

## Summer 2007

### Eng 401/G Advanced Composition Summer Web Course



#### INSTRUCTOR

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#### IMPORTANT URL'S:

**Blackboard:** <<http://ecourses.wku.edu>> There is one BB course site for both graduate and undergraduate students in this course.

**Instructor's Homepage:** <<http://www.wku.edu/~judith.szerdahelyi>>

**401/G Course Site:** <<http://www.wku.edu/~judith.szerdahelyi/NewWebsite/401web/401online.html>>

**Video syllabus:** <[http://www.wku.edu/~judith.szerdahelyi/NewWebsite/401web/401web\\_syllabus.html](http://www.wku.edu/~judith.szerdahelyi/NewWebsite/401web/401web_syllabus.html)>

#### CONTACT ME

Please note that our time zone is **Central Time** USA, and our course language is **English**.

- To get answers to your questions before the course starts (i.e. before the Blackboard (BB) course site has been updated), please use our [course wiki](#) to post questions and answers. We're building a course FAQ on our **Eng401GA71** wiki site.
- If you have questions about the course, assignments, etc. after BB is available; please post your question on the **Discussion Board** (DB). I'll get back to you within a few hours usually, but for safety's sake expect a max. 24-hour turnaround. Just like on the wiki, posting your question on the DB will allow your peers to view your questions and respond to them if they have the correct info.
- Please leave email communication with your instructor for emergencies. If you do have an emergency, you will probably get an answer within minutes. Email, and not my office phone, is the fastest way to reach me.
- Additional options for communication are video chat via Yahoo Messenger or Skype. I try to avoid typing since I'm very slow.
- We will also have one-on-one student-teacher conferences on the phone at certain scheduled times. Please do not call my home or cell phone number without a previous arrangement.
- Since I usually work at home and not in my office, I tend to forget to check my voicemail.

**PREREQUISITES OF THE COURSE:** English 100 and 300

#### GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

This is a course in composing and talking about **creative nonfiction**. The assignments are designed to help you learn to function like working writers: you will compose your works and, at the same time, study other writers and familiarize yourselves with specific subgenres and certain elements of nonfiction (truth, voice, memory, composing processes, etc.). In other words, this course focuses on creative nonfiction from two

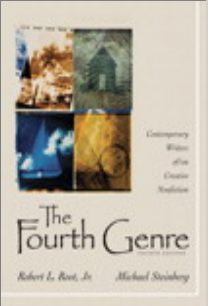


interrelated views: the practitioner's art and the critic's perspective. As your course book claims, it encourages you to learn the "craft the way most successful writers have learned theirs: by reading what other writers have written, by picking up tips and ideas from writers about the way they write, and by applying specific strategies culled from the readings to their own writing" (Root and Steinberg xvii).

## CONTENT AREAS OF THE COURSE

The course is organized around the following content areas:

Reading about creative nonfiction (CNF) theory; reading examples of CNF pieces; reflective reading responses; group/class discussions; awareness of reading and writing theory; CNF genres; style, truth & honesty; memory & imagination; voice; rhetorical context; effective writing process; habits of writing; writing workshop; self-evaluation; giving and getting feedback from peers, instructor, and online tutors at mycomplab.com; stages of revision; building writing confidence; advice for writers; good writing criteria; myths about writers and writing; best writing practices: do's & don'ts

## REQUIRED TEXTS

|                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                    |                                                                                         |                                                                                      |                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Root, Robert L., and Michael Steinberg. <i>The Fourth Genre: Contemporary Writers of/on Creative Nonfiction</i> . 4 <sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Longman, 2007. |  | King, Stephen. <i>On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft</i> . New York: Pocket Books, 2002. |  | Lamott, Anne. <i>Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life</i> . New York: Anchor Book, 1994. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

- The ability to analyze and apply effective writing techniques for creating texts in creative nonfiction (please refrain from fiction);
- Familiarity with what practitioners, scholars, and critics say about the various subgenres and purposes of creative nonfiction;
- An awareness that good writing is an authoring and crafting process made up of numerous steps and the ability to utilize those stages of the writing process that work best for you;
- A basic understanding of reading theory and how it helps your composing processes;
- The ability to work collaboratively on written assignments and to give constructive feedback to peers using technical language to critique works-in-progress;
- An enhanced writing confidence and finding your own voice;
- A willingness and ability to reflect on your own lives through the process of reading and writing about others;

## INSTRUCTOR'S ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

- Write the best paper(s) of your life and make your instructor famous by submitting something for publication ☺; (I collect acknowledgments—not stamps or some such thing)
- Have your own individual goals, agendas, and projects that you are working towards in this class, challenging yourself all the time;

- Learn something about writing that you have not had a chance to learn until now and that you consider important to learn before you graduate;

## ASSIGNMENTS

All your assignments are due on Blackboard's (BB) Discussion Board (DB). Please follow the Course Calendar to post assignments. The Course Calendar will tell you exactly what to post where and when. Be sure to use an accurate and meaningful subject line for your posts. Most of your assignments will be based on group work, so you have to be in close contact with your group members throughout the course and be a valuable group member. I will monitor your work all the time, even if I don't leave a message in response to your assignment. Be aware, however, that I will read postings randomly and won't read every word you ever write for this course. That would physically be impossible for any writing instructor at WKU. The quality of your posts has to be consistent. When it's my turn to give you feedback on your paper, I will read it carefully and go into much detail before I'm ready to schedule a phone conference with you. Since I'm trying to accommodate students with the conference schedule, it might take as long as ten days before you hear from me.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

You will write **two major essays**: one short piece (500-750 words) and one longer one (2000 words). You will prepare at least four initial rough drafts for the short piece and two for the long one. Peer feedback will help you decide which draft to choose for further revision before you submit it for a grade. I expect you to write papers because you have something to communicate and not because an assignment is due or you need credit to graduate. I invite you to take risks, to leave your comfort zones, experiment with writing, and try new forms, styles, genres, and tones when you decide on your assignments. You will never be punished if something doesn't work, as long as you write something else that does.

