stressed out anymore and my mind was clear. I felt like I released all the stress I had built up by just walking for fifteen minutes. Ashley, 3

Walking helped me plan out my Wednesday before Thanksgiving, when I have to go to school, come back home, start baking some cake then decorate it at a class. The walk made me feel a bit better and more relaxed about school and everything that is happening, but I am still scared about what might happen still. For some reason the cool, crisp air of fall always smelled nice, like the smell of it raining, and it has always helped me relax. Taylena

Before going on this walk, I was in a relatively bad mood. I had just taken a calculus test a few hours prior to the walk, and all I could think about were the stupid mistakes that I thought I had made and how that would affect my grade. But, while I was walking, my mind had started to clear up. The math test slowly faded out of my brain, and I was no longer worrying. It really surprises me how effective a walk can be. One of the most important things I've learned from this walk and the many others that I have taken for this class is that they really do help soothe the mind and allow for mental relaxation. College is a huge jump up from high school, with the difficulty being much higher. I would have to say that these weekly walks have truly helped me a lot in coping with the difficulty of school and the tremendous workload that is given. Chase, 7

I loved seeing the beautiful scenery around me; the little creek that flows through the whole trail, the different species of plants that makes the trail so unique, and the smell of fresh rain in the woods. All these things allowed me to relax and throw all my problems and stresses away. It felt as though I took all

those issues and crumpled them into a ball and threw it into a trash can. Undoubtedly, I should go on more nature walks to destress from the real world and find some peace within myself. Annabelle, 5

I had to walk home and prove to my parents that I was independent and could do it myself. They were angry that I was dependent on them for driving from and to work. This threw me into a rage, and I set of walking 13 miles home by myself. I was walking on bare road and I could feel cars driving away like 3 inches away from me... Every second, a car could be put on the road and those emissions cause ocean levels to rise, and greenhouse gases to form. I am a huge climate change believer and supporter, so this sounded terrible to me. I felt that as a human civilization we were going backwards. I wanted the natural environment of the Earth to be just as it was. I close lights at home when they are not in use, I reuse or recycle, and don't litter. All these thoughts emerged in my mind and I ended up actually walking 13 miles home and felt so accomplished, just like Reese Witherspoon's character in Wild. And I also got a clearer realization as to why she did as well after that. Mahera, 8

The walk helped me realize that taking things at my own pace will not only help me in the long run but will ease the pressure off my shoulders mentally as well. I realized my life is in my control, related to how I had control over where I was going in this walk in the trail. I can stop at any moment, turn back at any moment, and walk at any pace I want to. This walk helped me open my eyes to taking matters into my own hands and allowing myself to break things down to tackle as I go on. Rebecca, 7

Overall, thinking back on this walk with my friend, I am reminded how important it is to do what makes yourself happy. Sometimes in life we get caught up doing things that we think are going to make us successful, but we forget the primary reason behind it should be to make ourselves happy. I hope that when my friend moves back to Seattle she will be in a happy state of mind and do whatever it is that will make her happy. Austin, 10

When I was walking through the field, I started to think about why I was taking this walk and thought about all the previous nine walks that I took when attending B-Core. Each individual walk meant something unique to me that is indistinguishable from one another. From the first walk I was skeptical on how these walks would treat me, but at the end of it all, I now know that I've grown as a person from taking these walks on my own. I've learned to appreciate the value of being patient in a rapidly changing world, where there are constant demands from each individual, but most importantly I learned to be comfortable with myself. Connor, 10

In the last walking journal, I choose to redo my first walk and compare what went through my mind from then and to now... Comparing my mindsets from the beginning and end of the walking journals, I have become more observant and cautious of my walking habits such as, form, pace, breath, arm swing, talking and walking, and more. During this walk I rethought about my theory of which ever arm swings more is your dominant hand, I found it to be false because the more people I asked it came to the opposite hand is the hand that swings more when you walk based off asking people which hand was there dominant. Daniel, 10

