

AML 2410: Writing about Representations of Family History (sec. 1632), Fall 2017

Instructor Name: Ms. Alyssa Dewees

Course meeting times & locations: MAT 0108, TR 2-3/3

Office Location and Hours: TBA

Course website: Canvas

Instructor Email: adewees@ufl.edu

Course Description:

The concept of memories passed down through generations is arguably one of the most compelling themes in American Literature and one which allows Americans to explore their own identity. This course will focus on the inter-generational transmission of memory in American Literature, interrogating stories of individual and collective origin. Our discussions of texts concerning ancestry will question the way memories are transmitted through generations as well as how this process plays out in literature. It will also question how the individual relates to inherited collective and family histories which the individual was unable to witness—particularly those connected to a violent or traumatic past (including immigration, colonialism, and slavery). While the course will focus on texts that imagine a collective American story of origin, it also considers texts that present an individual's engagement with an un-lived family history. Finally, the course will examine how stories of American origin or ancestry are imagined, created, and disseminated, assessing their effects on a diverse and perpetually changing American population.

The assignments for this course will require students to read, analyze, and construct arguments concerning the assigned texts. Students will write three short essays throughout the semester as well as submit a series of short reading responses.

General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.

- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Required Texts:

Rita Dove, *Thomas and Beulah*

LeAnne Howe, *Shell Shaker*

Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*

Junot Díaz, *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*

William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*

William Carlos Williams, *In the American Grain*

Course Requirements (see below for Grading Rubric):

Focused Observations (200 points total)

Students will keep a journal to be submitted for a grade three times (**September 26th, October 26th, and November 21st**). The journal is a place to record and develop responses to your reading, to raise questions and explore uncertainties, to float hypotheses, compile evidence, record and (later) correct first impressions, make connections, complain and praise. **The journal is not for summarizing the assigned reading.** While the journals are less structured and more informal than the major essays, you will still be aiming for insightful analysis and interpretation. Interpretation means making claims (even hypothetical sketchy claims) about possible meanings and relations between things. Analysis means breaking things down into parts (in part to explore or support interpretations, often). It is most important to move beyond first responses and also to move beyond ‘like’ and ‘dislike’. (Go there, but don’t stop there.) You should be writing 1-2 typed, double-spaced pages (or equivalent, handwritten) per week. (With journals, more is always okay, too—in fact more is almost always better.) The highest grades go to the most inquisitive, persistent, detailed, thoughtfully reflective and effectively probing journals.

Family Photo Introductory Essay (500 words, 50 points)

Students will be asked to bring in a family photo and write about the photo (where it was taken, why, etc.) as well as its significance to them. For this assignment, “family” can be as broadly and creatively defined as the student likes.

Close-Reading/Analysis Essay (1,500 words, 200 points)

This essay will be a sustained close-reading of any text on our syllabus which appears on or before the end of Week 7 to be turned in **October 12th**.

Researched Critical Essay (2,000 words, 350 points)

This essay will be a sustained, formally researched critical analysis in which you will make an original argument about one or more literary text(s) through a particular theoretical, historical, or critical lens. This assignment will be turned in **December 7th**.

Attendance/Daily Participation (200 points)

The majority of class time will be spent reading, analyzing, and discussing the assigned texts and learning in workshops on writing and researching. For these reasons, daily and engaged participation is a priority in this course. All students should participate every day in some fashion, whether through offering points of view, raising questions, asking for clarification, and/or writing when it is required. Furthermore, peer

reviews and reading quizzes will count towards this score. **For every class period, please come to class with 3 written questions or insights about the reading that you are prepared to share. You may be called upon to share one of these.**

Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance: Attendance:* In accordance with the University of Florida's policy (which can be found at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>), **if a student misses more than six periods during a fall or spring semester, he or she will fail the entire course. Missing class on a double period counts as two absences. Exceptions to this policy include only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed.**
3. *Paper Format & Submission:* All papers will be submitted as MS Word (.docx) documents to E-learning or as hard copies. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and pages numbered. Be sure to staple papers before submitting hard copies.
4. *Late Papers/Assignments:* Unless an extension is granted before the due date, late assignments will be accepted with a 10% deduction for every day the paper is late. No late assignments will be accepted more than 5 days beyond the due date. In-class reading quizzes cannot be made up.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.
7. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.
8. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
9. *Grade Appeals.* In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
10. *Course Evaluations.* Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx>
11. Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>
12. *UF's policy on Harassment:* UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>

Course Schedule

This schedule is tentative and subject to change throughout the semester. All assignments and readings are due the day they are listed*. Make sure to check your e-mail and Canvas regularly for announcements and updates.

