Oxford College of Emory University

English 185-9B: Ethics of Life Writing and Memoirs Dr. Jeff Galle

Fall 2010 Office & hours: Seney 407;

Williams 105; MWF 9:35-10:25 M-F, 2:00-3:30; and appts.

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# **Required Texts**

Eakin, Paul John, ed. *The Ethics of Life Writing*. Kidder, Tracy. *Strength in What Remains*. McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes*. Ollestad, Norman. *Crazy for the Storm*.

## **Course Description**

English 101 is a writing course, and the approach we will take is to gain a good deal of experience in two genres, autobiographical and biographical writing. Life writing includes both of these genres, as well as other genres like travel writing.

This course in life writing possesses several features—readings about the decisions that writers make in writing their own life story or the life of another person, discussion of the ethics involved in what to include and exclude, and readings from several acclaimed examples of life writing.

We also plan to include a TPSL (Theory-Practice Service Learning) project with Challenge Academy students. We will pair up with individual Academy students, interview them informally over several meetings with the goal of collaboratively creating autobiographical vignettes of the lives of the Challenge Academy students in a wide range of media—video, audio, or written forms. This component involves the coordination of scheduling multiple meetings.

### Course objectives and learning outcomes

The student who successfully completes this course will

- 1. Possess increased skill in writing relative to the criteria of the course rubric.
- 2. Gain knowledge of the genres of life writing.
- 3. Gain knowledge of issues and decisions that writers make in writing versions of their own or another's life.
- 4. Gain greater skill and knowledge of collaborative writing, facilitation of classroom discussion, and (in some instances) interviewing.

# **Assignments in General**

- 1. Short assignments on these readings will frequently be done out of class and submitted through Blackboard.
- 2. Each student will have responsibility of leading/facilitating class discussion of readings (after the first two weeks).
- 3. Six essays (800-1200 words), most of them developed from working with the autobiographical experiences and/or the material generated

- from discussion of course materials. The essays will be primarily expository, but there may be elements of creative nonfiction as well. One of these essays, the last one, will take the form of reflections on your writing.
- 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 bogus memoirs, and the issues related to the historical documents.

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

Assignments/facilitation 15% (1-pg assns; facilitation(s); TPSL) 6 essays 60% (essentially one ~ every two weeks) Formal Paper 15% (due last day of regular classes)

Final exam 10%

### Readings, Assignments, Due dates

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

#### READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS

**DUE DATES\*** 

August 25, 27

"Why is it that I never . . ." (for Friday discussion of rubric and grading)

Syllabus and course outline

Eakin: Introduction

August 30, Sept 1, 3

Eakin: Part I

September 6: Labor Day Holiday

September 8, 10 ESSAY 1

Eakin: Part II, begin Part III

September 13, 15, 17

Eakin: complete Part III, Part IV

<sup>\*\*</sup>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.

September 20, 22, 24 ESSAY 2

Ollestad: pp. 1-96

Eakin completed: Discussion of Research Paper topics

September 27, 29, Oct 1 Ollestad: pp. 97-189

October 4, 6, 8 ESSAY 3

Ollestad: pp. 190 - end

October 11-12: Midsemester Break

October 13, 15

Review at mid semester: discussion and prep for second half

October 18, 20, 22 Kidder: pp. 1-98

October 25, 27, 29 ESSAY 4

Kidder: pp. 99-177

November 1, 3, 5

Kidder: pp. 178-259

November 8, 10, 12 ESSAY 5

McCourt: pp. 11-131

November 15, 17, 19

McCourt: pp. 132-251

November 22 ESSAY 6

McCourt: pp. 252-362

November 24-28: Thanksgiving Break

November 29, Dec 1, 3 RESEARCH PAPER DUE

December 6: Last Day of Class for MWF

December 8, Reading Day;

Final: Wednesday, December 15 (9:00-12:00) EXAM

## Other Responsibilities and Related Matters

- 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. 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 day that an essay (or other work) is late, I will deduct a letter grade from that paper (or other work).
- 4. Ms. Mary Moser 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.