

## Oxford College of Emory University

English 185-10A: CRW and Life writing  
Spring 2014  
Beta Seminar East Village; MWF 10:45-11:50

Dr. Jeff Galle  
Office & hours: Seney 401;  
T-F, 2:30-3:30; & by appt  
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### Required Texts\*

Balakian, Peter. *Black Dog of Fate: A Memoir*. Basic Books, 2009. 304 pp.  
Fuller, Alexandra. *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*. Random House, 2003. 336 p.  
Gutkind, Lee, ed. *In Fact: The Best of Creative Nonfiction*. Norton, 2004. 480p.  
Myers, Linda Joy. *Don't Call Me Mother*. She Writes P, 2013. 384 pp.  
Tomskey, Jacob. *Heads in Beds: A Reckless Memoir of Hotels, Hostels, and So-called Hospitality*. Doubleday, 2012. 256 pp.

\* We may use the internet to select several creative nonfiction essays that we will use in class discussion as well.

### Course Description

English 185-10A is a writing course in which you will undertake a number of writing projects of various lengths, purposes, and values. We will use the lens of the memoir as we read a series of essays/books in the genre of life writing with the purpose of studying the way that authors construct their own stories in order to better equip you to write your own creative nonfiction life writing essays.

This course in life writing possesses a number of features—the reading and class discussion facilitated by individual students of the texts mentioned above, a series of creative nonfiction essays that you will write in multiple drafts, a research paper on a particular issue in life writing and that is developed in conversation with me, and a service learning project at one of two places.

Each class is important because part of every class will involve student led class discussion and daily short quizzes over the reading for the day.

### Course objectives and learning outcomes

The student who successfully completes this course will

1. Develop skill in oral and written expression. (IDEA objective #8)
2. Learn how to find and use research resources for answering questions or solving problems (IDEA objective #9)
3. Acquire an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers (IDEA objective #12)
4. Gain knowledge of the genres of life writing.
5. Gain knowledge of issues and decisions that writers make in writing versions of their own or another's life.

### Information about Assignments

1. Daily quizzes and other short assignments on these readings will be required.
2. We will rotate (a signup sheet provided) the responsibility of leading/facilitating class discussion of readings (after the first two weeks).
3. Six essays (1100-2200 words; minimum 4pp, ds), most of them developed from working with the autobiographical experiences and/or the material generated from discussion of course materials. The essays will be written in the genre of creative nonfiction. One of these essays, the last one, will take the form of a reflection on your writing and your service work completed at the local institution where your service learning project takes place.
4. One formal paper (10 pages) requiring outside sources, MLA documentation, an in depth treatment of an issue, and some form of research presentation to the class. Topics to be decided as we discuss the various issues raised by the course content.
5. A final exam with questions covering content of the course, including the genre of life writing, the issue of sustainability, and the issues related to service learning.

### Grading of the Assignments and Assigned Weights of Each

Participation/quizzes/facilitation	10%
5 'regular' essays*	50%
Research presentation**	10%
Research Paper	20%
Final exam	10%

\*Essay 6 is a required and very important Reflective Essay/TPSL essay which is ungraded but should reflect your decisions and growth as a writer and your work in service.

\*\*The research presentation will provide an opportunity for each student to discuss in depth her or his work with the research process including some aspect of the memoir or life writing. This assignment is open-ended for the reason that we have a wide array of assignments in this class. A rubric will be available for guidance in putting the presentation together.

### Grading

All assignments will be assigned a letter grade, and I will use + and – to enable students to have more precise feedback as the quality of each particular letter grade. Hence, on a 100 point scale, an A- would fall in the low 90s, and a B+ in the high 80s, for example. Using a 12-point scale, each letter grade with + or – has a value as well.

