English 485.01W: Memoirs (Online)
COURSE SYLLABUS: Summer II 2012
Dr. Robin Anne Reid

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COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Textbook(s) Required: Increasingly in my creative writing courses, I am not requiring textbooks because so many excellent resources exist online, created by writers, editors, and agents. I have put together a list of online resources (about writing memoirs in general, and general resources for students wishing to publish their work, regardless of genre).

Course Description: English 485 is an advanced creative writing course. The class assumes that students are familiar with the principles of peer response/workshopping (taught in the introductory creative writing course which is a prerequisite). The advanced creative writing courses focus closely on a single genre which will change each time the class is taught. Students can take the course twice for credit when the genre changes. This term’s focus is memoirs. Prerequisite: English 315.

Course Outcomes:

1. Learners will demonstrate that they are active and engaged members of our learning community. This outcome will be assessed by evaluation of participation in the Course Discussion and Writing Workshops.
2. Learners will demonstrate that they are able to critique rough drafts of their classmates’ work by identifying structural elements, describing the effects, and offering constructive suggestions for revision. This outcome will be assessed by evaluation of selected peer response posts in the Writing Workshops.
3. Learners will demonstrate that they understand basic conventions of the genre of memoir, or life writing. This outcome will be assessed by evaluation of the Portfolio and the Revision Journal.
4. Learners will demonstrate that they have engaged in a writing process over the course of the semester which show revision on the global as well as surface levels. This outcome will be assessed by evaluation of the multiple drafts handed in throughout the semester and by the Revision Journal.
Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Learners will demonstrate that they are able to critique rough drafts of their classmates’ work by identifying structural elements, describing the effects, and offering constructive suggestions for revision. This outcome will be assessed by evaluation of selected peer response posts in the Writing Workshops.
2. Learners will demonstrate that they are able to critique rough drafts of their classmates and that they have engaged in a writing process over the course of the semester which show revision on the global as well as surface levels. This outcome will be assessed by evaluation of the multiple drafts handed in throughout the semester and by the Revision Journal.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Students will access and follow all course instructions found in the content area of the eCollege/NExT course.
2. Students will listen to all online lectures. Online lectures are collected on the "Lectures" Page.
3. Students will use the eCollege discussion tool to post to classmates in assigned discussions, including the Writing Workshop discussions.
4. Students will complete and submit assignments electronically using the eCollege dropbox tool/tab or assigned discussions.
5. Students will access their grades in the eCollege gradebook, including comments uploaded in eCollege as well as marked on drafts that have been uploaded.

Instructional Methods and Activities Assessments

Assignments in a creative writing class reflect the activities writers do: writing rough drafts, getting feedback, revising after feedback, revising further, then preparing final drafts for submission.

We will be doing all of these during the five-week summer term: the element that I include in the longer terms (researching potential publication markets for submission) no longer applies.

“Grading” creative writing is difficult especially if one is devoted to the philosophy of process which is that that good writing comes from multiple revisions. A grade shuts down revision.

In the real world, of course, writing is never graded, but readers make judgments all the time: to read or not to read, often after only a paragraph or two. Editors have only two grades: pass (they’ll print it) or fail (they reject it). Perhaps some will print it after you do some revisions.
The ideal writing workshop would not grade writing, but a class in the university system requires a final grade. I grade students on effort, participation, responses and improvement as well as on quality of work. Whenever I grade writing, my criteria are commitment and revision as well as quality. For this class, you will be evaluated in four areas:

1. 50%: Your own writing (brainstorming, first drafts, second drafts, third drafts)
2. 30%: Your constructive responses to your peers
3. 20%: Your Revision Journals (where you write informally about your revision; there are two of them assigned this term)

Grading

The class grade is based on a 100 point system, with each assignment being assigned a specific weight (percentage) of the grade. I have set up the gradebook with the assignments weighted: your grades will be entered in percentages, which the program will translate to "points earned."

If at any time you have a question or concern about your grade (which only you and I can access), please contact me (by email or by posting in the appropriate Dropbox). Please do not post about grades in the Virtual Office which is a public space.

90-100% = A  
80-89% = B  
70-79% = C  
60-69% = D  
59-lower = F

**ACCESS AND NAVIGATION, TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS, TECH SUPPORT**

This course will be taught entirely using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: https://leo.tamu-commerce.edu/login.aspx.

You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamu-commerce.edu.

Since this course will be offered partially online, special requirements must be considered. First, and perhaps most important, is that the student enrolled in this course must have access to a computer with the necessary software and services. The following information has been provided to assist you in preparing to use technology successfully in this course.

- Internet access/connection – high speed recommended (not dial-up)
- Word Processor (i.e. MS Word or Word Perfect)

Additionally, the following hardware and software are necessary to use eCollege:

Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you are using a Windows operating system (XP or newer) and a recent version of Microsoft Internet Explorer (6.0, 7.0, or 8.0).