## **7) Identity and diversity**

*This category captures a sense of danger and vulnerability some students felt when going on walks. Also, questions of identity emerged as students observed themselves being observed by others in part because of their outward appearance, ethnicity, or clothing choices.*

### **Student responses**

Today, I had to walk for about 30 minutes home alone and I never feared such a thing so much. It was just as I got off the bus, which was also my first ever bus ride; I noticed that the moment I stepped onto the sidewalk I had taken on such a huge responsibility which was to be my own 'walking buddy'. I began to notice small details like the way I walked and how I lay my arms by my side but then once I see a car drive by I put them in my pockets. (Luul, 1)

I realized this neighborhood was very quiet and we were occasionally getting odd stares. It's not really unusual to me anymore given how "different" I appear from the norm that society is used to especially in this neighborhood. However today it felt different, the stares were longer, and the smiles were turning more so into disbelief. Three black Muslim women walking down the streets of Woodinville, Washington into a mediterranean restaurant, one wearing a jilbab (full body length hijab), one with hijab and pants and another hijab with a skirt was just not an everyday sight. This image was completely unfathomable to the people who resided here. Our steps became larger and our conversations started to steer silence and constantly turning our heads to assure our own safety. This subtle joyful walk began to shift into a new mood that brought fear upon us. This walk made me realize how much the effect of our environment's atmosphere can impact the speed of our body. When one is in a comfortable or to say in a safe environment the speed of their walk isn't so hastily and fast however when the experience is the complete opposite like today's walk I found myself wanting to rush into my comfort zone to tame my speed and get that sense of safety as soon as possible by walking faster and not experiencing the joy of simply walking. Luley, 3

For this walk I decided to walk with one of my Caucasian friends and talk about something very awkward for the both of us, for the sake of this assignment. What made this more uncomfortable was the fact that this was done on campus, and since the campus is quiet for the most part, conversations are heard easily by anyone you walk past. Regardless I attempted to start the conversation with a broad topic and simply asked he thought of the BLM movement. His facial expression immediately gave me a general idea of it, so I jokingly told him "oh so you're a racist huh?" He immediately panicked trying to say his wasn't and tried explaining how he wasn't racist at all to the point where I believe he even bended his honest opinion on the BLM movement because he didn't want to seem racist. I notice now that during this whole fiasco his pace had picked up.

I told him I was kidding and then gave him my point of view, not on the BLM movement but rather on how he reacted, which was he shouldn't be afraid of his own opinions (clearly as long as they're not hateful). In the past few years I've noticed that an increasing number of Caucasians will hate on themselves just because of what other Caucasians have done in history. I told him that he shouldn't feel any sort of hate towards himself nor feel guilty because it wasn't him who did those terrible things. Racism went on for years and is still, but hate will ultimately never win, is what I told him (mainly because I remembered a powerful song that goes by that title). I'm glad we had this walk because it was more than enough for me to get my thoughts going and speak my truth to him and he seemed to receive it well and agreed. Abraham, 9

As a person of color, I decided to go on a walk with one of my friends who isn't a person of color. We talked about the differences in our cultures as we grew up and how other people treated us. It was a very enlightening experience to walk and understand each other's backgrounds better. One of the topics that we discussed, that I believe to be an extremely important topic was what we experienced growing up. For instance, the first time we noticed when we were judged based off our races. Annabelle, 8

