The Essay: Historical, Theoretical, Pedagogical, and Creative Applications

English 5369.001 Spring 2013

TR 7:00-9:30

Office Phone: (361) 825-2263

Office: Faculty Center 254

E-mail: Cristina.kirklighter@tamucc.edu

Office Hours: MW 2:45-3:30 and 4:55-5:10; TTR 3:30-4:30; TR 5:45-6:45

Classroom: CCH 210

Course Description:

This course is designed to cover many facets of the essay genre. Using the required texts and handouts as our course touchstones for personal essays and personal academic essays, we will examine how essays fit into the historical, theoretical, and pedagogical framework of the essay genre. In addition to studying and writing papers that speak to this framework, we also will explore the essay’s creative facets. Additionally, we will write an academically creative piece within this genre.

Course Objectives

- To survey the development of the essay to the present.
- To encourage close readings within this academic field.
- To actively participate in theoretically individual and collaborative critical reading, synthesizing, thinking, and writing.
- To introduce students to a variety of theoretical, pedagogical, historical, creative, and liberatory approaches to the essay.
- To examine critically and reflectively the various works we read.
- To examine connections and differences between essayists from various geographic, racial, class, and gender backgrounds.
- To examine and apply the essay to our pedagogical needs as students and teachers.
- To study and reflect how essay writing affects scholar, teacher, and student lives.
- To write personal essays.
Learning Outcomes:

- Analyze the historical roots of the personal essay and its significance as a genre in Rhetoric and Composition, Literature, and Creative Writing Studies.
- Analyze the cultural implications of personal essay studies.
- Apply the knowledge of this genre to pedagogical applications in the classroom and beyond.
- Analyze and apply the techniques of writing a personal essay and personal academic essay.
- Demonstrate through personal academic essays how personal writings can be integrated into traditional scholarly methods of research and writing.

Texts:

Bloom, Lynn. *The Seven Deadly Virtues and Other Lively Essays*.


Hogan, Linda, *The Woman Who Watched Over the World: A Native American Memoir*

Kirsch, Gesa and Liz Rohan (Eds.). *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*.

Lopate, Philip (Ed.). *The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present*.


Pagnucci, Gian S. *Living the Narrative Life: Stories as a Tool for Mean Making*.

Excerpts from other works pertaining to the essay will be distributed in class.

Film:

Baumbach, Noah. *The Squid and the Whale*.

Film reviews and interviews will be passed out in class.

Online Resources:

(to be announced or located on wiki page)
Goals of the Masters Program at TAMUCC

- Proficiency in the critical reading of texts in context;
- Proficiency in writing and critical thinking at the graduate level;
- Proficiency in scholarly methods of research and inquiry;
- Familiarity with core knowledge, vocabulary, issues and developments in Rhetoric/Composition, Linguistics, Literary Studies, and Borderland Studies;
- Knowledge of creative and thoughtful teaching pedagogies and classroom practices; and
- Knowledge of and appreciation for cultural diversity both within and beyond South Texas that will prepare them to be responsible participants in the global community.

Students and the teacher are expected to do the necessary work to help themselves and others achieve the above goals of this program.

Graduate Studies Standards

The instructor assumes that seminar members are good-faith graduate students. Bona fide graduate school behavior is distinguished in at least four ways.

1. Students read weekly assignments on time and come to the seminar with serious responses and a willingness to discuss.

2. Students do not assume that an assignment is legitimate only if it will be “tested.” The work is done for its own learning value.

3. Students expect that they will attend 100% of the time and not assume there are a certain number of allowable absences. I come to class because I want to share a learning experience with students and help them achieve the goals of the program. I also want to learn from each student. If we have 100% attendance, we stand to learn more from our multiple and valuable insights. Also, given that each student has a specific role to assume for each class, we cannot afford to have multiple absences. In fairness to everyone, students who unavoidably must miss a class are required to inform the professor and collaborators well in advance of our scheduled meeting. Absences will make it more difficult for me to discern your learning experience and contributions when I write down the weekly activities and ultimately the final grade.

