WRT 303: The Personal Essay
Course Syllabus, Fall 2015

Instructor: Kevin Clouther
Email: kevin.clouther@stonybrook.edu
Office Hours: (1 pm-2:30 pm M/F)
Office: Humanities 2106
Section: 1 (5:30 pm-6:50 pm M/W)
Room: Humanities 3016

Course Description
In this course we will concentrate on the reading and writing of narrative non-fiction; you will have the
opportunity to improve your own craft, discuss your peers’ personal essays, and learn from contemporary
masters such as Joan Didion, Leslie Jamison, John Jeremiah Sullivan, and David Foster Wallace. In all of
the work, we will examine together what makes a piece of writing worth reading, focusing on issues of
voice, structure, and language. You will be expected to participate actively, complete in-class writing
assignments, and present your creative writing twice for workshop. You will submit at least ten *single-
spaced* pages—you may submit a personal statement for application for graduate school—and
thoroughly revise one piece. This course satisfies the second half of the Writing Pre-Med/Pre-Health
Prerequisite (Prerequisite: WRT 102).

Required Books (available through university bookstore)
Didion, *The White Album*
Sullivan, *Pulphead*

I will provide handouts—in class or on Blackboard—throughout the semester. I recommend purchasing a
notebook for in-class writing, prompts, prewriting, etc., as well as a reputable dictionary (e.g. Merriam
Webster or American Heritage).

Course Requirements
Essay #1 (first draft): 25%
Essay #2 (first draft): 25%
Revision of Essay #1 or #2: 25%
Participation (contribution, prompts, workshops): 25%

Grading Policy
This course will use a grading system of A through D. I will do my best to explain what my expectations
are for each aspect of the class. Students who do not complete both essays and a revision of one story will
not pass the course. Please keep hard copies of all assignments with my written comments. There will be
no final examination.

Attendance Policy
The participation grade is based on active contribution, but every other aspect of the class is linked to
being in the classroom. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact either a classmate or me in
order to receive the readings or any modifications to the syllabus. Your final grade may be lowered for
more than two absences; if you miss more than four classes for any reason, you cannot pass the course.
Students who miss the first week of class will be de-registered automatically. In tallying total absences, I
do not distinguish excused from unexcused. It should be noted that excessive tardiness is also a form of
absence. Absences for medical leave, religious holidays, or authorized university activities should be
handled on an individual basis with me.

Late Work
All assignments are to be turned in on the day that they are due in class. Do not be a victim of technology: Printer malfunction does not justify late work! If you know in advance that you will not be able to finish the assignment on time, it is best to contact me as soon as possible.

Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gen Ed Requirement: Write Effectively in English</td>
<td>Produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gen Ed Requirement: Write Effectively in English</td>
<td>Demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Critical and Creative Engagement with Texts</td>
<td>Analyze texts to understand how and why they communicate their messages and effects to audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rhetorical Strategies</td>
<td>Achieve communicative purposes for different audiences and contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Grammar and Usage</td>
<td>Show evidence of careful sentence-level editing in final drafts at acceptable levels of accuracy in syntax, grammar, semantics, and punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Metacognition</td>
<td>Exhibit awareness of the relation of one’s writing practices and coursework to other academic, professional, and lived contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Multimodality</td>
<td>Evaluate, synthesize, and manage information from or in a variety of media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing Center

The Writing Center, a peer-tutoring facility, provides another valuable outlet for help on written assignments. Tutorials are offered on an appointment basis at Humanities 2009. Current hours and further information can be accessed at the following website:

http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/writrhet/writing_center/writing.html

Disability Support Services (DSS) Statement

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website:

http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities

Academic Integrity Statement

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more
comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website:

http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/index.html

Critical Incident Management Statement
Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn.

Reading Schedule
While this syllabus provides an outline for what we will do in the class, it is important to remember that it is subject to change, and that the only sure way to know what we will be doing is through regular attendance. Please finish the day’s reading before you arrive to class.

Week One
M, Aug 24
Introduction

W, Aug 26
*Pulphead*, “Upon This Rock” (Sullivan)

Week Two
M, Aug 31
*Pulphead*, “At a Shelter (After Katrina)” (Sullivan)
*Pulphead*, “Getting Down to What Is Really Real” (Sullivan)

W, Sept 2
*The White Album*, “The White Album” (Didion)

Week Three
M, Sept 7
No Class (Labor Day)

W, Sept 9
*The White Album*, “On the Mall” (Didion)
*The White Album*, “At the Dam” (Didion)

Week Four
M, Sept 14
Blackboard, “Grand Unified Theory of Female Pain” (Jamison)

W, Sept 16
Blackboard, “Thanksgiving in Mongolia” (Levy)

Week Five
M, Sept 21
*Pulphead*, “American Grotesque” (Sullivan)
Writing Workshop #1

W, Sept 23
Writing Workshop #1
Week Six
M, Sept 28
*Pulphead*, “Peyton’s Place” (Sullivan)
Writing Workshop #1

W, Sept 30
Writing Workshop #1

Week Seven
M, Oct 5
*Pulphead*, “Mr. Lytle: An Essay” (Sullivan)
Writing Workshop #1

W, Oct 7
Writing Workshop #1

Week Eight
M, Oct 12
*The White Album*, “Bureaucrats” (Didion)
Writing Workshop #1

W, Oct 14
Writing Workshop #1

Week Nine
M, Oct 19
*The White Album*, “In Bed” (Didion)
Writing Workshop #1

W, Oct 21
Writing Workshop #1

Week Ten
M, Oct 26
*The White Album*, “Quiet Days in Malibu” (Didion)
Writing Workshop #2

W, Oct 28
Writing Workshop #2

Week Eleven
M, Nov 2
“Writing Workshop #2

W, Nov 4
Catherine Lacey Guest Workshop

Week Twelve
M, Nov 9
Blackboard, “The String Theory,” (Wallace)
Writing Workshop #2

W, Nov 11
Writing Workshop #2

Week Thirteen
M, Nov 16
Blackboard, “Orchid Fever” (Orlean)
Writing Workshop #2

W, Nov 18
Writing Workshop #2

Week Fourteen
M, Nov 23
Blackboard, “The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved” (Thompson)
Writing Workshop #2

W, Nov 25
No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

Week Fifteen
M, Nov 30
Blackboard, “Instead of Sobbing, You Write Sentences: An Interview with Charles D’Ambrosio” (Jamison)
Writing Workshop #2

W, Dec 2
Writing Workshop #2
Revision Due