MASTER SYLLABUS
ENGL 310 -- Writing Your Life: Form & Function in Memoirs
CIP Code: 231302

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Revised By: Phil LaMarche, April 2012
Revised By: Kirk Jones, February 2020

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LIBERAL ARTS
ENGLISH/HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT
October 2020
A. **TITLE**: Writing Your Life: Form & Function in Memoirs

B. **COURSE NUMBER**: ENGL 310

C. **CREDIT HOURS**:
   - 3 Credit Hours
   - 3 Lecture Hours: 3 per week
   
   Course Length: 15 Weeks

D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE**: Yes

E. **GER CATEGORY**: GER 8

F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED**: Spring

G. **COURSE DESCRIPTION**:
   
   In this writing intensive course, students study a variety of literary forms within the memoir genre, and they create memoirs of different forms from their own life experiences. Students recognize that both concrete details and abstract ideas in memoirs represent universal truths and create poems and stories that reflect both.

H. **PRE-REQUISITES/CO-COURSES**:
   
   a. Pre-requisite(s): ENGL 101
   b. Co-requisite(s): None

I. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**:

   By the end of this course, the student will:

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<tr>
<th>Course Student Learning Outcome [SLO]</th>
<th>PSLO</th>
<th>GER</th>
<th>ISLO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. analyze and evaluate, various literary forms of the memoir genre, including poetry, short prose works, and longer prose works.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 [W]</td>
<td>2[CA]</td>
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<td>b. create literary works, including poetry, short prose, and the beginning of a longer prose work that applies both their understanding of the genre as a whole and their understanding of the craft of writing within that genre</td>
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<td>1 [O,W]</td>
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   **KEY**

   Institutional Student Learning Outcomes [ISLO]
<table>
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<tr>
<th>ISLO #</th>
<th>ISLO &amp; Subsets</th>
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| 1     | Communication Skills  
Oral [O], Written [W] |
| 2     | Critical Thinking  
Critical Analysis [CA], Inquiry & Analysis [IA], Problem Solving [PS] |
| 3     | Foundational Skills  
Information Management [IM], Quantitative Lit./Reasoning [QTR] |
| 4     | Social Responsibility  
Ethical Reasoning [ER], Global Learning [GL], Intercultural Knowledge [IK], Teamwork [T] |
| 5     | Industry, Professional, Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills |

J. **APPLIED LEARNING COMPONENT:** Yes__X____  No_______

- Creative Works/Senior Project

K. **TEXTS:**

*The Liar’s Club* – Mary Karr  
*Riding in Cars With Boys* – Beverly Donofrio  
*America Street* – Ed. Anne Mazer  
*Going Where I’m Coming From: Memoirs of American Youth* – Ed. Anne Mazer  
*A River Runs Through It* – Norman McLean  
*Angela’s Ashes* – Frank McCourt  
*The Idiot Girls’ Action-Adventure Club* – Laurie Notaro  
*Stories from Fourth Genre* (Literary Magazine/Memoir/Michigan State UP)

L. **REFERENCES:**

*The Unlikely Event of a Water Landing* – Christopher Noel  
*Blackbird* – Jennifer Lauck  
*Cherry* – Mary Karr  
*Close to the Bone: Memoirs of Hurt, Rage, and Desire* – Ed. Laurie Stone  
*Imagining America: Stories from the Promised Land* – Eds. Brown & Ling  
*Turning Life Into Fiction* – Robin Hemley  
*Writing from Within* – Bernard Selling  
*Writing Personal Essays* – Shelia Bender  
*‘Tis* – Frank McCourt
M. **EQUIPMENT:** Lecture Room Sufficient for 25 Students; VCR or DVD player and television.

N. **GRADING METHOD:** A-F

O. **SUGGESTED MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:**

For successful completion of this course, students are required to develop a portfolio of work that includes poetry, short prose, and the beginnings of a longer prose work in the memoir genre of a minimum of 20 pages. They are also required to write a “reader response” journal that comments on all assigned readings for the course. In addition, they will complete in-class writing exercises and in-class oral discussions of the works being studied and of the works they created.

P. **DETAILED TOPICAL OUTLINE:** Attached

Q. **LABORATORY OUTLINE:** None

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**DETAILED OUTLINE**

**ENGL 310 -- WRITING YOUR LIFE: FORM & FUNCTION IN MEMOIRS**

**TOPICS**

I. Introduction

A. Truth vs. Fiction
   1. Defining the Genre
   2. Continuum of Literary Genres

B. Inventing the Truth
   1. Time and Memory
   2. Reconstructing the Past
   3. Transforming the Past

C. Views of Memory Theory
   1. Sigmund Freud
   2. John Cadre
3. Carl Jung

II. Poetry

A. The Essence of Memoirs in Poetry*
   1. “Mezzo Cammin” – Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
   2. “Mother to Son” – Langston Hughes
   3. “Driving to Town Late to Mail a Letter” – Robert Bly
   4. “I Shall Paint My Nails Red” – Carol Satyamurti
   5. “Home is so Sad” – Phillip Larkin
   7. “Thinking About Bill, Dead of AIDS” – Miller Williams
  10. “Night Driving” – Dick Allen
  11. “Flash Cards” – Rita Dove
  12. “My Candle Burns” – Edna St. Vincent Milay
*Poems listed are representative of types to be read/analyzed by students.

B. Poetic Form
   1. Writing Poems
   2. Poetic Devices
   3. Writing Exercises

III. Short Prose Works

A. Readings*
   1. “Eleven” – Sandra Cisneros
   2. “Arm Wrestling With My Father” – Brad Manning
   4. Going Where I’m Coming From – Edited by Anne Mazer
*Stories listed are representative of types to be read/analyzed by students.

B. Writing Prose
   1. Childhood Memories
      a. Freewriting
      b. Using Significant Details
      c. Point of View
      d. Beginnings, Middles, and Ends
      e. Writing Exercises
   2. Mother, Father, and Other Relatives
      a. Letters That Will Never Be Sent
      b. Characterization
c. Use of Poetic Devices in Prose
d. Writing Exercises
3. Mapping Places
   a. Drawing a Map
   b. Setting
   c. Creating Tension
   d. Writing Exercises
4. ‘Here is What I Call My Life’ Stories
   a. First Time Experiences
   b. Tone and Voice
   c. Social Issues and Moral Beliefs
   d. Writing Exercises
5. ‘Make ‘Em Laugh’ Stories
   a. Showing vs. Telling
   b. Writing Exercises
6. Family Stories
   a. The Use of Irony
   b. Writing Exercises
7. Writing about Tragedy, Rage & Desire
   a. Memoirs & the Idea of Therapy
   b. Writing Exercises

IV. Novel-length Memoirs

A. Readings*
   1. The Liar’s Club – Mary Karr
   2. Angela’s Ashes – Frank McCourt
*These are representative of the full-length memoirs that may be read/analyzed by students.

B. Writing a Full-Length Memoir
   1. Planning
   2. Technique
   3. First Chapters
   4. Self-Awareness, Self-Discipline, and Inspiration
   5. Achieving Distance vs. Writing in the Moment

V. Conclusion

A. The Function of Memoirs
B. Putting Together a Portfolio
C. Seeking Publication
D. Giving Public Readings