4. Students assume that open and equitable discussion and critique is the soul of a graduate seminar. Everyone participates. Everyone is respectful of others’ thoughts whether they agree or disagree. Students should not put the burden on the teacher or on other students to originate or maintain discussion. They take on the responsibility to keep some seminar members from dominating others, and they do it by offering their share of talk. Since all were admitted to this program, we can assume that everyone has something insightful and valuable to contribute to discussions. A wise English professor once told me that he believes everyone in his classes has just about the same amount of intelligence. This belief also applies to him as the instructor. If we commit ourselves to this perspective, we can stand to reason that we will become better listeners and discussants.
Course Requirements

We will complete several assignments and activities during the semester to better enable us to fulfill the goals of the Masters Program. These will include the following:

1. In class discussion – You should be prepared to verbally discuss the readings each week. Short assignments will be given to each class member as a way of preparing for the readings during certain weeks. During some classes, you will share your larger projects with others for verbal feedback and peer editing purposes. Class members who have their own individual websites can post their writing projects online if they so desire to obtain additional online feedback from their peers, the instructor, and others. This is optional.

2. Periodically, the instructor will have 15 minute conferences with each student to discuss the readings or their writings. Class will be canceled during the week of these conferences. Students are required to attend these conferences and bring the necessary materials to prepare for the meeting. A sign-up sheet for specific conference times will be distributed the week prior to the individual conference. Those who are absent the previous week must contact the instructor via e-mail or phone as soon as possible to schedule a conference time. The purpose of these conferences is to provide individual one-on-one instruction, mentoring, and writing feedback with each student.

3. Early in the semester, we will research blogs and determine where we want to house our personal blogs. We will discuss effective ways to use blogs in our particular classroom environment. We can set up private blogs to be viewed by only the teacher or set up blogs for other students to see in our classroom or do both.

4. Revisiting a Research Project - Your minor project will involve revisiting a former research project that you did for another class (preferably graduate class but exceptions will be made for first year students). We will be studying the essays in Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process to better understand this project. I expect you to write a six page personal academic essay that provides readers with personal insights on why you were drawn to this research project and where you see yourself in the research and writing of this former project. You may also speak to how this research project affected your subsequent work in other classes, influenced your perspectives of teaching or other profession, and/or created changes in your personal life. You will be expected to present a brief 10 minute presentation at the end of this project to the class.

5. Personal Academic Essay – Your major project that will be due at the end of the semester involves writing a 15 page personal academic essay. You can also opt for a short exploratory essay (5 pages) and a 10 page personal academic essay. This is a scholarly form of writing that will combine the creative techniques we studied throughout the semester with academic scholarship on the essay. We will examine sample personal academic essays to help us understand this scholarly writing genre. A detailed hand-out will be passed out in class. A Reflective Overview will also be due on this project.
**Grading:**

Preparation for Class and Individual Conferences with Instructor - 15%

Blogs - 15% (Periodic Due Dates)

Revisiting a Research Project - 20% (Due: Mid Semester)

Personal Academic Essay - 50% (Due: Final Day of Class)

**Course Policies**

**Attendance/Participation**

Absences

As an active participant, you are expected to attend every class on time. Attendance is a crucial part of a class grounded in liberatory learning and teaching that necessitates an active engagement in classroom discussions, group activities, and peer editing of papers as well as other writing activities. You are a valuable contributor in this classroom, and a responsible contributor and teacher must be in consistent attendance. The work we will do during class is crucial to your understanding of the material and your success in the course. When a student is frequently absent, this requires the teacher to frequently explain the assignments and missed activities to the student and can hinder the effectiveness of group activities that require peer feedback. Consequently, the student who is frequently absent creates an unnecessary burden for both the teacher and their peers. Frequent absences will not fare well for your grade in that you will miss assignment explanations, handouts, in class activities, and course grade penalties as listed below. Please provide me with written documentation (e.g. doctor’s excuses, family deaths or serious illnesses, daycare issues, car trouble receipts) for any absences that you might have and e-mail me in a timely manner to notify me of your absence and receive makeup work information from me. I will then let you know if your absence is excused. Failure to follow these procedures will result in an unexcused absence.

Two unexcused absences = one lowered overall grade

Three unexcused absences = two lowered overall grades

More than four unexcused absences = failure of the course

**Deadlines**

As a participant, you must meet the required deadlines. Late submissions will not be accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances that meet with my approval and are in writing. These late submissions must be submitted within one week of the required deadline. Please write the reasons for your late submission in an e-mail no later than the due date of the assignment. Such
requirements will better prepare you for the deadline responsibilities that you will have in your classroom and to various co-workers and school administrators. The mid-term and final exam must be turned in on the required day and time with attachments that show your completed responses to the assignment.

