Wayne State University
College of Education
Fall 2016

Syllabus

Memoir Writing for Teachers

Division: Teacher Education
Program Area: Reading, Language, & Literature
Course: RLL 7600 Special Topics: Memoir Writing for Teachers
Day/Time: Thursdays, 5:00 – 7:45 p.m.
September 1, 15, 29
October 13, 27
Location: Room 200, College of Education
Instructor: Dr. Gina DeBlase
Office: 233 College of Education
Contact Information: 313-577-0960 (office)
313-577-4091 (fax)
GinaDeBlase@wayne.edu

Office Hours: For an appointment to meet in my office or via Skype, please email directly at GinaDeBlase@wayne.edu. My Skype name is Gina.DeBlase. Please email me directly to schedule an appointment.

Situating Ourselves as Literacy Teachers

“We must contemplate our own perspective and experience of the world to know and interact with others. We must also honor in others that which we claim for ourselves, that same uniqueness of place and time. From our own time and space, others help us know the self even more. It is an ever-evolving and dialogical process where we are constantly looking inward and outward” (p. 32)

Just Playing the Part”: Engaging Adolescents in Drama and Literacy (Language and Literacy Series); Christopher Worthman, Caroline Heller (2002) Teachers College Press.

This course is concerned with “the question about teaching that goes unasked in our national dialogue – and often goes unasked even in the places where teachers are educated and employed. But it should be asked wherever good teaching is at stake, for it honors and challenges the teacher’s heart, and it invites a deeper inquiry than our traditional questions do. … Who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form – or deform – the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and

Course Description: This one-credit course sets out to explore what you, as a teacher or teacher candidate already know, how you know these things and how you use this knowledge to make sense of literacy education. How is your awareness of your own history reflected in your approach to teaching? What are your own literacies? How do you address the unique needs of your students in your approach?

The work we will do across views learning to teach as a process of becoming more clearly aware of the ever-expanding landscape in which and through which we live our lives and suggests that we become more fully conscious of ourselves in that landscape. In a writing workshop format, our major focus will be an inquiry into our own lives through memoir writing. This writing will include family history, childhood stories, becoming and growing-up-as-a-teacher stories, coming-to-consciousness stories, situating-self-in-history stories, etc. We will draft more pieces than we revise as we become aware of how significant and everyday experiences and people shape our sense of self, both personally and professionally. Looking across our stories, we will reflect on issues of growth and change, and how experiences shape perspective.

Although the teaching of writing is not the focus of the course, we will be generating ideas, drafting, revising and editing our own writing – using strategies and processes which are very helpful for teaching our own students, too. We will share writing ideas and problems in presentations and in conversations, collaborating to form working writing groups. As we write, we will read published memoirs, but the major text for the class will be the drafts and revisions produced by class members.

Required Texts


Required Articles

Faust, Mark. “Mixing memory and desire: A family literacy event.” Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy 47.7 (April 2004): 564-72.


Additional References


**Course Requirements**

Active participation in discussion is expected in all classes. It is expected that you will come to class each week with a new draft of your writing and that you will actively participate in the work of your writing group.

- Select and introduce to the class two selections from *Modern American Memoirs.*
- Bring a new draft piece of writing to each class (see class schedule).
- Produce a final edited copy of one draft piece of writing and a final reflection.
- Each week, please bring to class enough copies of your writing (5 copies) for all members of your group and one copy for the instructor.

**Recommended**

Keep a journal for responding to prompts in class, generating ideas on your own, responding to the memoirs, your responses to your experiences in writing your memoir, your responses to others’ writing and comments on your writing, whatever else seems relevant. If you would like, you can submit this journal with your portfolio.

**Professional Commitment:** I anticipate that you will attend all class sessions and will make every effort to be here on time and to actively participate. Because we meet for only five class sessions, if you miss more than one class or are not in attendance for the entire class time, you will receive a failing grade. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, you will receive ½ an absence. Coming to class unprepared (not having done the required reading and/or not bringing new or substantially revised work to class) may result in failing the course. If extenuating circumstances cause you to miss more than one class, please discuss this with me as soon as possible and preferably before you miss class.

**Grading**

Because of the nature of the writing you will do in this course, I will not grade your work. However, the writing you bring to class each week must reflect a serious commitment to your work and the work of this class. I expect that every piece of writing you bring to class will show sustained and thoughtful effort. Writing that is completed at the last moment or does not strive to be your best work will likely result in an unsatisfactory grade.