IN THIS WALKING JOURNAL I WALKED WITH A MUSLIM WOMAN THE SAME AS ME BUT THE ONLY REASON WAS THAT SHE WORE A HIJAB BUT I DON'T. NOW DIFFERENT GIRLS IN ISLAM CHOOSE TO WEAR HIJABS AND SOME DON'T BUT ALL HAVE THEIR OWN REASONS. SOME FOLLOW THEIR PARENTS WISHES AND OTHERS WISH TO BLEND IN WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS, AND I WAS THE LATTER. I WALKED WITH ONE OF MY MUSLIM FRIEND AND WE TALKED ALMOST ABOUT EVERYTHING. I FELT SO GREAT AND RELAXED AND I FELT LIKE WE WERE BOTH SO SIMILAR IN OUR QUALITIES AND BELIEFS. Something I noticed that I hadn't noticed before, was the beauty around me because most of the time people don't take the time to notice their environment. Everyone can achieve some level of enjoyment if they just took some time to bring it into their life. My mood was very relaxed . I was calm both ways. The walk helped a lot to slow down my mind and get rid of some worries and tension I have had building up. it was as if we all understood this was a journey we all had to walk on differently and in our own way. One thing I definitely felt that was most prevalent walking around in this type of environment was that my heart rate slows down by quite a bit, and it is just purely joyful. I slow my steps down as well like the whole world is moving in slow motion. Maahera, 10

## **8) City life**

*The final category captures reflections about city life and moving through the built environment on two feet.*

### **Student responses**

Being from a small, quiet suburban town, walking around in Seattle is like a slap in the face. There is a ridiculous amount of differences in the two different locations. Even just the short walk on campus you run into a plethora people. Especially at the Seattle campus, everyone is walking around to get to their next class, to meet up with some friends, or even just returning to their dorm. They all walk with a purpose to get where they are trying to go as fast as possible. Annabelle, 2

For my very last journal entry I wanted it to be special and I wanted to think of a walk that would sum up my thoughts of this class as well as a goal I wanted to complete as a Seattleite. What was more perfect than a walk in downtown Seattle. I was really anxious at first given how big downtown is and the amount of people I pre assumed to be around the area. I started my walk at Westlake station and from there I kept walking around. I went into many shopping departments and started to look around. I also met some pleasant people. Luley, 10

I noticed that there were a lot of homeless people on my walk. This led to a very loaded thinking session. I had thoughts like, "Did they eat today?", "How did they become homeless?", "I'm very fortunate." It made me really sad. But at the same time, it really put me back in my place since I have been taking things for granted. I realized I'm very well off, and even being able to go to University in the U.S, is a privilege. I complain about homework, but I'm lucky enough to be pursuing higher education. Seeing this on my walk made me appreciate the smaller, simpler things in my life. I appreciate not having to worry if I'll eat tomorrow, not having to worry about where to sleep tomorrow, or how I'm going to get around. I went into this walk generally happy, but I walked out with a loaded mind and a feeling of... comfort. Comforted that I have a comfortable life. Rebecca, 4

Overall, I think this walk gave me the opportunity to slow down my busy life, at the moment and appreciate the businesses and art in my community. It was nice to see something that I haven't seen before and learn something new about the area. Austin, 4

All these walks I took this quarter in relation to this class I noticed I was always occupied with either a person, my mind or my body. For the first time I really was led through my legs and was lost in the world. I was taking in all that my eyes were capturing, and it was never ending. I never got this experience with any other walk. This walk exemplified this mood of empowerment because of my independency and how much control I had. I was led by only my legs and eyes thus the journey was never ending. All in all this walk was such a learning experience for me. I truly captivated and understood the flow and lightness that walking can have in my life. I surrounded by walls by beginning it with a lot of negative energy and for a change this one was the exact opposite. It began and ended with only positive and uplifting vibes. Luley, 10

The world is not something to look at. It is something to be in. – Mark Rudman

The careful foot can walk anywhere. – Chinese proverb

When we die the wind blows away our footprints and that is the end of us. – San saying (Kalahari)

## **Conclusion**

Part I of this paper looked at ideas and texts in the syllabus. Part II showed how these played out in my student's own words. The theme of walking bursts with meanings, connections, and implications for individuals and society. Approaching the course from an interdisciplinary perspective is therefore essential to executing a course on Walking. Moreover, a course like this can be an important part of a student's holistic education, one that offers a unique way to experience the campus, their communities, and themselves. As educators, how can we show to our students, our institutions, and the wider culture why a course like this is important? How do we demonstrate why it is worth it to educate "the whole self"?

