

Oxford College of Emory University

English 185-9A: CRW and Life writing
Fall 2013
Beta Seminar East Village; MWF 9:30-10:35

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

Dillard, Annie and Cort Conley, eds. *Modern American Memoirs*. New York: Harper, 1995. 449 pp.

Isaacson, Walter. *Steve Jobs*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011. 627 pp.

Lawson, Jenny. *Let's Pretend This Never Happened*. New York: Berkeley, 2012. 370 pp.

Russo, Richard. *Elsewhere: A Memoir*. New York: Knopf, 2012. 246 pp.

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

Course Description

English 185-9A 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.

Assignments in General

1. Short assignments (including quizzes) on these readings will frequently 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 (1000-2000 words; 4-8 ds pp), 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 our 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 oral presentation of the findings to the class. Topics to be decided upon 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

Assignments/quizzes/facilitation	10%
5 'regular' essays*	50%
Oral 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 oral presentation will provide an opportunity for each student to discuss in depth her or his work with 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. Attendance. Be present and on time. 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. Kim David in 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

August 28: Syllabus, introduction to course, impromptu writing
 August 30: Dillard (3 selections)
 September 2: Labor Day Holiday
 September 4: Dillard (3 selections)
 September 6: Dillard (3 selections)

September 9 (Monday): Lawson September 11: Lawson September 13: Lawson	ESSAY 1
September 16 (Monday): Lawson September 18: Lawson September 20: Lawson	
September 23 (Monday): Isaacson September 25: Isaacson September 27: Isaacson	ESSAY 2
September 30 (Monday): Isaacson October 2: Isaacson October 4: Isaacson	
October 7 (Monday): Isaacson October 9: Research day: Life Writing and databases October 11: Mid-point staking stock	ESSAY 3
October 14-15 Fall Break October 16: Isaacson October 18: Narrowing the research topic: thesis	
October 21 (Monday): Russo October 23: Russo October 25: Russo	
October 28 (Monday): Russo October 30: Russo November 1: Dillard	ESSAY 4
November 4 (Monday): Dillard November 6: Dillard November 8: Research class day	
November 11(Monday) November 13: Research class day November 15: Oral presentations	
November 18 (Monday) November 20: Oral presentations November 22: Oral presentations	
November 25 (Monday): Oral presentations November 27 – 29: Thanksgiving Recess	ESSAY 5

December 2: Makeup day if needed: complete unfinished work

December 9: Last day of MWF class: final exam prep: RESEARCH PAPER

December 11 Wednesday Reading Day

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

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 *American Memoirs* book for an author you want to study in greater depth, or
6. Develop a research project that grows from one of the other books we have read.
7. Then, in conversation with me, develop a topic by the October 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