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ENG 302 Writing Narrative

In this course, we will focus on writing narrative in three genres: short fiction; the biographical portrait or profile; and literary non-fiction. You will write five narrative pieces in total: two short stories, one biographical portrait/profile, and two literary non-fiction essays. Class periods will begin with a discussion of the assigned readings, before moving on to brainstorming, drafting, and workshopping your writing (depending upon which phase of the writing process we are in).

Required Texts

Alice LaPlante, *The Making of a Story: A Norton Guide to Creative Writing* (MS)
Maggie Nelson, *The Red Parts: Autobiography of a Trial*
Readings on Blackboard (BB)

Course Policies

Grading: Each of the five narrative pieces count for 10% of your grade, or 50% of your total course grade. The final portfolio (revision of 2 pieces of your choice), due during Finals Week, counts as 25% of your grade. Your participation in workshopping activities with your peers both in and outside of class will make up the final 25% of your course grade.

Attendance Policy: Because this is a workshopping course and meets only once a week, it is essential that you attend each of the fifteen class sessions. You will be granted ONE absence, without penalty, for any reason. Any student who misses more than THREE class periods will be encouraged to drop the class.

Grade Due Dates and Late Papers:

Short Story #1: Due Friday, September 14
Short Story #2: Due Friday, September 28
Profile: Due Friday, October 19
Non-Fiction Essay #1: Due Friday, November 9
Non-Fiction Essay #2: Due Monday, November 26
Portfolio: Due December 10

Papers are due on Blackboard on the day indicated on the paper prompt UNLESS you have spoken to me first about an extension. I am happy to grant extensions, but need you to clear them with me before handing in a paper late. ANY PAPER HANDED IN MORE THAN 2 WEEKS PAST THE DEADLINE will receive a failing grade.

E-mail assistance: I am happy to answer specific questions about your paper over email. In general, I do not check email after 9 p.m. Once I receive your email, I will respond as soon as I can, usually within twenty-four hours.

Communication with your instructor: Please contact me if you encounter any problems (or emergencies) that threaten your productivity or your ability to attend a class or conference. It is always better to let me know of such issues right away so that I can work with you if possible.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. <http://dsp.usc.edu>

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. <https://diversity.usc.edu/>

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, <http://emergency.usc.edu>

USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. <http://dps.usc.edu>

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Unit One: The Short Story

Week One (August 22)

Introduction to the Course: What is a Story?

Readings:

- MS Chapter 1 “What Is This Thing Called Creative Writing?” pp. 23-38; Chapter 2 “The Splendid Gift of Not Knowing,” pp. 65-68. [17 Pages Total]

In Class: Discuss readings; selected short fiction

Week Two (August 29)

Making Things Happen (Plot)

Readings:

- (MS) Chapter 3 “Details, Details,” pp. 107-116; Chapter 4, “The Shapely Story,” pp. 152-165; and Chapter 9, “The Plot Thickens,” pp. 375-388. [35 Pages Total]
- (BB) Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find.”
- (MS) ZZ Packer, “Brownies,” pp. 227-245. [18 pages]

In Class: Brainstorm Story Ideas

Week Three (September 5): DRAFT of STORY # 1 DUE

Plot (Continued) and Point of View

Readings:

- (MS) Chapter 6 “Who’s Telling This Story, Anyway?” pp. 258-281; Chapter 11 “Raising The Curtain,” pp. 465-475 [33 Pages Total]
- Katherine Mansfield, “Miss Brill” (BB)
- Jamaica Kincaid, “Girl” (BB)

In Class: Workshop Story #1

Week Four (September 12)

Character and Dialogue

Readings:

- (MS) Chapter 5, “Why You Need to Show *and* Tell,” pp. 204-223; Chapter 8, “You Talking to Me?” pp. 341-345.
- Ernest Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants” (BB)

In Class: Workshop Story #1

Week Five (September 19) DRAFT of STORY # 2 DUE

In Class: Workshop Story # 2

Unit Two: The Biographical Portrait

Week Six (September 26)

The Biographical Portrait/Profile

Readings:

- (BB) Taffy Brodesser-Akner, “How Goop’s Haters Made Gwyneth Paltrow’s Company Worth \$250 Million,” *The New York Times*.
- (BB) Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, “A Most American Terrorist: The Making of Dylann Roof,” *GQ*.
- (BB) “The Art of the Profile with David Remnick of *The New Yorker*,” *Storyboard*.

In Class: Workshop Story #2

Week Seven (October 3)

Readings:

- (BB) Vladimir Nabokov, excerpt from *Speak, Memory*

In Class: Present Research and Outline

Week Eight (October 10) PORTRAIT/PROFILE DUE

In Class: Workshop Portrait/Profile

Unit Three: Literary Non-Fiction: The Essay

Week Nine (October 17)

The “Personal Essay” or Memoir

Readings:

- (BB) Aldous Huxley, Preface to *Collected Essay*
- (BB) James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*
- (BB) Merve Emre, “Two Paths for the Personal Essay”
<http://bostonreview.net/literature-culture/merve-emre-two-paths-personal-essay>

In Class: Workshop Portrait/Profile

Week Ten (October 24)

Reading:

Maggie Nelson, *The Red Parts* [190 pages]

In Class: Brainstorm Essay Topics

Week Eleven (October 31) DRAFT of NON-FICTION ESSAY #1 Due
Types of Essays (1): The Lyrical (Person, Place or Thing)

Readings:

- (BB) William Styron, “Potter’s Field.”
- (BB) Annie Dillard, “The Weasel.”
- (BB) Virginia Wolf, “The Death of the Moth”
- (BB) Richard Selzer, “The Knife”

In Class: Workshop Non-Fiction Essay #1

Week Twelve (November 7)
Types of Essays (II): The Braided

Readings:

- (BB) Jacquelyn Ardam, “Real Toads at the International Cryptozoology Museum.”
- (BB) Jo Ann Beard, “The Fourth State of Matter.”
- (BB) Sam Anderson, “Why Does Mount Rushmore Exist?”

In Class: Workshop Non-Fiction Essay #2

Week Thirteen (November 14) DRAFT of NON-FICTION ESSAY #2 DUE
Types of Essays (III): The Hermit Crab

Readings:

- (BB) Lois Ruskai Melina, “Metamorphosis.”
- (BB) Leslie Jamison, “Devil’s Bait.”
- (BB) Ocean Vuong, “A Letter to My Mother She Will Never Read.”

In Class: Workshop Non-Fiction Essay #2

Week Fourteen (November 21 Thanksgiving Vacation)

Portfolio and Revision

Week Fifteen (November 28)
Revising 2 pieces