Personally, when I tell other *adults* about the class, they almost universally respond with curious enthusiasm. My *students*, on the other hand, start off in a state of curious bewilderment. Some wondered at first if it was a real class. Others struggled to explain what the class was about to friends and family. But after students are immersed in the course for a few weeks and start to do the walking practices on their own, they begin to understand the class.

One reason why taking a course on walking is strange is that education is becoming more and more instrumentalized. An important rationale for the course from my perspective is that it affords an opportunity to confront students early on about what education is for. Are we here for job training only – an instrumental stepping stone to a pre-determined career? Or are we here for self-cultivation? We're here for both, but it is increasingly harder to "sell" the latter in a society where the exorbitant cost of education is privatized and institutions themselves have to justify the marketability of majors in terms of career options and earning power. No wonder students are streaming into STEM majors and abandoning the humanities and social sciences. And since so much of being a STEM major involves staring at screens, a class on walking seems, at the very least, extremely peculiar. But as mentioned at the beginning, slowing down is something all of us need in a culture that quietly but relentlessly speeds life up on a treadmill of productivity and busyness. As more and more of life becomes sedentary and experienced as a series of interiors, it is invigorating to get outside, breathe fresh air, and move slowly in rhythm using our lungs and our legs, counteracting the fast, frenetic pace that is modern life.

There are strengths and weaknesses to teaching a course like this to first year students, especially during fall quarter and the turbulent transition to college. On one hand, first year students need a course like this to help them learn how to slow down, observe themselves and the world around them, and walk to gain perspective on the pressures of college life. As seen above, many students found the experiences they had whilst on walks whether alone or with others to sharpen their attentiveness outward, increase reflection inward, and be more mindful about how college life is unfolding.

On the other hand, student comprehension of and appreciation for course literature was limited. I thought readings were mostly accessible and only a few were “difficult.” But many students had a hard time genuinely engaging with the readings. Some of this is probably due to student demographics and preferences about majors, in addition to a general decline in time devoted to reading. And most of my students intend to be STEM majors where reading widely is not likely to be a major focus of their college experience. A compromised ability – or even unwillingness – to read carefully prevented robust and sustained discussion about class themes throughout the quarter during class time. Add the social anxiety of being first quarter, first year students in a college classroom setting and in-class engagement leaves much room for improvement.

I’d be curious to see how this class would work as a senior seminar. Smaller class dynamics might permit better discussion. Logistically, it’d be easier to go on group walks together or engage in other activities as a class. Students who are about to graduate and move into the “real world” could find that practicing the techniques of walking help to put into perspective where the pathways out of college will soon take them. The connections they

strengthen with friends, family, and neighbors when they go on walks for their Walking Journal can facilitate dialogue about future plans. What's more, busy seniors can benefit from the gift of time that a course like this affords. I'd be curious to see if seniors who took a course like this would be more or less open to *doing* the walking practices compared to first year students.

Rory Stewart in *The Marches – A Borderland Journey Between England and Scotland*

(2016) speaks of the difficulty of capturing the entire experience of going on a long walk. He writes,

I've never been very good at explaining why I go on long walks. The truth is, I think, is I believe walks are miracles, which can let me learn, like nothing else, about a nation, or myself, helping me solve disappointments... But when I try to describe everything I hope to get out of a walk I feel I embarrass myself.<sup>lvii</sup>

For someone who has written two long books about walking through Afghanistan and Britain, he's being modest. But the truth is that describing the experience of a walk is a phenomenological challenge. There's a reason why phenomenologists like Heidegger speak cryptically and poetically, and existentialists like Jean Paul Sartre manically try to capture the minute details of frenzied streams of consciousness. Capturing the experience of being in the world, as opposed to describing the world, is difficult because of its subjective dimension. But try we must. Mindful walking is a powerful way to deepen a sense of self, connect with others and with a place, and sharpen our powers of observation and attention. As Proust writes, "The real voyage of discovery consists, not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

