

Methods and Materials: Memoir
Summer 2016, LTCR 170
Monday-Friday June 20--July 1
1-5 PM, Kresge 159

Micah Perks, email meperks@ucsc.edu

(Micah can be available to meet after or before class most days, email or talk to her in class to make an appointment)

Course Description:

This course is an exploration of the memoir genre. We will read creative and craft 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.

Required Reading:

Reader at Bay Tree and possibly 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 in class; revision due Sunday July 10, emailed to me by midnight 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. Twelve point font, double-spaced.

Frequent in-class writing

Grading Policy:

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

Responsibility: no more than one absence, ideally no absences, timely attendance, daily, respectful participation in seminar as evidence that you have read and thought about the work, no texting or going on-line during class, 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 willingness to work in the "discomfort zone" (ie. take risks).

Working: excellence in terms of the craft/ theoretical concepts introduced in class (depth of engagement with retrospection, voice, experimenting with form, vivid language, search for meaning, 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 outstanding in one of the other two areas. It is advisable not to count on doing something outstanding for your grade.

Any of the following will lower your grade and may get you a failing grade: two or more absences, frequent disrespect of the teacher and/or students, 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 20th

Introductions and Expectations

Bring Reader to class

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 Write about a time you were scared.

Wednesday, June 25

Memoir as Confession

Readings due: excerpt of *The Confessions* by Augustine and Lydia Yuknavitch's *Woven and The Argonauts* 233-238.

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 (if you want you could try weaving your confession in with another story, something that happened to you, or a fairytale or a news event that you think extends the meaning of your confession, the way Yuknavitch or Nelson does).

Thursday, June 26th

Lopate, *Reflection and Retrospection*, Baldwin, Manguso

Experiment 3: 250-500 words: How would you describe the way Baldwin and Manguso use reflection and retrospection? Would Lopate approve? 250-750 words: Think about someone or some place or some thing you have complicated feelings about. Try to combine vivid description/scene with reflection and retrospection about those complicated feelings.

Friday, June 27th

Lee, *Magical Dinners*, Kincaid, and Bechdel

Experiment 4: 250-500 Compare the tone and language/form of the way these three writers describe their relationships with their parents. 250-750 words: Each of these authors show their relationship with their parent through what Bechdel calls the "currency" of something tangible: books, a yellow dress, food. Can you show your relationship to a parent (or other family member) through something tangible?

WEEK TWO:

Monday, June 30th

Read: 37 *Difficult Questions*, Bechdel, *Altar Boy*

Alex reads if she wants

Character exercise

Outline exercise

Tuesday, July 1

Anzaldua

1-120

120-140

140-2

2-220

220-240

240-3

3:10--

Melissa comes

Wednesday, July 2

1-120

120-140

140-2

2-220

220-240

240-3

3:10--

Ben
Matthew

Thursday, July 3
Five full class workshops
Marlene
Alexandria
Katherine
Rose
Val

Friday, July 1
Five full class workshops
Magdalena
Angela
Aminta
Julia
Steven