Attributes of satisfactory writing at the draft stage include writing that:

- is clear and thoughtful
- is relevant to the topic and meets the requirements of the assignment
- uses details and description
- shows evidence of organization
- does not contain mechanical errors at the level that distract the reader
- Demonstrates effort of the student’s capability
Plagiarism
Plagiarism includes copying material (any more than 5 consecutive words) from outside texts or presenting outside information as if it were your own by not crediting authors through citations. It can be deliberate or unintended. If you're in doubt about the use of a source, cite it. Students caught plagiarizing information from other sources will receive a failing grade in the course. University policy states that students can be subject to multiple sanctions, from reprimand to expulsion as a consequence of academic dishonesty. To enforce this policy, all outside references must be submitted with assignments.

Withdrawal Policy
- Students who withdraw from a course after the end of the 4th week of class will receive a grade of WP, WF, or WN.
  - WP will be awarded if the student is passing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
  - WF will be awarded if the student is failing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
  - WN will be awarded if no materials have been submitted, and so there is no basis for a grade
- Students must submit their withdrawal request on-line through Pipeline. The faculty member must approve the withdrawal request before it becomes final, and students should continue to attend class until they receive notification via email that the withdrawal has been approved. Withdrawals can be requested at any point from the fifth week of class through the study day.

Attention Students with Disabilities
- Wayne State University is committed to providing students with disabilities an equal opportunity to benefit from its programs, services, and activities. If you have a disability that limits your participation in class in any way, please inform the professor and alterations in the course will be made. All printed materials are available in alternative formats.
- If you feel that the limitations imposed by your disability will interfere with your ability to successfully fulfill the requirements of this course, you are strongly encouraged to contact Educational Accessibility Services (EAS) in room 583 Student Center Building to request an accommodation. Phone number: (313) 577-1851.
- The EAS Student Handbook, found online at the link below, includes departmental procedures and policies, in addition to the many forms that may be used to request the services and accommodations that you desire.
  - [http://www.eas.wayne.edu](http://www.eas.wayne.edu)

Teacher Education Policy Statement on Graduate Student Dispositions and Academic Progress

Professionalism
Students admitted to a graduate program within the Division of Teacher Education are expected to conduct themselves professionally. The graduate student must exhibit personal and professional behaviors, including but not limited to integrity, honesty, and respect for others.
Individuals must use practical judgment to determine how to behave in a variety of situations. In classes, students are expected to give and accept constructive feedback. In addition, they are expected to take an active role in their learning and contribute to the learning of their peers.

**Professional Expectations**
Developing professionalism is one of the skills that the division emphasizes. The degree of professionalism that students develop in all of their interactions in the Wayne State University community will impact their ability to achieve their goals both in Teacher Education and in their career.

- The teacher takes initiative to grow and develop with colleagues through interactions that enhance practice and support student learning.
- The teacher understands the expectations of the profession including codes of ethics, professional standards of practice, and relevant law and policy.

**Academic Standards and Requirements**
Graduate students must make consistent and adequate progress toward degrees, endorsements, and/or certifications in their programs. In an effort to ensure program integrity in the Teacher Education Division, students must adhere to professional expectations and meet the following standards and requirements:

- Students who receive two grades of C+ or below will not be permitted to complete the program.
- Repeating courses to improve grades is only permitted once.
- Grade Point Averages must be 3.0 or higher for the coursework that is on the Plan of Work.
- The Plan of Work must be completed in the first semester after being admitted into the program for master level students and before 18 credits for doctoral level students.
- Students must meet with academic faculty advisors on a regular basis. Doctoral students must complete an Annual Review and an Individual Development Plan (IDP).
This plan is tentative. Expect changes in response to the evolving work of the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic/Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15</td>
<td>Origins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Read** journal articles:
- *Mixing memory and desire*
- *Writing and identity construction*
- *Linkages of nonfiction and selfhood.*

**Read:** From *Modern American Memoirs:
- *This Boy’s Life* (p. 193)
- *Facts of Life* (p. 68)

**Write:** *Origins* – (3-5 pages; bring 5 copies)

Make sure to select two selections from *Modern American Memoirs* and 2 alternate selections. We’ll sign-up for readings beginning Thursday, September 29. You will be responsible for introducing two readings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 29</th>
<th>Family History or Influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
**Read:** Two selections from *Modern American Memoirs* (to be determined on September 15)

**Write:** *Family History or Influences* – (3-5 pages; bring 5 copies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October 13</th>
<th>Critical Turning Point or Self in History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
**Read:** Two selections from *Modern American Memoirs*

**Write:** *Critical Turning Point or Situating Self in History* – (3-5 pages; bring 5 copies)
October 27

Read: Two selections from *Modern American Memoirs*

Read journal article: *Mapping our stories: Teachers’ reflections on themselves as writers.*

Write: *Teacher Story* – (3-5 pages; bring 5 copies)

---

*Final Reflection* (2-3 pages) and the final edited copy of one draft piece of writing may be submitted any time after the conclusion of the last class session but no later than the end of the day on Thursday, November 3. Send your paper as an email attachment to me at GinaDeBlase@wayne.edu