

Professor Julie Bleha (jb1378@nyu.edu)

k10.0347, Writing Seminar I, The Gallatin School, NYU: Writing the Self

Autumn 2008, T Th 2.00pm – 3.15pm, 48 Cooper Square, Room 104

Office and Office Hours: 715 Broadway, Room 431, T 1pm – 2pm, 212 998 7329

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Course Description This term, we will explore how writers create and express the idea of selfhood, most particularly in the autobiography. While some of the pieces we will study are not explicitly named as autobiographies, they all encounter and grapple with the notion of how identity is formed and presented. We will explore how writers – including yourselves – choose to represent the self: What do they choose to include or exclude from their narratives? In what genre do they choose to produce (e.g. literature, drama, new media)? From what context(s) do they choose to start (e.g. socio-political, historical, spiritual)? Through this exploration, we may see how they come to self-awareness and in turn, how individual selves relate to larger formations of identity, including faith-based, historical, ethnic, or gendered affiliations. For one class period, we will attend an informational session at Bobst Library.

Readings I have ordered inexpensive and/or used paperback editions whenever possible (please buy editions indicated); the Hacker, Malcolm X, and Woolf are on order at Shakespeare and Company, 716 Broadway at Washington Place.

Works:

A Pocket Style Manual, Diana Hacker (Bedford)

Confessions, Jean Jacques Rousseau, <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/3913>

La respuesta a Sor Filotea, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Blackboard)

Dancing With the Devil, Brooke Berman (Blackboard)

History and Memory, Rea Tajiri (DVD - class viewing)

Persepolis, Marjane Satrapi (DVD – on reserve at Avery Fisher Center, Bobst Library)

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (excerpt), Harriet Jacobs

The Education of Henry Adams (excerpt), Henry Adams

The Autobiography of Malcolm X, Malcolm X with Alex Haley (Ballantine)

“Sketch of the Past” in *Moments of Being*, Virginia Woolf (Pimlico)

Participation This is one of the most important aspects of the class; informed engagement is vital. Thus, you should prepare for class by thoughtful and attentive reading of – and carefully considered responses to – the works. This goes for both the works on the reading list and your colleagues’ writing. Since this is a seminar class, your input is essential. In addition, you should consider the value of listening as akin to that of speaking up.

Each student will lead a class discussion on a reading of your choice. Choose a brief passage from the reading of the day: it should be one you find particularly interesting, provocative, or even confounding. Type up the passage on a page, or (if a longer one, notate it). Next, formulate two questions or comments related to the passage. The first question will require the class to focus on the lines themselves in an analytic way (i.e. break something down into its component parts); the second question will require the class to relate the passage to the work as a whole or to the focus of the course as a whole. Type the questions on the same page as the passage, and bring enough copies of this compendium to distribute to the class. In addition, be

prepared to start the discussion by telling the class why you picked this passage, and why and how you went about formulating the questions you did.

Written Work You will prepare four short papers (approximately three to five pages each). Each paper will have a draft and revision component, though the timing and process for each of them may be different (check the schedule). We will explore ways to define the ideas about which we care to write, how to develop those ideas both through obvious (explicit, technical) means and not-so-obvious (cross-curricular inquiry, instinctual vs. intellectual responses) means.

All formal written work must be typed in Times New Roman, 12-pitch font, with 1" margins all around, double-spaced, and stapled if more than one page in length. Do not give a separate title page; instead, on page one, give your full name, the class number, and the date. Every paper, including draft versions, should be titled (centered, below name, class, and date), with all pages numbered. Using MLA documentation, give in-text citations and a works cited section at paper's end when necessary. Papers not following this format will not be accepted; part of your work in this class is to begin developing a writer's discipline and these requirements are part of that charge.

On occasion, we will do informal writing exercises in class. Also, there will be brief, ungraded written responses and other homework assignments given for various pieces we read. I suggest you collate all such writing exercises and responses so that you may refer to them as the term progresses. I may request to see these collated writings at any time during the term.