### **Other Responsibilities and Related Matters**

1. Be present, on time, and engaged in the class discussion. I take roll the first thing as class begins, and always mark as absent those who are not in the room. You may miss three class meetings, but I will deduct points (5 pts per absence) from your class participation grade after the third absence. Students who are late must assume responsibility to be certain the attendance record is changed to reflect their attendance.
2. Honor Code. We will discuss this important issue in class, and we will cover plagiarism at that time. But please be aware that your writing is to be your own, and any other person's writing must be acknowledged through citations in the proper form. Please consult the Oxford College Handbook if you have any questions regarding the Code or the Honors Council.
3. Service Learning duties. The Office of Student Development for Community Service will work with our class to arrange the place and transportation for this important part of the course. (This work may provide the topic for one of the personal essays as well). Relating your work in service to the content of life writing would provide the ideal outcome here.
4. Late essays and other work. Work should be turned in on time so that I will be able to give you feedback on that assignment when the class is discussing the assignment. The longer period of time after we discuss an item that goes by, the less relevance and usefulness that assignment will have. For every class day that an essay (or other work) is late, I will deduct a letter grade from that paper (or other work).
5. Ms. Sarah Bankston is our library support person, and she will be leading training sessions for you at different points in the semester. So attending these sessions during class time is required.
6. Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford and Emory faculty/staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.

### **Readings, Major Assignments\*, Due dates**

\*Short assignments and facilitation of discussion are not placed on the calendar because those decisions will be made in class.

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **FRIDAY DUE DATES**

January 15: Syllabus, introduction to course, impromptu writing

January 17: *In Fact*, Dinner at Uncle Boris, 85-91; criteria of creative nonfiction

January 20: MLK Holiday

January 22: Being Brian (163-72); Shunned (49-70)

January 24: TPSL information; Crystal McLaughlin, guest

January 27: discussion of Essay 1; continue with *In Fact*, Three Spheres (3-23)  
 January 29: Looking at Emmett Till (24-48)  
 January 31: one more story from *In Fact*, TBA **ESSAY 1**

February 3: *Heads in Beds*, Chs 1, 2: 1-55  
 February 5: *Heads*, Chs 3-5, 56-105  
 February 7: *Heads*, Chs 6-8, 106-164

February 10: *Heads*, Chs 9-11, 165-216  
 February 12: *Heads*, 12 – end, 217-288  
 February 14: *Don't Call Me Mother*, pp. 1-60 **ESSAY 2**

February 17: *Mother*, pp. 61-121  
 February 19: *Mother*, pp. 123-181  
 February 21: *Mother*, pp. 182-234

February 24: *Mother*, pp. 235-300  
 February 26: Research day: Life Writing and databases  
 February 28: *Mother*, pp. 301-55 **ESSAY 3**

March 3: *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, pp. 3-59  
 March 5: *Dogs*, pp. 60-129  
 March 7: Narrowing the research topic: exploratory paragraph on topic

March 10-14: Spring Break

March 17: *Dogs*, pp. 130-189  
 March 19: *Dogs*, pp. 190-254  
 March 21: *Dogs*, pp. 255 - end

March 24: Black Dog of Fate, Sect I, II  
 March 26: *Fate*, Sect III  
 March 28: *Fate*, Sect IV **ESSAY 4**

March 31: *Fate*, Sect V  
 April 2: *Fate*, Sect V  
 April 4: Research class day

April 7: *Fate*, Sect VI, VII  
 April 9: return to *In Fact*, TBA  
 April 11: return to *In Fact*, TBA

April 14: Research presentations, 3x  
 April 16: Research presentations, 3x  
 April 18: Research presentations, 3x

April 21: Research presentations, 3x

## ESSAY 5

April 23: Research presentations, 3x

April 25: Makeup day if needed: complete unfinished work

April 28: Last day of MWF class: final exam prep: RESEARCH PAPER

April 29 Tuesday: Reading Day

Final Exam (ESSAY 6 Reflection essay is due on day of final exam)

(Final Exams: April 30-May7)

Notes on the Research Paper process in stages (due dates at every stage)

1. Issues in Life Writing list will be discussed in class during the first book.
2. First library research class will introduce you to the genre of life writing in terms of research resources.
3. As we read individual essays and/or book chapters, examine them for issues in life writing that appeal to you.
4. What questions have been raised that you want to pursue?
5. Peruse the various texts we have this semester for an author you want to study in greater depth, or
6. Develop a research project that grows from some combination of books we have read.
7. Then, in conversation with me, develop a topic by the research days we have.
8. The research paper process involves a number of distinct stages, each of which involves a particular task.
  - a. Selection of Life Writing issue/topic
  - b. Selection of book(s) for exploration of the topic
  - c. Creation of a researchable question using issue and book(s)
  - d. Prospectus, outline, rough draft
  - e. Secondary source short paper
  - f. Final draft