090:101:48 SNOWSHOEING THROUGH SEWERS: EXPLORING THE
HUMAN-BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Byrne seminars usually focus on an area of the professor’s interests and/or research. One
area in which I have been involved for years, and on which I have written a great deal—
and made a film—is what I call “Urban Adventure.” What I have tried to do, in short, is
place in question the conventional notion of human adventure as escape from civilization.
My adventures have been into civilization, into and through the human-built
environment. I have argued that adventure can build community rather than simply
escape from it. I look forward to sharing my experiences and ideas with you and
introducing you to a world that may be unfamiliar to you as it is to most Americans.

January 28, Film Three Days on Big City Waters

February 4, Snowshoeing Through Sewers, Preface and the New York adventures,
chapters 1, 2, and 3.

February 11, Snowshoeing Through Sewers, the New Jersey adventures, chapters 4, 5, 6,
7, 8.

February 18 Snowshoeing Through Sewers, The Philadelphia adventures, chapters 9, 10

February 25, from The George Washington Bridge: Poetry in Steel (the Introduction and
chapter 1, “A Day on the G.W.B.”)—on electronic reserve

March 4, from The George Washington Bridge: Poetry in Steel, chapter 11, “The G.W.B.
and Me”—on electronic reserve

March 11, from Homes on Wheels, chapter 1, “Wheel Estate,” and from Looking for
America on the New Jersey Turnpike, ch. 8, “Rest Area Culture”— electronic reserve.

Field Trip: after spring break we will have an all-day field trip. We will discuss ideas for
this trip and dates in class. I suspect we will go on a Friday or a weekend if some of you
have Friday classes. The all-day field trip will be in lieu of three class days. Ordinarily
there are ten in a Byrne seminar. Those who come on the field trip will have completed
the course. Those who do not or cannot will be responsible for a field trip on their own to
be reported to me on a two-three page paper at an early date.

One more point: attendance at meetings of this seminar are mandatory. If you must miss a
session you must inform me by e-mail or a phone call no later than one hour prior to a
seminar meeting, informing me of the reason I should probably also say a word about
what I would hope you will get out of this course. The course is designed to interrogate
the conventional notion of adventure and the dichotomy that exists in the American mind between nature and the built environment. This course is about seeing and experiencing. Most of us travel through our lives half blind to what is around us. This course will endeavor to correct this. If successful it should make your lives more meaningful. The course may also have some effect on recognizing your place in the environment and ending the dichotomy that exists among too many of us between nature and us. The course will argue forcefully that we are an intimate part of nature—giving us much potential for both saving it or destroying it.