I'll end with a quote from a student from a Somali immigrant family who is the first in her family to attend college. Luley writes:

After the end of our walk my family, all mentioned how they thought this class at first was 'weird and not a real class.' But taking walks with me throughout the quarter, they said how beneficial it was and just how much we underestimate walking. I told them I went through this same experience. We overlook the simplest things in our life, and it isn't until we put a lot of focus on it that we start to reflect and appreciate life and all its blessings a little more. (9)

If I could get my students to appreciate the small blessings of the world through mindful walking, perhaps the larger blessings become more easily accessible as well. As Frederick Buechner says, we "enter the extraordinary by way of the ordinary."

## Appendixes

### 1. Walking journal

Each week you will take a different kind of walk of your choosing from a selection of options. Walk for at least 20-30 minutes (longer if you desire). Walk with intentional awareness and mindfulness about what you are doing and experiencing. Upon completion of the walk, write a one-page reflection. Except for week 2, these will typically be turned in each Tuesday, hard copy.

#### Required Walks

- Solitary walk
- Walk with a family member
- Walk with a friend
- Walk in the woods/rural/wilderness setting
- Walk in an urban/suburban setting

#### Optional Walks & Encounters

- Walk in a neighborhood you once knew, but in one that has changed significantly
- Walk by taking a scenic route
- Take part in a march or demonstration
- Take part in a charity walk
- Take part in a parade
- Walk with / interview a mailman
- Get a foot massage/reflexology session
- Visit a podiatrist
- Get your gait analyzed at a running shoe store
- Walk at sunrise
- Walk at sunset
- Walk in the rain
- March to the Match with a Sounders crowd
- Join with a UWB student group that is engaged in some sort of walk
- Walk with a person of color (POC) and discuss aspects of being a POC in public space
- If you identify as a POC, walk with someone who's not and talk about your experience
- Walk with a woman who wears a hijab and discuss the experience
- If you wear a hijab, walk with someone who doesn't
- Contact a pedestrian rights organization and go on a walking tour
- Discover a hiking club or neighborhood association and go on a hike/walk
- Walk to places on the Bothell/Cascadia campus you've never been to before
- Walk in a crowded space
- Walk on a street without sidewalks/good pedestrian infrastructure (be careful!)
- Walk on a beach
- Walk barefoot
- Walk through a garden
- Get lost (but don't lose your common sense)

- Walk in a public park
- Walk with a pet (tune into what they are experiencing)
- Walk with an expert who can narrate something about your joint experience
- Walk up a stream
- Ramble off trail
- Investigate your shoe closet (what do your shoes tell you about what sorts of walking/running/movement that you do?)
- Climb a mountain
- Walk with someone in a wheelchair
- Walk in a sacred space
- Walk a spiritual labyrinth
- Walk through a mall
- Other creative walks of your choice. Be imaginative!

**Broad questions to consider when writing your reflection:**

- Where did you walk?
- Why did you choose this route?
- What did you notice about this walk sensually – what did you see? Hear? Smell? Feel?
- How did you walk – fast, slow, with rhythm, at an irregular pace?
- Who did you walk with?
- What kind of conversation did you have?
- What was surprising about this walk? What did you notice that you didn't notice before?
- What was your mood upon entering the walk? What was your mood at the end?
- Was your mind full of thoughts and reveries or did you empty your mind and think of little at all?
- Did the walk help you to slow down?
- Did the walk provide an opportunity for reflection about something?
- Did the walk provide an opportunity for contemplation – allowing something to emerge that you weren't conscious of previously?
- Did you encounter or interact with strangers? What was the experience like?
- What did you notice about the natural environment that caused you to pay attention?  
About the built environment?
- How does movement impact your thinking? Your mood? Your emotions?

## **2 Campus Walk**

Walk for 30 minutes on campus to discover as many new places to you as possible. Document these places and write about how this walk helped you to learn more about your campus home for the next four years.

