

## **ANT 325L (31765) Ethnographies of Emotion**

**CLA 5.118 Wed 3-6**

Katie Stewart (kstewart@mail.utexas.edu)

Office CLA 4.408 office hours M 2-3, Wed 1-2, or by appt.

This course uses ethnographic writing to explore the ways in which shared emotions and sensibilities animate and define social and cultural life. It is a writing workshop and carries the writing flag. We will build conceptual skills through the process of working with words, both by building voice as writers, learning to write clearly, succinctly and with conviction, and by reading and listening to others' writing and learning how to compose responses.

You will write seven 500 word pieces, each written in four drafts, using the elbow method outlined in Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers*, keep a daily writing journal for the first seven weeks, and write a final essay by editing 3-5 of your short pieces. In seminar, each person will read their work aloud while the others listen carefully and take notes developing their own creative lines of thought in response. After four readings, we will discuss the four pieces together. Learning to be good readers or listeners is part of the process of learning to be good writers. Finally, there will be workshops on ethnography, auto-ethnography, editing, voice, affect and emotion, and what constitutes a life or a world.

Ethnography, meaning writing difference, is detailed descriptive writing about the entanglements of forms, forces, practices, media, materialities, sensibilities and structures in some world or scene of life. Its objects of analysis are not dead and fixed but moving and mixing so it writes about the angles, possibilities, and problematics. The world it describes is one actively filtered through the author as one who participated in and observed.

### **Readings**

Mary Karr. *The Art of Memoir*.

Kathleen Stewart. *Ordinary Affects*.

Peter Elbow. *Writing Without Teachers*. (on canvas)

Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me*.

Rebecca Solnit. *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*.

Greg Bottoms. *Pitiful Criminals*.

### **Requirements and Structure of the class**

Everyone starts with 100 points. Points will be subtracted if you fail to complete assignments or show inadequate development in your written essays.

1. Regular attendance and participation. 14% of the grade (one point off for every unexcused absence). If you are absent for a good reason, talk to me.
2. Free-writing journals turned in for the first 7 weeks. 7% of the grade. (one point off each week you miss).
3. Seven 500 word pieces, each written through four drafts, the final draft read aloud in workshop. Please bring all four versions to be checked. 49% of the grade.

4. Final essay editing together 3-5 of the short weekly essays. 30% of the grade.

*Week 1* Aug 29

ethnographic research workshop  
workshop on brainstorming to produce your first paper topic  
practice the Elbow method

Week 2 Sept 5

Read: Elbow. *Writing Without Teachers*, chapters 1-3  
Turn in daily free-writing journal.  
Bring four drafts of your 500-word piece. Read the final draft.  
Workshop on descriptive writing.

*Week 3* Sept 12

Read: Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me*.  
Turn in daily free-writing journal.  
Bring four drafts of your 500-word piece. Read the final draft.  
Workshop on subject-positioning.

*Week 4* Sept 19

Read: Elbow. *Writing Without Teachers*, chapter 4, 5, appendix essay, and appendix.  
Turn in daily free-writing journal.  
Bring four drafts of your 500-word piece. Read the final draft.

*Week 5* Sept 26

Read: Mary Karr. *The Art of Memoir*  
Turn in free-writing journal.  
Bring four drafts of your 500-word piece. Read the final draft.  
Workshop on voice.

*Week 6* Oct 3

Read: Kathleen Stewart. *Ordinary Affects*.  
Turn in daily free-writing journal.  
Workshop on emotion and affect.

Week 7 Oct 10

Read: Greg Bottoms. *Pitiful Criminals*.  
Turn in daily free-writing journal.  
Bring four drafts of your 500-word piece. Read the final draft.  
Workshop on describing a world.

Week 8 Oct 17

Read: Mary Karr. *The Art of Memoir* (2cd half)  
Turn in daily free-writing journal.  
Bring four drafts of your 500-word piece. Read the final draft.

Week 9 Oct 24

Read: Rebecca Solnit. *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. (1<sup>st</sup> half)

Bring notes inspired by all of the readings. What more/else might do with your writing?

Workshop on auto-ethnography. Class will break into two groups.

Week 10 Oct 31

Read: Rebecca Solnit. *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. (2<sup>nd</sup> half)

Bring four drafts of your 500-word piece. Read the final draft.

Week 11 Nov 7

Select 3-5 of your pieces to compose a final paper. Bring a list of your writing and editing challenges in the effort to combine the pieces without losing their singularity.

Editing workshop

Week 12 Nov 14

Bring a first attempt to carefully edit together your 3-5 pieces. Look for, and create, links, resonance, parallels between them so that an idea emerges in their combination. Rewrite, rewrite, rewrite (at least 5 times) over the next two weeks.

Class will break into two groups to hear and work through each student's efforts.

Week 13 Nov 21 (no class. Thanksgiving break)

Week 14 Nov 28

Read final essays.

Week 15 Dec 5

Read final essays.

### **Rubric for the 500 word pieces**

Please put your name on it.

Write four drafts, using the elbow method - 45 minutes of fast writing followed by 15 minutes of hard editing eliminating all but the sentences or sentence fragments you think are true (really express your thought, or start to develop it). **Bring all four drafts to class. They don't have to be printed; you can show them to me on your computer.**

The writing should be descriptive and ethnographic. It should be about some aspect of a world – anything from a conversation, a political economic structure, a moment in your life entangled in forms, objects, and sensibilities. The style of the writing is up to you (creative, social scientific, memoir, blog, etc).

Remember you are not just reporting dead facts but composing an account in relation to an existing composition of ways of living and being, translating creative processes already in play. You can include descriptions of people, language, places, situations, bodies, events, or objects. Work with the details of particulars (what did that character actually say, what color was the water in the ocean that day). Your paper may assemble

different kinds of significance (explicit meanings or values, unspoken but visceral bodily preferences for how close someone stands to others in line, or a regional taste for hot food, differences in gender or race, “big picture” descriptions of city-wide infrastructures or intimate details of everyday life in a moment. Ethnographic writing tries to describe some kind of world “out there” but it is also filtered through you as the one who participated in and observed what you’re describing and then worked to recompose it in words.

Be a composer. Actively produce a picture of what you’re trying to describe. Be creative. Be detailed and precise.

Be clear (don’t use jargon and try eliminating all the words you don’t need). Try, at first, writing in very short sentences. You can later add some longer sentences into the mix to create a rhythm to the writing as a whole. Be direct. Try to approach your object of description from several different angles; these might describe a different aspect of what you’re describing (its materiality, its history, its status as an icon for some group, etc) or they might describe some alternate possibilities of what emerge from this thing, or what could happen to it, or how it might effect other things (the possibilities resonant in it).

Try to write for an audience – your classmates and perhaps also the people you are writing about (what would they think/say about what you’ve written? Would they recognize themselves in it or be interested in the thoughts you’ve had?). Try to hear your words, your voice. Try reading your piece aloud.