

*****This syllabus is from a previous iteration of the course and is provided for informational purposes only; dates are incorrect and specific assignments may vary greatly.*****

HUMS 629: VOICE AND STYLE: EXERCISES FOR WRITERS

**Graduate Liberal Studies Program
Wesleyan University Spring 2013**

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Readings will be discussed on the days indicated below. Writing assignments are listed on a separate sheet and will be distributed at the first class. The assignments are flexible: you may write nonfiction or fiction as long as you pay attention to the guidance of the prompts in the early exercises. Later in the course you will work on a longer piece. If you arrive in the course already launched on a longer project, you are welcome to continue working on that in place of the short exercises. As the course description mentioned, previous students in the courses have written (among other things) personal essays and narratives, literary essays or journalistic pieces, short stories, portions of novels, memoir, material for web sites, and professional articles. I am flexible and look forward to working with you.

A.G.

A binder of course readings will be available from Wesleyan's printing service in the Usdan Center on February 11 (or before). Contact Jennifer Platt at jplatt@wesleyan.edu to order your digital copy or request a print version (which you'll need to pick up). On days when we discuss binder selections, please bring a hard copy to class. In other words, you may need to print out some pieces if you're using the digital version.

*If you have the binder from fall 2012, you don't need to get a new one.

I will also be distributing pieces in class occasionally as xeroxes.

SCHEDULE:

Jan. 28: class cancelled because of snow

Feb 4: *Best American Short Stories-2012*

Feb 11: *Best American Travel Writing 2009*, ed. S. Winchester

Feb 18: Selections from the binder and xeroxes, to be announced

Best American Essays 2013

Selected short fiction also

March 4: Selections from binder and xeroxes; editing exercises; selections from *Best American Science Writing 2012*

Semester break

March 25: Colum McCann, *TBA*

(You will be beginning work on your final project at this point in the semester.)

REVISED SCHEDULE BELOW

Apr 1: TBA (possibly Linh Dinh, *Blood and Soap may be out of print*)

Apr 8: Gertrude Stein, *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*

Apr 15: In-class test and review of the course

Apr 22: Final readings in binder

Apr 29: Student readings in class/ celebration

(Tues) Apr 30: Final conferences in class or by phone

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SPRING 2013:

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Feb 4: As assigned in the first email

Feb 11: Write a 3-page piece (fiction or nonfiction) that establishes a place and suggests a dramatic action that has already occurred. Introduce at least 3 characters, each of whom is busy doing something.

Feb 18: This exercise asks you to borrow a writing design or specific feature (repetition, for example) that you see in one of the binder readings. Write a short piece of your own that makes use of the same pattern you see in that reading.

For example, see Chang-Rae Lee's handling of time in "Coming Home Again", or repetition of sentence phrasing in Doyle's "Leap," or the focused contrast in the opening of Laura Neuman's "Forks." Feel free to choose any piece you like. And don't feel bound to imitate the whole piece: just use the borrowed design to start you writing and thinking.

Feb 25: Write a short piece of memoir or fiction in which the narrator has a very distinct voice and a vividly drawn relationship with someone else. Think about how you'll show me the differences between the characters.

Mar 4: Revise (and expand?) one of your previous pieces, making the voice, detail, and order clearer, more dramatic.

Semester Break

Mar 25: Write a piece that has two lines of action running through it. Think of these as foreground and background stories if that's helpful.

Apr 1: Write 2 pages of your final project and also submit an account of what you think you're writing about. List some information you need to go and learn about--how to suspend cables from the World Trade Center Towers, for example.

Apr 8: Submit 5 rough pages of draft.

Apr 15: In-class test: review the course readings. 5 pages of rough draft due.

Apr 22: 8-10 page draft of the final project due for discussion in class

Apr 29: Student readings: read a 5 min. passage from your work
Final projects due.

Tues, Apr 30: Final conferences in class or by phone.

Also bring a self-evaluation describing your progress in the course. Review each of the exercises you wrote, and write about each informally: tell me what you thought you were doing when you wrote each piece, what you see in your writing now, and what has helped you become more astute.

What writing questions are important to you now?