### 3. Thich Nhat Hahn exercise

On page 31 in Hahn's *How to Walk* he writes,

When you walk mindfully, just enjoy walking. The technique to practice is to walk and just to be exactly where you are, even if you are moving. Your true destination is the here and now, because only in this moment and in this place is life possible. The address of all the great beings is "here and now." ... You know where to go. Every in-breath, every out breath, every step you make should bring you back to that address.

With Hahn's advice in mind, set out on a mindful walk on the Bothell campus. You can choose to walk inside, outside, or some combination of the two. Perhaps visit a place on campus where you've not been to before

Focus on:

- Mindful attention to your steps
- Awareness of your breath
- Noticing your surroundings
- Slowing down
- Enjoying walking!

After 15 minutes (time it with your phone), pull out your question journal and sketch a short paragraph capturing where you went and what the experience was like to focus on just enjoying walking. Date this entry and title it: Hahn's Walking Advice exercise. Sometime before next week, type up your paragraph and upload it to Canvas under the Assignment tab for this assignment.

### 4. Psychogeography/derive exercise

**Walking & Writing Exercise**

*Psychogeography*

According to Situationist Guy Debord, psychogeography is, "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals." Moreover, psychogeography is:

- Diverse activities that raise awareness of the natural and cultural environment.
- Attentive to the senses and emotions as they relate to place and the environment.
- Serious fun.
- Often political and critical of the status quo.

To Sadie Plant in *The Most Radical Gesture*, “To derive was to notice the way in which certain areas, streets, or buildings resonate with states of mind, inclinations, and desires, and to seek out reasons for movement other than those for which an environment was designed.”

**Derive:** aimless, random drifting through a place, guided by whim and an awareness of how different spaces draw you in or repel you.

For this exercise, please engage in the following act of *derive*:

- Leave the classroom, in pairs, with your question journal.
- Spend 10-15 minutes wandering aimlessly.
- Notice which spaces, large or small, draw you in or repel you.
- Try to become aware of and name these forces of attraction and repulsion.
- At the end of the *derive*, find a cozy spot to free write for another 5 minutes in your question journal about what you experienced.
- If you did not have enough time for this experience, consider engaging in some derive after you leave class today on route to your next “situation.”
- Read through the “Emotions defined” definitions in:  
<https://mappingweirdstuff.wordpress.com/2009/06/14/mapping-weird-stuff-psychogeography/>
- Finally, based on what you wrote in your question journal, write a one-page, typed response that captures your experience during this assignment. Bring this assignment as a hard copy next class AND upload it to Canvas.

## 5. Moods & Energies walk

### Walking & Writing Exercise

### *Moods & Energies*

For this walking exercise, you are given full license to people watch! Like previous exercises, you will walk around campus. This time pay attention to people with a particular focus on the moods and energies they emanate as they go about their daily business.

For this exercise, please engage in the following *derive*:

- Leave the classroom with your question journal.
- Spend 15-20 minutes wandering with a goal of drifting past as many people as possible.
- Notice what people are doing.
- Try to describe the kind of moods and energy they are giving off.
- Name their moods and energies, using precise language.
- At the end of the *derive*, find a cozy spot to free write for another 5 minutes in your question journal about what you experienced.

- To give you some potential vocabulary, read through the “Emotions defined” definitions in: <https://mappingweirdstuff.wordpress.com/2009/06/14/mapping-weird-stuff-psychogeography/>
- Finally, based on what you wrote in your question journal, write a one-page, typed response that captures your experience during this assignment. Bring this assignment as a hard copy next class AND upload it to Canvas.

