WRT 303: The Personal Essay
Course Syllabus, Spring 2016

Instructor: Kevin Clouther
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Office Hours: (2:30 pm-4 pm T/Th)
Office: Humanities 2106
Section: 5 (11:30 am-12:50 pm T/Th)
Room: Humanities 3013

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 Charles D’Ambrosio, Joan Didion, Leslie Jamison, Mary Karr, and John Jeremiah Sullivan. 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)
D’Ambrosio, *Loitering*
Karr, *The Art of Memoir*

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 F. 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 essay 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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gen Ed Requirement: Write Effectively in English</td>
<td>Produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Gen Ed Requirement: Write Effectively in English</td>
<td>Demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Gen Ed Requirement: Write Effectively in English</td>
<td>Research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details</td>
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<td>4. Rhetorical strategies</td>
<td>Achieve communicative purposes for different audiences and contexts</td>
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<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>
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<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>
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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
T, Jan 26
Introduction

Th, Jan 28
Loitering, “Orphans” (D’Ambrosio)

Week Two
T, Feb 2
Loitering, “This Is Living” (D’Ambrosio)
The Art of Memoir, “The Past’s Vigor,” “The Truth Contract…” (Karr)

Th, Feb 4
Loitering, “Documents” (D’Ambrosio)

Week Three
T, Feb 9
Loitering, “Winning” (D’Ambrosio)
*The Art of Memoir,* “A Voice Conjures…,” “Don’t Try This at Home…” (Karr)

Th, Feb 11  
Blackboard, “Grand Unified Theory of Female Pain” (Jamison)

Week Four  
T, Feb 16  
Blackboard, “Thanksgiving in Mongolia” (Levy)  
*The Art of Memoir,* “Hucksters, the Deluded…,” “Interiority and Inner Enemy…” (Karr)

Th, Feb 18  
*Loitering,* “Whaling Out West” (D’Ambrosio)

Week Five  
T, Feb 23  
*The Art of Memoir,* “Dealing with Beloveds…,” “Why Memoirs Fail” (Karr)  
Writing Workshop #1

Th, Feb 25  
Writing Workshop #1

Week Six  
T, Mar 1  
Blackboard, “Mr. Lytle: An Essay” (Sullivan)  
Writing Workshop #1

Th, Mar 3  
Writing Workshop #1

Week Seven  
T, Mar 8  
*The Art of Memoir,* “An Incomplete Checklist…,” “Against Vanity” (Karr)  
Writing Workshop #1

Th, Mar 10  
Writing Workshop #1

Week Eight  
T, Mar 15  
Spring Recess (No Class)

Th, Mar 17  
Spring Recess (No Class)

Week Nine  
T, Mar 22
Loitering, “Casting Stones” (D’Ambrosio)
Writing Workshop #1

Th, Mar 24
Writing Workshop #1

Week Ten
T, Mar 29
Loitering, “Any Resemblance to Anyone Living” (D’Ambrosio)
Writing Workshop #1

W, Mar 30
Eugene Hammond Reading, 1-2 pm (Poetry Center, Humanities 2001)

Th, Mar 31
Writing Workshop #1

Week Eleven
T, Apr 5
Blackboard, “On Self Respect” (Didion)
Writing Workshop #2

Th, Apr 7
Writing Workshop #2

Week Twelve
T, Apr 12
Blackboard, “The String Theory” (Wallace)
Writing Workshop #2

Th, Apr 14
Writing Workshop #2

Week Thirteen
T, Apr 19
Blackboard, “The American Boy” (Mendelsohn)
Writing Workshop #2

Th, Apr 21
Writing Workshop #2

Week Fourteen
T, Apr 26
Blackboard, “Carpet Is a Class Issue” (Daum)
Writing Workshop #2

W, Apr 27
Sarah Azzara Reading, 1-2 pm (Poetry Center, Humanities 2001)

Th, Apr 28
Writing Workshop #2

Week Fifteen
T, May 3
Blackboard, “The Crack-Up” (Fitzgerald)
Writing Workshop #2

Th, May 5
Writing Workshop #2
Revision Due