Workshops Writing Seminar I focuses on the various stages of the writing process, including freewriting, drafting, revising and polishing essays. Prominent in this course is a workshop component in which you act as a peer commentator on your colleagues' work and receive and incorporate critical commentary from them as well. For those sessions, you will bring copies of your work to class and distribute them to your colleagues; it is absolutely essential that you come prepared for the workshop sessions, which means printing beforehand and bringing enough copies for the group to read. If you would like feedback or guidance on your work outside of the classroom, you may attend my office hours to discuss your writing. You may also make use of the Gallatin Writing Center, which is at 715 Broadway, Room 423.

Attendance and Lateness If you are absent, it is your responsibility to keep up with the readings, and to find out what was discussed in class. Two extreme latenesses equal one absence. More than three unexcused absences and/or excessive latenesses, and your grade will be adversely affected. The seminar depends on your presence for its success as a forum for learning.

Plagiarism and Social Responsibility Why are these two matters linked? Because if you plagiarize – cheat – you are dishonest not only towards the person from whom you have stolen ideas and/or wording, and not only towards the instructor to whom you are presenting this work as your own. You are also cheating the community of learners in your class – and yourself. Of course, there are also serious academic repercussions in addition to the metaphysical ones. Don't plagiarize.

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Overall classwork & participation (including preparatory reading, reader responses, presentations, discussion, and workshop contributions)	30%
In-class presentation	10%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	15%
Paper 3	15%
Paper 4	20%

Schedule (“P” followed by # means Paper 1, etc.; “V” followed by # means first version, etc.)

T 9.2	Introduction. Discuss materials of inquiry, goals, and strategies. Freewrite.
Th 9.4	Discuss poems. Discuss self-portrait objects.
T 9.9	*Meet in Bobst Library lobby for library session.
Th 9.11	<u>Early Modern Voices</u> <i>La respuesta</i> . Discussion; one-page reader response due .
T 9.16	<i>Confessions</i> , Book 1. Freewrite. Discuss ideas for P1 (narrative paper).
Th 9.18	Workshop P1/V1. <i>Confessions</i> , Book 2. Discussion.
T 9.23	Workshop P1/V2. <i>Confessions</i> , Book 3.
Th 9.25	<i>Confessions</i> , Book 4. One-page reader response due .
T 9.30	P1 final version due , with all versions attached. <i>Confessions</i> , Books 5-6. Freewrite.
Th 10.2	<u>Imaginative Autobiographies</u> <i>Dancing with the Devil</i> . One-page reader response due . Discuss P2 ideas (descriptive paper).
T 10.7	<i>History and Memory</i> . Watch and discuss.
Th 10.9	Workshop P2/V1 (focus on opening ¶s). <i>Persepolis</i> . Discussion; one-page reader response due .
T 10.14	No class – Columbus Day.
Th 10.16	Workshop P2/V2.

- T 10.21 P2 final version **due**, with all versions attached.
Historical and Political Selves.
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Discussion and freewrite.
- Th 10.23 *The Education of Henry Adams.* Discussion; one-page reader response **due**.
- T 10.28 *Malcolm X*, pages TBD.
- Th 10.30 *Malcolm X*, pages TBD.
One- to two-page idea essay on historical autobiographies **due**.
- T 11.4 *Malcolm X*, pages TBD. Discussion and freewrite.
Workshop ideas for P3 (literary criticism paper).
- Th 11.6 *Malcolm X*, pages TBD. Discussion and freewrite.
One- to two-page idea essay on P3 ideas **due**.
- T 11.11 **Workshop** P3/V1.
- Th 11.13 **Workshop** P3/V2.
- T 11.18 P3 final version **due**, with all versions attached.
Malcolm X, pages TBD. Discussion.
- Th 11.20 Workshop ideas for P4 (argument paper).
- T 11.25 **Workshop** P4, opening ¶s.
- Th 11.27 No class – Thanksgiving.
- T 12.2 **Workshop** P4/V1.
Writers on Life-Writing.
Sketch of the Past. Discussion and freewrite.
- Th 12.4 *Sketch of the Past.* One-page reader response **due**.
- T 12.9 The Age of Confession.
Recent memoirs of note (true and otherwise).
- Th 12.11 P4 final version **due**, with all versions attached.
Last class. Online blogs and video diaries.
Student evaluations.