## 6. Sensorial Walk

### Writing Exercise: Quiet Noticing *Becoming Animal*, David Abram

In this book, Abram explores the value of phenomenology to environmental ethics – the *philosophy of lived experience* that begins with the notion that the “real world” is experienced by a multiplicity of subjects through different senses and ways of knowing. In doing so, Abram claims that our animal senses perceive things by being in relation with them (49). How can we better understand Abram’s perspective *from the inside out*? For this exercise, please engage in the following:

- Leave the classroom with your question journal for a destination around campus (can be outside, inside, or some combination of both)
- Spend 5 minutes wandering until you come to a place that calls you to stop
- Engage in some form of centering for a couple minutes (quieting the mind, deep breathing, etc.)
- Choose a sense you’d like to focus on as best you can (sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell)
- Spend 10 minutes tuning into this sense and notice what you experience in the world around you. It will be difficult to isolate a particular sense, so return to it if you lose focus.
- You can stay in one place or continue to walk around
- If you lose focus, return to your breath and try again
- At the end of 10 minutes, find a cozy spot to free write for another 10 minutes in your question journal, giving you vivid detail for the (1) page write up you’ll turn in Tuesday Nov. 13

## 7. STAR Library and Group Project

**The Art & Politics of Walking**  
Lambacher & Rowland  
BCORE 107 G  
**2018 STAR Library Project & Group Presentation**

## **Assignment**

This assignment has three parts:

- 1) Individual research using the UWB Library on a topic shared by your group.
- 2) Collaboration with your group to create a presentation.
- 3) Group presentation.

The goal of this assignment is for you to learn about how to do research using UWB Library systems through the thematic focus of our class. By researching specific examples of types of conscious walking, you will add to cases already found in our syllabus.

### **Part 1: STAR Project worksheet**

You been placed in separate groups to do research on a theme of “walking” encountered in our class. Under your designated theme, each of you will research an example of this kind of walking. Then you'll share the results of your research with your group, making sure that you do not duplicate your examples. This means that you should be in communication with each other as you go through the STAR Project worksheet, so you eliminate any redundancies. The worksheet will guide you through “strategies and tools for academic research” using UWB Library resources. When you are finished, submit the worksheet **both** to the assignment’s Canvas page **and** turn in a hard copy to Jason. You can find the worksheet here (also posted to Canvas under this assignment):

<http://guides.lib.uw.edu/dc/lambacher>

### **Part 2: Design a group presentation**

Prepare a 10-minute presentation (roughly 7-8 PowerPoint/Prezi slides with images and text) to be delivered to class on November 8. The presentation should first introduce the class to the general theme of your walking category, before you highlight particular cases. Note that you will need to be succinct when discussing your cases. Aim for one or two slides (max) per example.

### **Part 3: Group presentation**

- The presentation should be emailed to Jason by the beginning of class on presentation day (Nov. 8).
- The presentation should leave a few minutes at the end for Q&A from your classmates.
- The whole presentation, including Q&A, should be no longer than 12 minutes.
- All group members need to participate equitably in the research, presentation construction, and delivery of presentation phases of the assignment.

**Group 1 (Arts of conscious walking)**

**Group 2 (Marches/political demonstrations)**

**Group 3 (Rural walking / trail networks)**

**Group 4 (Urban walking / walkable cities)**

**Group 5 (Pilgrimage / spiritual walks)**

**Group 6 (Epic walks)**

## 8. Critical Book Review

### Research Paper: Critical Book Review

This paper gives you an opportunity to critically engage with one of the core texts in our class. First, select one of the core texts that you'd like to review:

- Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust*
- Alexandra Horowitz, *On Looking*
- Frederic Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking*

Then, revisit chapters assigned for class and read a few more chapters that were unassigned but look intriguing to you. After you've done this reading, write a (4) page critical essay that evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the book *as it relates to the theme of walking*.

