

Methods and Materials: Memoir  
Summer 2014, LTCR 170  
Monday, June 23-Thursdays, July 3  
1-5 PM, Kresge 159  
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Course Description: This course is an exploration of the memoir genre. We will read creative and critical texts, from Augustine through Cheryl Strayed, in order to explore some fundamental sites of tension in the genre: truth, memory, identity formation, the self as cultural/historical subject, the self as narrative in relation to other narratives, fact and imagination; as well as exploring the way formal possibilities trouble or mask these sites of tension.

Required Reading:

Reader at Bay Tree and some additional readings emailed to you as pdfs or handed out in class.

You are required to check your UCSC email every evening.

Required Writing:

7-12 page memoir, 12 point font, double-spaced (1750-3000 words); draft due the day before your scheduled workshop during second week of class; revision due July 11, emailed to me by five pm in a word document with the subject heading: Memoir Final. This memoir can be a series of short pieces or one piece or even a chapter from a longer work. Feel free to email the final draft to me sooner if you wish.

Five experimental responses written outside of class

Frequent in-class writing

**Grading Policy:**

There are three areas in which you will be graded/evaluated :

Responsibility: no absences, timely attendance, frequent, respectful participation in seminar as evidence that you have read and thought about the work, handing in of all required written work on time, one 20 minute meeting with instructor before or after class during the second week.

Experimentation/Revision: hard work on revising according to teacher's comments and peer comments, bold and sincere attempts to experiment with the concepts introduced in class. Pushing yourself to try new things.

Working: Does your work show excellence in terms of the craft/ theoretical concepts introduced in class (language, form, character, theme, rhythm, depth of engagement with ideas, etc...)

### Letter Grade System:

If you accomplish all of the requirements under responsibility, you will receive some sort of B.

If you accomplish all of the requirements under responsibility and excel at Experimentation /Revision, Responsibility and/or Working, you will receive some sort of A.

If you do not accomplish all of the requirements under responsibility, you will receive less than a B, unless you are doing something truly remarkable in one of the other two areas. It is advisable not to count on doing something truly remarkable for your grade.

Any of the following will lower your grade and may get you a failing grade: an absence, more than two tardies (arriving ten minutes or more after class starts), failure to hand in any of your work, failure to hand in rough draft and final version of memoir by deadlines.

Daily Syllabus (changes announced in class and/or by email):

#### WEEK ONE

Monday, June 23<sup>th</sup>

Introductions and expectations  
Buy Reader if you haven't

Tuesday, June 24

Reading due: "Toward a Definition of Creative-Nonfiction" by Brett Lott in reader and Lee's "Magical Dinners" in reader.

Experiment 1 DUE: 250-500 word response to Brett Lott: What is Lott's final definition of creative nonfiction? In his essay, what do you find most valuable? What troubles and/or interests you? In what ways does Lee's "Magical Dinners" fit or not fit Lott's description of creative non-fiction? AND 250-500 word description of a dinner you remember vividly.

Wednesday, June 25

Readings due: excerpt of The Confessions by Augustine and Patricia Hampl, "The Invention of Autobiography" (read Patricia Hampl first). Also go here to look at contemporary confessionals: Dear Sugar (Cheryl Strayed) on The Rumpus <http://therumpus.net/sections/dear-sugar/>

Experiment 2: 250 words: Going back to Lott's essay on Creative nonfiction, can you trace any of his assumptions about personal writing to Augustine? What ideas about memoir (according to Lott) seem to have changed since Augustine? 250-750 words double-spaced: write a confession with a specific audience in mind.

Thursday, June 26<sup>th</sup>

Reading due: The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, Mary Rowlandson excerpt and Perks, excerpt from Pagan Time in reader and [http://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/read/i-asked-my-dad-who-has-dementia-to-annotate-jonathan-franzens-how-to-be-alone-](http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/i-asked-my-dad-who-has-dementia-to-annotate-jonathan-franzens-how-to-be-alone-)

Experiment 3: 250 words: What is the relationship between Mary Rowlandson's narrative of her captivity and the biblical passages in the text? (optional: how am I using "master" narratives to set up my memoir?)  
Anything else you notice? 250-750 words: Write a piece in which you incorporate a "master" narrative into your narrative.

Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup>

Writing About Other People

Reading due: "Into The Wild," Baldwin, Mills and Miller,

Due: 250-750 pages: someone else's story; 250 words: what are your ethics of life writing (refer to the reading)?

WEEK TWO:

Monday, June 30<sup>th</sup>

Read: Coetzee, Kincaid, Sante

Think about: In what ways do the writers of these experimental memoirs trouble or subvert the genre? (will be writing about this in class)

Workshop:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Tuesday, July 1

Read Bechdel

- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

Wednesday, July 2

Read Diaz

- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.

Thursday, July 3

Read Fitzgerald

- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.

