Your courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, eCollege also supports the Firefox browser (3.0) on both Windows and Mac operating systems.

It is strongly recommended that you perform a “Browser Test” prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login in to eCollege, click on the 'myCourses' tab, and then select the “Browser Test” link under Support Services.

If your computer and internet services do not meet the minimum requirements for eCollege, you are welcome to use any of the computer labs on campus.

Secondly, it is also vital that the student have a working knowledge of the hardware and software they will be using. The Distance Education Department maintains a FAQ page for students taking online and web-enhanced courses. The web address for this information can be found at http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/itde/FAQs.asp.

eCollege Student Technical Support

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of eCollege. The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Chat Support: Click on 'Live Support' on the tool bar within your course to chat with an eCollege Representative.

Phone: 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Email: helpdesk@online.tamuc.org to initiate a support request with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Help: Click on the 'Help' button on the toolbar for information regarding working with eCollege (i.e. How to submit to dropbox, How to post to discussions etc...)

If you run into problems accessing eCollege through the standard online class link, try this alternate College web address is: http://online.tamuc.org
COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

I have regular office hours in my office for face-to-face meetings and phone calls. I do not expect students to come to campus if they are enrolled in online courses, but I expect them to realize they may contact me by phone during those office hours.

However, the official medium of communication for the university is email which is handled through our eCollege platform.

All email correspondence for this course will be sent to student myLeo email accounts.

An Adobe Presenter/Breeze presentation is available to demonstrate how to access your Leo email: [http://breeze.tamu-commerce.edu/myleomail/](http://breeze.tamu-commerce.edu/myleomail/). Please make it a habit to check email often and log in to the course daily to stay connected with the class.

Warning: Because this course is offered entirely online, the only way to verify that people emailing me are the students registered in the class is via their email accounts. Please use your official university email if you must email me, especially if you have questions about a grade.

I post information in the "Class Announcements" section of our online course and send it out via email to make sure students get the information in a timely manner. You are responsible for checking your university email and the Class Announcements at least once a week.

INSTRUCTOR, UNIVERSITY, AND DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE AND LANGUAGES PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Take some time to read: university faculty have a good deal of latitude in some of their policy areas.

The first set of policy statements are mine.

The second set of policy statements are mandated by the University and Department of Literature and Languages.

By staying in the class after reading this syllabus, you are contractually obligated to meet class requirements and follow *all* class policies.
Instructor Policies

Late Work: Late work will not be given any credit. In this class, "late" means anytime after the No Penalty Zone (NPZ). However, all the assignments must be turned in; since revision is built into the class, your best choice is to turn whatever you have in even if it is not perfect. Please understand I do not expect perfection (not even in "final" drafts for a semester course, whether five or sixteen weeks); what I do want to see is improvement!

The weekly due dates are always Friday, at midnight; the No Penalty Zone is Sunday at midnight.

WARNING ABOUT NPZ: always aim to complete your work by the original midnight deadline; then, if life intervenes, you have a safety net. If you aim to complete your work by the NPZ and life intervenes, which it will, there will be no safety net. Keep in mind that the grading in this class rewards the revision process, including effort, so not turning in work because it's "not perfect" is counterproductive to the entire philosophy of the course.

If you have a medical condition or emergency which affects your ability to do the work for this class, please email me as soon as possible with documentation.

University & Department Policies

Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism: Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. Academic dishonesty can also include writing assignments for someone else, turning in papers someone else wrote for you, and tests that you took for someone else or that someone else took for you. Turning in work written for another class is also dishonest.

A "Positive Learning Environment" is one which allows and encourages contemplation, thoughtful discourse and critical analysis of information. Since almost all contact will be take place via electronic means, it is important to be courteous and respectful in responding to ideas that may differ from yours. This is an educational environment, and therefore each student should exhibit a decorum that lends itself to the intellectual exchange of views and ideas.

Literature and Languages Policy on Plagiarism: Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty such as collusion. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b [1, 2, 3])
The Department of Literature and Languages defines plagiarism as occurring when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Simply having a list of sources at the end of the project does not sufficiently meet the academic standards for acknowledging sources. The Department defines collusion as selling academic products (any written or recorded or pictorial material intended to be submitted to satisfy an academic requirement). You must acknowledge and document all sources (quoted and paraphrased) in your formal report. Documentation requires clear identification within the text (embedded in your sentences or in parentheses, endnotes, or footnotes) of the source for material that has been summarized, paraphrased in your own words, or quoted directly. Page numbers must be given for direct quotes.

Plagiarism is not excused by saying "I did not mean to do it!" Intentional and unintentional plagiarism will both result in a failing grade on an assignment, or, in repeated cases, in a failing grade for this class.

