

ENGLISH 596h-003 MODERN LITERATURE **FALL 2007**
NONFICTION CRAFT SEMINAR: THE MEMOIR AS LITERATURE
Alison Hawthorne Deming

Thursday 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

POETRY CENTER

This nonfiction craft seminar will explore contemporary memoir, focusing on major works in the genre. The reading list will present students with various conventions and inventions (in terms of voice, structure, development, and the problem of the “I”) available to literary nonfiction writers with the goal of increasing each writer’s sense of the range of possibility for working in memoir form. I have included a short list of alternative books, in the event you’d like to branch off the main trail. In that event, you may substitute one or two of the books on the "Alternates" list for one or two on the primary list. Lest this become too confusing for you, me and our companions in this enterprise, I will ask you each to make those decisions by the second class meeting and to slip me a note or email to that effect. I'll adjust the class schedule accordingly and I will expect you to make a short (ten-minute) presentation on the book.

COURSE CONTENT AND WRITING REQUIREMENTS

We will read and discuss twelve books with occasional other materials of interest to be distributed in class. You will be expected to write a **two page response paper** to each of the books and to hand it in on the day that book is discussed in class. This is a craft course for writers, therefore your reading should be intuitive and acquisitive rather than analytical. Look for things that inspire your own writing—thematic questions, prose style, means of dramatizing epiphany, narrative voice/cadence/tone, narrative or rhetorical strategy, or a new understanding of form. Read as a writer, looking for devices that you can cull for your own work. Please pay attention to the details of structure: select a paragraph or sentence in each work that you particularly admire and be prepared to say why. In the ongoing attempt to find artful language for describing form in literary nonfiction, I invite you to bring to class--should you feel so inspired--a graphic representation (e.g., map, architectural drawing, graph, or musical score) of the book’s structure. Books are available at the UA Bookstore.

ALTERNATIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Instead of writing a response paper, you may opt to write a **two page imitation** inspired by the assigned author. The imitation must be modeled stylistically (i.e., in terms of voice, diction, figurative language, rhetorical device, location of the first person narrator, developmental structure) on the assigned author and not simply a response to subject matter.

You will also be expected to share the leadership for the seminar by taking a turn leading the discussion. We will set up a structure for this on the first day of class. Finally, I’ll ask you to write a five-page reflective essay on the subject of “The Memoir as Literature” due on the last day of class.

GRADING

I will give you a letter grade on your weekly papers and final reflection; the average of these grades will make 50% of your course grade. The other 50% will be based upon your attendance and class participation. Attendance and weekly writing based on the books assigned is required.

READING SCHEDULE: Writing assignments are due at the class meeting during which that particular book is discussed and will not be accepted at a later date.

August 23	1st class Introductions and expectations.
August 30	Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Speak Memory</i>
September 6	H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), <i>Tribute to Freud</i>
September 13	NO CLASS (AHD at Environmental Writing Institute in Montana)—two weeks for Jung book
September 20	C.G. Jung, <i>Memories, Dreams, Reflections</i>
September 27	Beryl Markham, <i>West With the Night</i>
October 4	<i>Geronimo: His Own Story</i> (ed. with Frederick Turner introduction)
October 11	Annie Dillard, <i>For The Time Being</i>
October 18	Primo Levi, <i>Periodic Table</i>
October 25	Abigail Thomas, <i>Safekeeping: Some True Stories From a Life</i>
November 1	James Baldwin, <i>Note of a Native Son</i>
November 8	Ivan Doig, <i>This House of Sky</i>
November 15	John Berger, <i>Photocopies</i>
November 22	THANKSGIVING
November 29	Marjane Satrapi, <i>Persepolis</i> LAST CLASS: Evaluations & 5-page reflection on memoir due

ALTERNATES:

Patricia Hampl, *Blue Arabesque*

Linda Hogan, *Dwellings*

Richard Katrovas, *The Years of Smashing Bricks*

Richard Rodriguez, *Days of Obligation*
Scott Russell Sanders, *Hunting for Hope*

OFFICE HOURS

Wednesday 11:30 – 1:00 PM or Thursday 11 – 12:00 PM

Or by appointment

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