

**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
CANTON, NEW YORK**



MASTER SYLLABUS

ENGL 310 -- Writing Your Life: Form & Function in Memoirs

CIP Code: 231302

**Prepared By: Cindy Lou Daniels
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:

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

KEY

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes [ISLO]

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

J. APPLIED LEARNING COMPONENT: Yes X No _____

- **Creative Works/Senior Project**

K. TEXTS:

Greywolf Annual Three: Essays, Memoirs, & Reflections – Ed. Walker
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 Maclean
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

Writing for Your Life—Ed. Jonathan Bing
This Boy's Life—Tobias Wolff
Bastard Out of Carolina – Dorothy Allison
A Child Called It –Dave Pelzer
Escaping Into the Open—Elizabeth Berg

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

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
6. “The Snow Globe” – Howard Nemerov
7. “Thinking About Bill, Dead of AIDS” – Miller Williams
8. “The Writer” –Richard Wilbur
9. “Ex-Basketball Player” – John Updike
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
3. “The Sow in the River” –Mary Clearman Blew
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