Plagiarism or collusion will result in an automatic failing grade on the assignment. A second instance of plagiarism or collusion will result in an automatic F for the class. If you have declared a major, I will notify your Department Head and the Dean of your college of your plagiarism. A report of the incident will also be filed with the Office of the Dean of Students. This report may stay on your permanent collegiate record and you may also be subject to further disciplinary action being taken by the university.

Online resources on plagiarism:

http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml

Creative writing courses may include "imitatio" exercises (imitation exercises) where students can choose to imitate a published work to learn a technique. In such exercises, students are expected to identify the work being imitated in the assignment that is turned in.

Courtesy: All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student’s Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, conduct).

Drop Policy: The university drop policy has recently changed because of state mandates.

Effective Fall 2008, a course dropped after census date in a term will receive a grade of “Q”. Drops with “Q” grade will not affect the GPA overall status, but are counted as attempted hours and count towards the 6 drop rule, three-peat, 45-hour and 30-hour rule. Graduate students are not subject to the six-drop rule, but will have the advantage of the “Q” grade. The date information can be found here and is listed each term in the Schedule:
A student may drop a course by logging into their myLeo account and clicking on the hyperlink labeled 'Drop a class' from among the choices found under the myLeo section of the Web page.

**Incomplete Grades:** The Incomplete grade is reserved for those students who have been active in class and have maintained a passing grade until nearly the end of the course. If circumstances in the last few weeks make it impossible for a student to hand in the last assignments(s), then the Incomplete can be granted. The student must supply documentation concerning the circumstances that have made it impossible for course work to be completed.

Students who have failed to turn in assignments in earlier weeks are *not* eligible for an Incomplete and will not be granted one. Anyone who is unable to complete the work in the semester they are enrolled will not be able to do it alone in the following term. If the missing work is not handed in by the end of the next long semester, the grade automatically goes to an F, by university policy. There is no appeal for that grade.

Since this class is an online class you should be aware of the following university policy: You will be required to complete the course outside of the eCollege platform. The class platform is available for student access for only two weeks after the close of each semester.

**Students with Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**  
Texas A&M University-Commerce  
Gee Library  
Room 132  
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835  
Fax (903) 468-8148  
StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu
COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR
SUMMER II 2012
July 9-August 9

Week 1  July 9-13
Read:  All Class Assignments (uploaded in the Class Assignments Unit and
       Doc.Sharing)
Post:  Introduction to Class (Introduction Discussion in Discussions Unit)
Upload: Brainstorming Assignments (Brainstorming Dropbox)

Week 2  July 16-20
Read:  Classmates' Introductions
Post:  Responses to three classmates
Post:  First Draft Materials (1000 words) (Writing Workshop 1 discussion)
Upload: First Draft Materials (1000 words) to First Drafts Week 2 Dropbox

Week 3  July 23-27
Read:  First Draft Materials
Post:  Responses (to three classmates)
Post:  First Draft Materials (1000 words) (to Writing Workshop 2 discussion)
Upload: First Draft Materials (1000 words) to First Drafts Week 3 Dropbox

Week 4  July 30--August 3
Read:  First Draft Materials
Post:  Responses to three classmates
Post:  Second Draft Materials (2500 words) (to Writing Workshop 3 discussion)
Upload: Second Draft Materials (2500 words) to Second Drafts Week 4 Dropbox
Upload: Revision Journal #1 to Revision Journal Dropbox (there is only one)

Week 5  August 6-9 (FOUR DAY WEEK)
Post:  Third Draft Materials (3000 words) (to Writing Workshop 4 discussion)
Upload: Third Draft Materials (3000 words) to Third Drafts Week 5 Dropbox
Upload: Revision Journal #2 to Revision Journal Dropbox (there is only one)
Memoirs/Life Writing Resources List

The Association of Personal Historians

http://www.personalhistorians.org/

Tell Your Story--Connect Generations

http://www.personalhistorians.org/tell/tell_your_story.php

Creative Writing Now

How to Write a Memoir

http://www.creative-writing-now.com/how-to-write-a-memoir.html

Has a lot of links to other pages that might interest you

Karenzo Media

How to start Writing Your Memoirs: The Timeline

http://karenrager.tripod.com/id16.html

National Association of Memoir Writers

http://www.namw.org/

Always look to see if there's a professional organization and what they offer you as an aspiring author!

William Zinsser

How to write a memoir: Be yourself, speak freely, and think small

http://theamericanscholar.org/how-to-write-a-memoir/

Note: I often encourage students to look for other resources beyond the ones I supply. Be aware that in the case of memoirs/life writing, there are an awful lot of people online who have sites that want the writers to pay them money for various services: in most cases, I strongly discourage my students from every paying money to get their work published (publishers pay writers money, not the other way around). We'll talk more about this issue in class.