

Methods and Materials: Memoir
Summer 2015, LTRC 170
Monday, June 22-Thursdays, July 2
1-5 PM

Micah Perks, email meperks@ucsc.edu

Micah can be available to meet after or before class most days, email to make an appointment

Course Description: This course is an exploration of the memoir genre. We will read creative and critical texts, from Augustine through contemporary experimental writers, 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 10, emailed to me by five pm in a word document with the subject heading: Memoir Final. This prose 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.

Four experimental creative/critical responses written during the first week 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, daily, respectful participation in seminar as evidence that you have read and thought about the work, handing in of all required written work on time.

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 and work out of the "discomfort zone."

Working: excellence in terms of the craft/ theoretical concepts introduced in class (language, form, character, theme, rhythm, depth of engagement with ideas, point of view, 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: one or more absences, 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 23th

Introductions and Expectations

Buy Reader if you haven't

Read/listen to the ethics of memoir writing in class.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=5152136>

Tuesday, June 24

2 Readings due: "Toward a Definition of Creative-Nonfiction" by Brett Lott in reader and Eva Saulitis' "Wild Darkness," in reader.

Experiment 1 DUE: 250-500 word response to Brett Lott: List Lott's definitions of creative non-fiction.

What troubles and/or interests you about these accumulating definitions? In what ways does Saulitis' "Wild Darkness" fit or not fit Lott's description of creative non-fiction? AND

250-500 word description of an encounter with the wild (you are free to interpret wild in your own way).

Wednesday, June 25

Memoir as Confession

Readings due: excerpt of The Confessions by Augustine and Patricia Hampl, "The Invention of Autobiography" (read Patricia Hampl first).

Experiment 2: 250-500 words: What can you learn about writing memoir from Augustine? How would you describe the qualities of Augustine's Confessions as a piece of autobiographical writing? His relationship to his audience (God)? (feel free to reference Lott) 250-750 words double-spaced: write a confession with a specific audience in mind.

Thursday, June 26th

Writing About Childhood

Reading due: Coetzee, Kincaid, Lee

Experiment 3: 250 words: What qualities of childhood do each of these writers emphasize?

250-750 words: Write a scene from your childhood, emphasizing one of the qualities you just described.

Friday, June 27th

Anti-Confessional and Contemporary Memoir

Manguso, Powell/Shields and essay about them, plus Lopate, Reflection and Retrospection

Experiment 4: 250 words: what did you find most interesting in the readings for today and why.

250-750 words: Write a memoir based on the interview you did in class today. Reflect on the experience of interviewing.

WEEK TWO:

Monday, June 30th

Read: Bechdel, Perks, Selling Out Everyone You Love

Workshop:

Tuesday, July 1

Karl Ove Knausgaard

Four full class workshops

Wednesday, July 2

Baldwin

Five full class workshops

Thursday, July 3

Five full class workshops