## READING ASSIGNMENTS

Reading assignments come from two major sources: (1) from your required course books and other published print or electronic materials and (2) from your peers' essays and DB posts. To pass this course, you will complete all the reading assignments and provide evidence that you have done so. Posting a well-composed, extensive reading-response piece on the DB is the easiest way to prove this.

## GRADES

### LIST OF CLASS REQUIREMENTS

- A short ("Brevity") piece (500-750 words) with four initial rough drafts and with substantial multiple revisions of one piece.
- A long piece (2000 words) with two initial rough drafts and substantial multiple revisions of one piece.
- Meaningful participation in class and group discussions and activities
- Evidence of completing all reading assignments by extensive and insightful reading-response postings (min. 300 words) on BB's Discussion Board by due date
- Three writing exercises of your choice from a list under BB's Assignments section
- Meaningful, constructive feedback on peers' essays (i.e. substantial, concrete suggestions to help peers' revision; write letter to all group members + two anonymous)
- End-of-term digital portfolio (possibly a personal/professional website with a reflective video file)
- Improved technology skills to enhance your future courses, career, etc. (through a video or website)

- project: digital storytelling with photos and other multimedia applications, video memoir, etc.)
- For graduate students, an additional (research) project to be discussed later

There are no exams in this class, only due dates for reading and writing assignments and a final digital portfolio. To pass the course, you have to complete all assignments and meet all course requirements. Your grade will be based on the **quality** of your work and **not on your effort**. Your work (papers, portfolio, reading-responses, feedback, etc.) will be assessed holistically. However, if you prefer rubrics to guide your writing, check out the link under External Links. Only major papers will receive letter grades in this course. All other assignments (such as reading-responses, journals assignments, etc.) receive either full credit, half credit, or no credit. I will keep track of your grades and your progress in general, but so should you. Although you are not going to get lot of grades in this course, you should never have to wonder about your performance if compare your work to that of others in class and the examples. Self-evaluation is what we do for the portfolio, too. Please keep all your documents and my feedback and/or grade until the end of the semester.

### Final grades are based on the following approximate distribution:

|    |                                                                                                                                                |       |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Portfolio cover letter (or reflective movie)                                                                                                   | 10%   |
| 2. | Revised Paper 1                                                                                                                                | 20%   |
| 3. | Revised Paper 2                                                                                                                                | 20%   |
| 4. | Participation (class and group discussions, DB postings, reading assignments, reliability as a group member, improved technology skills, etc.) | 20%   |
| 5. | Writing exercises                                                                                                                              | 15 %  |
| 6. | Feedback                                                                                                                                       | 15 %  |
| 7. | Total                                                                                                                                          | 100 % |

### GRADING SCALE

A is excellent; B is good; C is satisfactory; D is poor but passing; F is failure.

**Percentages:** 90% to 100% = A; 81% to 90% = B; 71% to 80% = C; 61% to 70% = D; 60% = F

### COURSE POLICIES

#### DEADLINES

Most of this class involves you directly in writing, responding, and reporting in small and large groups. Missing deadlines might have a negative effect on your peers' performance, especially during workshop cycles when you have to post your own work in time for others to critique and when you yourself have to give feedback on peers' papers in time for them to revise. Therefore, missing workshop deadlines and not allowing your peers enough time to give or receive feedback will have serious consequences, including a low participation grade. If you are forced to miss an assignment due to illness or an emergency, I'd rather that you post your reading response late than your workshop draft or feedback. I expect you to notify both your workshop group and me if "life happens" and you need an adjustment. Three late postings for reading responses are allowed without penalty as long as you keep all involved parties informed. Remember that keeping the communication channels open is crucial in this course.

#### CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY/PLAGIARISM

This class is held in accordance with the academic integrity policy of WKU. ([See Undergraduate Catalogue p. 26.](#)) Violating this policy will result in a failing grade for the course. For Plagiarism FAQ, see

[Composition Program's website.](#)

## STUDENT DISABILITY SERVICES

Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services, Room 445, Potter Hall. The OFSDS telephone number is (270) 745-5004 V/TDD. Please do not request accommodations directly from your instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

## REMINDERS

- To improve your writing skills, you have to write, write, write, and revise. Writing improves only by writing.
- When you choose your assignments, please refrain from pieces of fiction.
- Don't double-space your assignments online.
- Don't trust the spellchecker. Use your own judgment.
- Observe email etiquette. Use salutation and sign your messages.
- When sending email, please specify subject in subject line: "Eng 401/G-A71: Sick today;" otherwise your email might be overlooked.
- Don't send attachments via email and don't post assignments as attachments on BB. Keep virus definitions up-to-date.
- This syllabus has been digitized. Look for hyperlinks.
- Play it safe and have several electronic and paper copies of your work.

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- This course is based on the assumption that students are responsible for their own learning. What you put in the course is what you get. It is your responsibility to make the course work for you and improve your writing skills wherever you are. If you decide to stay in this course after reading the syllabus, I will assume that you agree to its terms and requirements.
- The schedule and procedures in this course are living documents and subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. Changes will be announced under BB's Announcements.
- Should there be any loopholes in these rules, I will decide the outcome and solution.
- I wish you an enjoyable and rewarding semester. I'm doing my best to make this course fun for you. Good luck with your studies!



Comments or questions about this document should be directed to [Judith.Szerdahelyi@wku.edu](mailto:Judith.Szerdahelyi@wku.edu).

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