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> Ashford (2017)
- <sup>ii</sup> Solnit (2000), \*\*\*
- <sup>iii</sup> Solnit (2000), \*\*\*
- <sup>iv</sup> Pappano (2014)
- <sup>v</sup> Manjoo (2018)
- <sup>vi</sup> Klepeis et. al. (2001)
- <sup>vii</sup> Solnit (2000), 9
- <sup>viii</sup> Hahn (2015), 9
- <sup>ix</sup> Hahn (2015), 15
- <sup>x</sup> Hahn (2015), 17
- <sup>xi</sup> Elkin \*\*\* 21
- <sup>xii</sup> Foot Facts: <https://www.foot.com/foot-facts/>
- <sup>xiii</sup> Nierenberg (2013)
- <sup>xiv</sup> Mudede (2017)
- <sup>xv</sup> Avarez \*\*\*
- <sup>xvi</sup> Solnit (2000), 3
- <sup>xvii</sup> Solnit (2000), 250
- <sup>xviii</sup> Solnit, (2000), 5
- <sup>xix</sup> Solnit (2000), \*\*\*
- <sup>xx</sup> Thoreau \*\*\*
- <sup>xxi</sup> MacFarlane \*\*\*
- <sup>xxii</sup> Gros \*\*\* , 37
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Gros \*\*\* 37, 38
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Hazlitt \*\*\*
- <sup>xxv</sup> Hazlitt \*\*\*
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Gros \*\*\* 97
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Horowitz \*\*\*
- <sup>xxviii</sup> In Horowitz \*\*\*

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xxix Horowitz \*\*\*, 16  
xxx Kristoff (2017)  
xxxi Thoreau \*\*\* 2  
xxxii Thoreau, 10  
xxxiii Gros \*\*\*, 93  
xxxiv Gros \*\*\* 102  
xxxv Chatwin \*\*\*  
xxxvi Chatwin \*\*\*  
xxxvii MacFarlane \*\*\* chapter on ice  
xxxviii Basho \*\*\* 15  
xxxix Solnit (2000), 173-74  
xl Woolf, \*\*\*  
xli Solnit (2000), 172  
xlii Solnit (2000), 172  
xliii Gros, 177  
xliv Gros, 178  
xlv Gros, 176  
xlvi Gros, 180  
xlvii Gros \*\*\* 176  
xlviii Gros, 177  
xlix <https://mappingweirdstuff.wordpress.com/2009/06/14/mapping-weird-stuff-psychogeography/>  
l Elkin \*\*\*, 13  
li Staples \*\*\*  
lii Bazian (2016)  
liii Solnit (2000), 253  
liv Horowitz, 87  
lv Deleuze & Guttari (1993)  
lvi Horowitz \*\*\* 153  
lvii Stewart (2016), 119



Mindfulness has become a well-known term, and with that people want to learn more. Here are 22 mindfulness exercises for adults and practitioners. In a global climate with few clinical psychologists in relation to the need for them, and in a time when individual therapy time is limited and expensive, the proven efficacy of group-based therapy is great news. Even if you do not feel a need to visit a therapist, there are mindfulness-focused groups that share and deepen meditation practice (Brach, 2016). Holmes, Kimberley. 2015. Reflections on Teaching and Learning in Undergraduate Education: An Auto-ethnographical. Reflection on Storytelling as a Portal to Mindfulness, Creative Approaches to Research, vol. 8. no. 2, pp. 88-102. © 2015. Creative Approaches to Research. Kimberley Holmes. Reflections on Teaching and Learning in Undergraduate Education. An Auto-ethnographical Reflection on Storytelling as a. If setting out on a journey is a central aspect of human experience, What are the motivations? Classical examples indicate the following; 1. To answer a basic concern about existence, such as the meaning of suffering. 2. To respond to an inner call. 3. To escape oppression. Several teaching tools helped teachers employ an open inquiry process. We concluded that the teaching tools applied by teachers in documenting their inquiry processes enabled them to express dynamic inquiry characteristics. The results indicate consistency between the criteria most frequent in teachers' inquiries and the criteria running through their reflections. In addition, teachers implemented the dynamic inquiry criteria in their classroom teaching. View This chapter proposes an overview of cohesion politics across the three cases. Before, however, it is necessary to concede two caveats and clarify the argument about the type of political change that this convergence represents. Read more. Article.