

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FORM 2001-2002

NON-GENERAL EDUCATION PROCESS A

*DEADLINES: Deadline dates for 2001/2002 submissions: Regular proposals: October 19, 2001 to be implemented in Fall 2002; Short-Term proposals: December 7, 2001 to be implemented in Fall, 2002; Regular proposals February 15, 2002 to be implemented in Spring, 2003; March 22, 2002 for short-term courses to be implemented in Spring 2003.

PROPOSAL TITLE: Writing the Memoir

SPONSOR(S): Dr. Carl Hausman, Chair

DEPARTMENT: Journalism and Creative Writing

COLLEGE: Communication

IF LAS CHECK ONE: History/Humanities Math/Sciences Social/Behavioral Sciences

Check one: Undergraduate Graduate

THE ATTACHED **NON-GEN-ED** PROPOSAL IS BEST DESCRIBED BY THE ITEM(S) CHECKED.

New non-gen-ed course

Short-term non-gen-ed course

Minor curricular changes (fewer than three) to:

existing non-gen-ed course

non-gen-ed degree requirements

major

minor, specialization, concentration, track, certificate program

DEPARTMENT

(Signature indicates approval)

Dept. Curriculum Chair / Date 2/14/02

Dept. Chairperson / Date 2/14/02

ACADEMIC DEAN

Approved Not Approved

Comments: NO SUPPORT LETTERS. ONLY REFERENCES TO THEM!

Dean's Signature/Date [Signature]

COLLEGE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Date of open hearing (if necessary) 5/9/02 Approved 5 Not Approved 0
Comments:

Signature of College Chair/Date: Donald R. Bell 5/9/02

UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Date Received/Processed _____
Comments:

Curriculum Chair Signature Janette Rivers Date Announced At Senate 6/5/02

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT/PROVOST

Approved Not Approved _____ If no, reasons are as follows:

Student Credit Hours _____ Faculty Load Hours _____ Equalized Credit Hours _____

Official Copy & Approval Sheet Filed (Date): _____ Executive VP/Provost Signature/Date: Alan J. [unclear] 7/29/02

REGISTRAR

Date Approved Course Description Received _____ Hegis Taxonomy & Course Number Assigned 0602 223

Registrar Signature/Date E. C. [unclear] 8/5/02

NOTIFICATION FORWARD

_____ Senate Curriculum Committee Chairperson _____ Academic Dean(s)
_____ Department Chairpersons _____ Registrar _____ Sponsor(s)

COURSE PROPOSAL

1. DETAILS:

- a) Course Title: Writing the Memoir
- b) Sponsor: Dr. Carl Hausman
- c) Credit Hours: 3 Credit Hours
- d) Course Level: Master of Arts in Writing Graduate Course
- e) Curricular Effect: This course will serve as an elective for students in the Master of Arts in Writing. In particular, students enrolled in the Creative Writing track and the Journalism track will find this course pertinent to their specialization.
- f) Prerequisites: Core I.
- g) Suggested Time and Scale of Implementation: One section to be offered annually, beginning in the fall of 2002.

2. RATIONALE:

This course will provide students in the Master of Arts in Writing with an opportunity to explore one of the most prevalent literary forms today, that of the memoir. The memoir usually deals with a portion of one's life, rather than life in its entirety. Students need to understand the differences, as well as the similarities, between the memoir and the novel. They need to learn how to transform their experiences into memorable scenes in order to capture the drama and force of real life, in the most literary way possible. Writing the memoir will help students appreciate complex act of discovering what we know and shaping that knowledge into the appropriate literary form.

3. ESSENCE OF THE COURSE:

a) Description of the Course: In this course students will turn experience into memoir by applying the fundamentals of traditional story telling--plot, structure, voice, description, characterization, conflict, point of view, and dialogue--to their work. Students will learn that there is more to memoir writing than just reminiscing, and further, that memory can confuse, obscure, and detract from experience. Students will read and discuss published works from memoirists and complete writing assignments, as well as in-class exercises. Students will submit work for critique in workshop sessions, and will come away from the course with three short-form memoirs that may be interrelated or stand alone.

b) Course Objectives: As a result of taking this course, students will be able to:

1. Shape the raw experience of their lives into an engaging narrative.
2. Present themselves and others as specific characters and empathetic protagonists.
3. Find the emotional and psychological truth at the heart of an experience.
4. Develop convincing scenes linking emotions and events effectively.
5. Tap the imagination, as well as memory, in the development of the narrative.
6. Engage in the process of researching one's one life.
7. Master storytelling techniques to help write memoirs of power, beauty, and truth.
8. Participate in the give and take of constructive commentary in writing workshops.
9. Become acquainted with the outstanding memoirs of the genre.
10. Produce a body of original works in keeping with the memoir as a literary form.

c) Topical Outline of the Course:

1. Introduction: What is the memoir? What distinctions must be drawn between the memoir and the novel? Between autobiography and memoir? Between fact and fiction? What are the characteristics of the memoir as a literary form?
2. What Techniques may writers employ to develop effective memoirs? What are some of the outstanding memoirs? What do these literary forms have in common? What differences? Reading and responding to selected memoirs.
3. Exploring Significant Issues Regarding the Memoir. Understanding the difference between emotional truth vs. factual truth. Getting in touch with memory and imagination in writing exercises. Discovering our stories.
4. Developing Drafts: Understanding the Importance of Beginnings and Endings. Focusing on significant moments, key characters, and believable scenes. Establishing a point-of-view.
5. Shaping the Narrative: A memoir, just as a novel, should have a plot with a beginning, middle, and end. Choosing the right episodes to develop the story. Developing a workable timeframe for the narrative.

