

ENGL 4399.003: Senior Seminar
American Life Writing
 Fall 2015
 TR 12:30-1:50pm
 PH 211

Dr. Desiree Henderson
 Office: CAR 603
 Email: dhenderson@uta.edu
 Phone: English Department Main Office 817-272-2692
 Office Hours: TR 2-3pm and by appointment

Course Description: This class explores American life writing (non-fiction genres such as diaries, letters, and memoirs) and how these genres provide a space for marginalized voices to be recorded and heard. Students will develop an understanding of life writing as a scholarly field of study, as well as learn research methodology for conducting their own recovery work. Discussions will also address fictional versions of these genres (the epistolary novel, diary fiction, and autobiographical fiction), their contemporary social media counterparts (email, blogs, and so forth), and the emergence of graphic non-fiction writing. This class is organized in conjunction with the Fall 2015 Hermanns Lecture Series and students will have the opportunity to participate in a “master class” with the guest speakers.

Required Books:

Cherokee Sister: The Collected Writing of Catherine Brown, ed. Gaul, U Nebraska P, 2014: ISBN: 0803240759
Memoirs of Elleanor Eldridge, ed. Moody, West Virginia UP, 2014: ISBN: 1935978233
 Jennifer Sinor, *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray's Diary*, U Iowa P, 2002: ISBN: 0877458332
 Alice Walker. *The Color Purple*. Mariner Books. ISBN: 0156028352
 Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*. Houghton Mifflin. ISBN: 0618871713

E-Book Policy: Students may use e-book readers or tablets in class – but no cellphones, please. If you access the required reading in electronic format, you are expected to have the same edition of the books as listed above. Other editions will not have the same supplementary material or page numbers, greatly hindering your ability to complete assignments and participate in the class discussion.

Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

- Identify the major trends and debates within Life Writing Studies.
- Identify and explain the historical, literary, or social/political context(s) of assigned texts.
- Explain and analyze how context shapes the composition, reception and/or interpretation of texts.

- Critically analyze literature within a historical and cultural context.
- Develop and present an original analytical argument about life writing texts.

COURSE POLICIES

Grade Policy/Requirements:

Group Presentation = 10%

Writing Assignments (3) = 20% each

Final Essay = 30%

Descriptions of major assignments and examinations with due dates: Students will write three short essays (3-4pgs.) and one long essay (10-15pgs). They will also complete a group oral presentation on social media as a form of life writing. Due dates are listed below on the Reading and Assignment Schedule. All requirements and due dates are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Attendance Policy: At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, my policy is as follows:

Attendance is mandatory and late arrival is not acceptable. I will take attendance in every class.

Perfect Attendance	Students who attend every class (have 0 absences and no late arrivals) will have 2 additional points <i>added</i> to their final course grade. Any absences, including excused absences, will exclude the student from these bonus points.	
Allowed Absences	Students are granted 3 unexcused absences during the semester without penalty.	
Unexcused Absences	Any additional absences will result in a loss of points as detailed below. <i>Points will be deducted from the student's final course grade.</i>	
	# of Unexcused Absences	Points Deducted
	1-3	0
	4	3
	5	5

Excused Absences	<i>DO NOT claim excused absences until you have exceeded your 3 allowed absences.</i> In order to claim an excused absence, you must submit written confirmation (copy of doctor's note, written excuse, etc.) that clearly states your name and the date(s) you were absent. Do not submit absence paperwork over email. Only a limited number of excused absences will be granted.
Excessive Absences	Excessive Absences (6 or more) will result in an automatic F in the course.

Expectations for Out-of-Class Study: Beyond the time required to attend each class meeting, students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least an additional **nine** hours per weeks of their own time in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, preparing for exams, etc.

Late Policy: All assignments will be accepted late with a deduction of 5 points per class date and 10 points per weekend. The Final Essay will only be accepted late with evidence of a medical or family emergency.

Electronics Policy: Students are expected to behave responsibly and respectfully during class, which means that everyone turns cell phones off before class and refrains from texting or other disruptive behavior during class. E-book readers, tablets, and laptops are allowed in class only for the purpose of displaying the assigned readings and taking notes. Cellphones are not allowed during class, unless specifically announced. Violation of this policy can affect your course grade and may result in an Academic Dishonesty investigation.

Library Resources: Our Subject Librarian is Diane Shepelwich. Her contact information is: dianec@uta.edu Ph: 817.272.7521
<http://library.uta.edu/staff/diane-shepelwich>

The English Writing Center (411LIBR): Hours are 9 am to 8 pm Mondays-Thursdays, 9 am to 3 pm Fridays and Noon to 5 pm Saturdays and Sundays. Walk In Quick Hits sessions during all open hours Mon-Thurs. Register and make appointments online at <http://uta.mywconline.com>. Classroom Visits, Workshops, and advanced services for graduate students and faculty are also available. Please see <http://www.uta.edu/owl> for detailed information.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw.

Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Title IX: The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit uta.edu/eos. For information regarding Title IX, visit <http://www.uta.edu/titleIX>.

Academic Integrity: Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures: Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located down the hallway. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

Student Support Services: UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For

individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at www.uta.edu/resources.

ENGL 4399 Reading & Assignment Schedule

- All assignments and scheduled readings are subject to change at instructor's discretion.
 - Students are expected to bring copies of assigned materials to class on the day they will be discussed, in either hard copy or digital format. Laptops and tablets will be allowed in class.
 - BB = sources available through Blackboard
 - All other essays/articles are accessible through the UTA Library; students are responsible for retrieving these pieces on their own.
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8/27 Introduction to Life Writing Studies

9/1 Reading Autobiographically

Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact" (BB)

Smith & Watkins, "Life Narrative" and "Toolkit" (BB)

9/3 Reading the Diary

Sinor, *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing*, first half

9/8 Reading the Diary

Sinor, *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing*, second half

9/10 Reading Diaries Online

Select one diary from those provided at www.diaryindex.com/digitized-diaries/ and complete diary reading worksheet.

Henderson, "Reading Digitized Diaries" (BB)

9/15 Diary Fiction

Cate, "Susy L—'s Diary" (BB), first half

H. Porter Abbott, "Letters to the Self: The Cloistered Writer in Nonretrospective Fiction" *PMLA* 95.1 (1980): 23-41.

9/17 Diary Fiction

Cate, "Susy L—'s Diary" (BB), second half

Lejeune, "How do Diaries End?" (BB)

9/22 Reading Letters

Writing Assignment #1 due

Bryan Waterman, "Coquetry and Correspondence in Revolutionary-Era Connecticut: Reading Elizabeth Whitman's Letters," *Early American Literature* 46.3 (2011): 541-63.

Bryan Waterman, "The Letters of Elizabeth Whitman to Joel and Ruth Barlow, 1779-1783." *Early American Literature* 46.3 (2011): 656-600.

9/24 Reading Letters

Wheatley, Selection of poems and letters (BB)

Review the manuscript of Wheatley's letters (click on Phillis Wheatley and then scroll down to her letters): <https://www.masshist.org/endofslavery/>

9/29 Epistolary Fiction

Rowson, *Sarah*, first half (online: link TBA)

10/1 Epistolary Fiction

Rowson, *Sarah*, second half

Weyler, from *Intricate Relations* (BB)

10/6 Recovering Memoir

Writing Assignment #2 due

Gaul, *Cherokee Sister*

10/8 Recovering Memoir

Gaul, *Cherokee Sister*

10/13 Recovering Memoir

Moody, *Memoirs of Elleanor Eldridge*

10/15 Recovering Memoir

Moody, *Memoirs of Elleanor Eldridge*

10/20 Life Writing and New Media Preview

Chaney, "Introduction" and "The Animal Witness of the Rwandan Genocide" (BB)

Lejeune, "Autobiography and New Communication Tools" (BB)

McNeill, "Life Bytes" (BB)

10/22 Class canceled → Master Class with Hermanns Speakers 6-8pm

10/23 Hermanns Lecture Series – **Please plan to attend**

10/27 Recovering Memoir

Wrap up: *Cherokee Sister* and *Elleanor Eldridge*

10/29 Contemporary Epistolary Fiction

Writing Assignment #3 due

Walker, *Color Purple*

11/3 Contemporary Epistolary FictionWalker, *Color Purple*

Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens" (BB)

11/5 Class canceled

11/10 Contemporary Epistolary FictionWalker, *Color Purple*Essay of your choice on *Color Purple*11/12 Graphic MemoirBechdel, *Fun Home*11/17 Graphic MemoirBechdel, *Fun Home*

Watson & Smith, "Mapping Women's Self-Representation" (BB)

11/19 Graphic MemoirBechdel, *Fun Home*Essay of your choice on *Fun Home*11/24 Student Conferences

11/26 Thanksgiving Holiday – class canceled

12/1 Student Conferences12/3 Life Writing and New Media

Group presentations

12/8 Life Writing and New Media

Last Day of Class; Group presentations cont.

Monday December 14: **Final Paper due** by 5pm

Emergency Phone Numbers: In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at 817-272-3003 (non-campus phone), 2-3003 (campus phone). You may also dial 911.