I treat this class as if it is a professional educational workplace, and I expect you to be a professional. What is expected of you at your place of employment as a future teacher is what I expect of you in class.

Discussions

You must play an active role in classroom discussions and group activities. Dialogue (whether written or verbal) is a vital part of the learning process for this class.

In Class Conduct

Please refrain from using your computers for unrelated work during class. Also, please put away your cell phones during class.

University Policies.

Grade Appeal Process

As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

Notice to 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 believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical
access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism**

The University will not tolerate plagiarism or any other form of intellectual/academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is a serious violation of departmental and University policies, but it is sometimes difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Regardless, work that is turned in for the course that is plagiarized will be failed. If you are unsure about your use of sources, please consult with me or visit the writing center (in the TLC, in the Glasscock building) for advice on source documentation BEFORE the item is due. For this course, you must use either MLA or APA citation style. Any grammar handbook and many web sites have directions on correct citation.

**Acceptance of Diversity** We are the most diverse campus, in terms of racial identity, in the Texas A&M system. This means that we are all meeting and working with people who are different from ourselves in terms of their identities: whether that is defined by their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, and/or religion. Respecting and accepting difference is vital to your success in this class, on this campus, as a future teacher in your own classroom, and in the global community.

**Resources outside of class.**

The Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA) is now located in Glasscock 112. It is available to any student for free tutoring. Tutors are there to provide services for all stages of the writing process. Tutors, however, will not correct your paper, but instead they can assist you in developing strategies to become a better writer. The Center will assist a student’s writing in any class, and no appointment is necessary. Students must go to the library to make an appointment. Appointments are strongly suggested during the latter part of the semester when many papers are due in classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-24</td>
<td>Introduction to the course. Discussion of elements of the personal essay and characteristics of the personal essay scholar. Distribute handouts.</td>
<td>Film viewing in class of <em>The Squid and the Whale</em> and <em>Montaigne and Self Esteem</em>; <em>Alain de Botton</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-31</td>
<td>Read materials on <em>The Squid and the Whale</em> Baumbach reveals inspiration for 'Squid.', B by Jonathan Baumbach, <em>Mother Knew Best</em>,</td>
<td>Film viewing of Phillip Lopate's interview with Noah Baumbach, director of <em>The Squid and the Whale</em>. Discussion of the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and *Scenes From A Divorce, Georgia Brown* review of *Twister*. Read the Introduction to *The Art of the Personal Essay* (xxiv-liv) and handouts "Beyond the Cinema of the Other: or Toward Another Cinema" (33-38) in *I Am Aztlan: The Personal Essay in Chicano Studies*. Additional Resource: Frances Negron-Muntaner Home Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-7</td>
<td>Review Blogging resources on resources page and bring ideas/resources for developing the Blogging portion of this class. Also, view Digital Storytelling sites. Read Seneca and Plutarch in <em>The Art of the Personal Essay</em> (APE). Read Michel de Montaigne in (APE) (43-112). Read pages 1-26 in <em>The Seven Deadly Virtues</em> and pages 15-34 in <em>Traversing the Democratic Borders of the Essay</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-14</td>
<td>Class will be from 7:00-7:45 in lieu of individual conferences. We will implement our blog plan for the class at this time. Prepare for individual student conferences (15 minutes) by reading five essays of your choosing from <em>Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process</em> and the essay <em>Plunging In: Getting Started</em> in <em>Literary Nonfiction: The Fourth Genre</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-21</td>
<td>Part V in <em>The Art of the Personal Essay</em> (from now on referred to as APE): Read Thoreau's &quot;Walking,&quot; <em>Photographs of Thoreau's nature walks: Thoreau and Walden Pond</em>; James Baldwin's &quot;Notes of a Native Son,&quot; <em>Baldwin Interview</em> Annie Dillard's &quot;Seeing.&quot; <em>Annie Dillard's website</em> <em>I am Aztlan</em>; Read &quot;The Maguey:Coming Home&quot; (pgs. 19-22) <em>Maguey; Santa Barraza</em> <em>The Seven Deadly Virtues</em>; Read &quot;Coming Clean: Confession as a Lying Art&quot; (pgs. 27-36).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Review Blogging resources on resources page and bring ideas/resources for developing the Blogging portion of this class. Also, view Digital Storytelling sites. Read Seneca and Plutarch in *The Art of the Personal Essay* (APE). Read Michel de Montaigne in (APE) (43-112). Read pages 1-26 in *The Seven Deadly Virtues* and pages 15-34 in *Traversing the Democratic Borders of the Essay*.**