***Approximately every 2 weeks you'll receive a list of "Themes to Consider" which connect the previous weeks readings to the upcoming readings alongside a list of "Questions about the Upcoming Readings." This list may help you to draw connections between past and present reading assignments. Reading over and thinking about this list will always be part of the assigned homework.**

| Wk | Day | Reading/Viewing Material | Due |
|----|---------|--|--|
| 1 | T 8/22 | Introduction; In-class viewing: Carrie Mae Weems, <i>Family Pictures and Stories</i> | |
| | R 8/24 | Weems, <i>Family Pictures and Stories</i> ; bell hooks, "In Our Glory: Photography and Black Life" | |
| 2 | T 8/29 | Ralph Eugene Meatyard, <i>The Family Album of Lucybelle Crater</i> ; Bring in family photograph | |
| | R 8/31 | Marianne Hirsch, <i>Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory</i> : "Introduction" | |
| 3 | T 9/5 | Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> | Family Photo Introductory Essay |
| | R 9/7 | Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> | |
| 4 | T 9/12 | Rita Dove, <i>Thomas and Beulah</i> | |
| | R 9/14 | Rita Dove, <i>Thomas and Beulah</i> | |
| 5 | T 9/19 | Jamaica Kincaid, from <i>The Autobiography of My Mother</i> | |
| | R 9/21 | LeAnne Howe, <i>Shell Shaker</i> | Focused Observations Due |
| 6 | T 9/26 | LeAnne Howe, <i>Shell Shaker</i> | |
| | R 9/28 | LeAnne Howe, <i>Shell Shaker</i> | |
| 7 | T 10/3 | LeAnne Howe, <i>Shell Shaker</i> | |
| | R 10/5 | Writing Day; Peer Review | Close-Reading and Analysis Draft Due; Peer Review Due |
| 8 | T 10/10 | Maxine Hong Kingston, from <i>The Woman Warrior</i> | |

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| | R 10/12 | Amy Tan, <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> | Close-Reading and Analysis Due |
| 9 | T 10/17 | Amy Tan, <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> | |
| | R 10/19 | Amy Tan, <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> | |
| 10 | T 10/24 | Toni Morrison, from <i>Playing in the Dark</i> | |
| | R 10/26 | Gwendolyn Brooks, "To the Diaspora" Saidya Hartman, from <i>Lose Your Mother</i> | Focused Observations Due |
| 11 | T 10/31 | Junot Díaz, <i>The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> | |
| | R 11/2 | Junot Díaz, <i>The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> | |
| 12 | T 11/7 | Junot Díaz, <i>The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> | |
| | R 11/9 | Junot Díaz, <i>The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> | |
| 13 | T 11/14 | William Faulkner, <i>As I Lay Dying</i> | |
| | R 11/16 | William Faulkner, <i>As I Lay Dying</i> | |
| 14 | T 11/21 | William Faulkner, <i>As I Lay Dying</i> | Focused Observations Due |
| | R 11/23 | Thanksgiving Break | |
| 15 | T 11/28 | William Carlos Williams, <i>In the American Grain</i> | |
| | R 11/30 | William Carlos Williams, <i>In the American Grain</i> | Researched Critical Essay Draft Due |
| 16 | T 12/5 | William Carlos Williams, <i>In the American Grain</i> | |
| | R 12/7 | Final Course Discussion | Researched Critical Essay Due |

Grading/Assessment Rubric

Assessment Rubric

| | SATISFACTORY | UNSATISFACTORY |
|---------|---|--|
| CONTENT | Papers exhibit evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide an adequate | Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off- topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion |

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| | discussion with basic understanding of sources. | of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources. |
| ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE | Documents and paragraphs exhibit identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement and topic sentences. | Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader. |
| ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT | Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments. | Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis. |
| STYLE | Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical structure. | Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly. |
| MECHANICS | Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the satisfactory range, papers may contain a few spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive and do not obscure the paper's argument or points. | Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility. |