6. Workshopping the First Drafts. Identifying what works and what does not. Practicing the fine art and craft of revision. Revising for clarity, coherence and overall effectiveness. Learning the techniques of close reading and line editing.
7. Conferences: Reviewing drafts one-on-one with the instructor. Raising and responding to questions regarding characterization, conflict, crisis, plot, point-of-view, transitions, and overall impact.
8. Reading from Final Drafts. Reviewing the marketplace and its preferences for particular literary forms. Preparing the manuscript and submitting it for publication.

d) Evaluation and Grading Procedures:

Assessment of the quality of students' writing of three short memoirs. Also, students will be expected to participate in class, complete in-class writing exercises, turn their work in on time, and provide constructive commentary in a workshop setting, and will be evaluated on their performance in each of these areas.

The course itself will be evaluated using the College of Communication's student evaluation forms to obtain feedback on course content, the texts, assigned readings, writing exercises, general assignments, and overall instruction.

4. RESULTS OF CONSULTATIONS:

The Master of Arts in Writing Graduate Program Advisor, Dr. Diane Penrod, has served as a consultant in the development of this course and is highly supportive. In addition, Dr. Toni Libro, Department of Journalism and Creative Writing, supports the course and has provided a letter of recommendation. Additional members from the departments of Journalism and Creative Writing, and Composition and Rhetoric, associated with the Master of Arts in Writing program, have offered advice and served as consultants in the development of the course.

5. ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

a) Recommended Texts:

Baldwin, James. *Notes from a Native Son*. Beacon Press, 1953, 1983.

Crews, Harry. *A Childhood*. Harper & Row, New York, 1978.

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Hemley, Robin. *Turning Life Into Fiction*, Story Press, Ohio, 1994.

Barrington, Judith. *Turning Memories into Memoirs: A Handbook for Writers*.

Capote, Truman. *In Cold Blood* by Random House, Inc. 1993.

Dillard, Annie and Conley, Cort, eds. *Modern American Memoirs*. HarperPerennial, HarperCollins, New York, 1995.

Forche, Carolyn and Philip Gerard. *Writing Creative Nonfiction: Instruction and Insights from Teachers of the Associated Writing Programs*. Story Press, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2001.

Gutkind, Lee. *The Art of Creative Nonfiction: Writing and Selling the Literature of Reality*. John Wiley & Sons, 1997.

Hurston, Zora Neil Hurston. *Dust Tracks on a Road*. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1942.

Karr, Mary. *The Liars' Club*, Penguin Books, 1995.

Licktenberg, Greg. *Playing Catch With My Mother: Coming to Manhood When All the Rules Have Changed*, Bantam, 1999

McCourt, Frank. *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir*. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1996.

McDonnell, Jane Taylor. *Living to Tell the Tale: A Guide to Writing Memoir*.

Moody, Anne. *Coming of Age in Mississippi*. The Dial Press, Inc. 1968.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. Scribner, New York, 2000.

Kingston, Maxine. *The Woman Warrior*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1975.

Talese, Gay. *Unto the Sons*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. New York, 1992.

Talese, Gay and Lounsberry, Barbara. *The Literature of Reality: Writing Creative Nonfiction*. HarperCollins College Publishers, New York, 1996

Welty, Eudora. *One Writer's Beginnings*. Warner Books, New York, 1983.

Wolff, Geoffrey. *The Duke of Deception: Memories of My Father*, Random House, Inc., 1979.

Wolff, Tobias. *This Boy's Life*. Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1989.

6. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Students will receive in-depth instruction in writing the memoir, one of the most engaging and popular literary forms today. Students will read widely from selected memoirs, write three short memoirs that may stand alone or be interrelated, and experience the workshop method of critiquing manuscripts. Students will focus on characterization, conflict, point-of-view, voice, and other literary elements traditionally associated with the narrative form as they develop their memoirs.

"To write one's life is to live it twice, and the second living is both spiritual and historical, reaching deep within the personal as it seeks its narrative form and also grasps the life of the times..." -Patricia Hampl



Rowan University Senate

TO: Carl Hausman, Chair of Dept. of Journalism and Creative Writing
FROM: *Cindy Vitto*
Cindy Vitto, English Dept.
DATE: May 14, 2002
RE: Support for Writing the Memoir (Proposed Course)

I have examined your proposal for the graduate course Writing the Memoir and am pleased to offer my endorsement. The subject matter is interesting and useful for anyone pursuing higher education in writing, the organization is well thought out, and the class structure is very appropriate for such a course. I am pleased to note that there is ample opportunity for workshopping and revision.

Although the English Department occasionally offers seminars in the memoir as a literary genre, we have no such course as the one you are proposing, and so it would serve as a useful complement for our majors who may be interested in pursuing graduate study with you.