**Discussion of readings and Brainstorming Activity for Project 1. Develop ideas for Class Blogging.**

**Bring to your conference in FC 254 the work you will be revisiting and ideas that you have for this project. Be prepared to also talk about the readings with me and why you chose these works from *Beyond the Archives*.**

**Enter first Blog entry by Friday 2-18. Bring draft of Project 1 to class for peer review or e-mail draft to me by 2-11 if you do not feel comfortable sharing with others. Discussion of readings.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment/Activity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-28</td>
<td>Rough Draft of Revisiting a Research Project is due in class tonight. Please bring a hard copy to class. Enter your blog by this weekend and respond to at least two blogs by Wednesday morning. This will be our blog. Read pages 39-100 in <em>The Seven Deadly Virtues</em>. After reviewing pages 91-100, locate an academic essay, new journalism work, or personal work in the mass media that might be used as an example of what Bloom discusses in these pages. Be prepared to individually discuss your example in class. Bring a copy of the work or display it on the computer if it is accessible online.</td>
<td>Discussion of Readings and examples from pages 39-100. Re-visiting our blogging activities. <strong>Bad Writing Contest:</strong> CCCC Guidelines for Ethical Research in Composition Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7</td>
<td>No class in lieu of individual conferences (15 minute sessions) in my office FC 254. <strong>Due:</strong> Final Draft of Revisiting a Research Project. Read pages 103-123 in <em>The Seven Deadly Virtues</em> and pages ix-56 in <em>Living the Narrative Life</em>, and Chapter 4 in <em>Traversing the Democratic Borders of the Essay</em>. Brainstorm ideas for your personal academic essay to share with me at the conference.</td>
<td>Individual Conferences (FC 254). Be prepared to talk about the readings and compare contrast essays “The Obituary” (handout) and “A Tennis Legend” (31-36 in <em>Living the Narrative Life</em>). E-mail me your ideas for your personal academic essay at least two days before your conference. We'll discuss your ideas at the conference session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-11 to 3-15</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>Read Linda Hogan’s <em>The Woman Who Watches Over the World</em> to prepare for University’s Author Day speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-21</td>
<td>No class in lieu of attending Linda Hogan’s reading. E-mail me a one page essay of possible research you will be using for your personal academic essay and its relevance to your personal academic essay journey.</td>
<td>Create Blog before 3-21 on Linda Hogan’s <em>The Woman Who Watches Over the World</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-28</td>
<td>Read pages 124-205 in <em>The Seven Deadly Virtues</em> and handout by Richard Marius. Work on writing one page of your personal academic essay to submit today. <strong>Richard Marius:</strong> Lynn Bloom's audio clips from <em>The Seven Deadly Virtues</em></td>
<td>Discussion of readings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4</td>
<td>No class in lieu of individual conferences (15 minute sessions) in my office FC 254. Readings: Select two chapters from <em>Literary</em></td>
<td>Discussion of readings and bring in four pages of your personal academic essay draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-11</td>
<td>Read handout &quot;Turning Sunshine into Noir and Fantasy into Reality&quot; in (pages 201-210) <em>Information on Alvina Quintana</em>, <em>David Rieff</em>; Dr. Quintana's blog and &quot;The Death of a Moth&quot; (pages 265-267) in <em>The Art of the Personal Essay</em>. Useful link for <em>The Death of the Moth</em>:. Select one essay from <em>The Art of the Personal Essay</em> that you would like to analyze in terms of the craft of the essay. Be prepared to individually talk about your chosen essay and how it may help you with writing up your personal academic essay.</td>
<td>Discussion of the readings with particular attention on the techniques employed by the essayists. Continue working on your essays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-18</td>
<td>Continue working on your draft. Select one paragraph from your draft that you feel comfortable projecting on the screen and sharing with others for group feedback.</td>
<td>Peer feedback workshop on each student's paragraph. Writing workshop on revision of paragraphs. Sign up for conferences and e-mail me complete draft by 4-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-25</td>
<td>No Class in lieu of student conferences. E-mail me your complete draft by 4-19</td>
<td>Student Conferences in my office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-2</td>
<td>Final Project due in my office FC 254 between 7:00 and 8:00. You can e-mail me your paper prior to this date or drop it by my office.</td>
<td>Enjoy your summer!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflective Overview of Final Project due during exam week (to be announced)