

COL227Z / ENGL228Z / WRCT227Z
LIFE WRITING: WRITING ABOUT THE SELF AND FROM EXPERIENCE

Winter Session 2023

Instructor: Charles Barber, M.F.A., Associate Professor and Writer-in-Residence in Letters

Meeting time and place: Daily, Monday – Friday: Jan 10 – 25, 10:30 am – 3:00 pm, Boger Hall room TBD

Office Hours: By appointment, Boger 313

Contact info: cmbarber@wesleyan.edu

COURSE FORMAT AND STRUCTURE:

Short daily writing exercises on an assigned element of creative nonfiction. Exercises will be no longer than 1,000 words. Students must read the essays by class and be prepared to discuss them in detail. Students are allowed two opt-outs from the daily assignments, at times of their own choosing.

We will often engage in in-class writing exercises. These exercises are meant to be exploratory and fun, and are ungraded.

Readings must be completed before each class, and discussion will center on how the author handled the relevant element of creative nonfiction, as well as general discussion of the merits of the work. The nature of class discussion of students' writing will be one of appreciation of things done well, and constructive criticism.

At the end of the class, a piece of creative non-fiction of at least 5,000 words will be due. The last class sessions will primarily involve discussion of each class member's final essay as it is in progress.

No laptops or electronic devices can be used in class. You are encouraged however to bring food and drink.

Responsivity by email is appreciated.

Class discussion is strongly encouraged. Grading is based on the following: 50 percent weekly essays, 25 percent class participation and overall effort and engagement, 25 percent final essay.

READINGS:

William Styron, *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness*
Mary Karr, *Cherry*
George Plimpton and Jean Stein, *Edie: American Girl*
Alex Haley and Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

It is required that students read *Darkness Visible* by the first class session. It is highly recommended that they read the first half of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* before the course begins.

Essays to be handed out in class may include:

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The Psychology of Life Stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(2), 100-122.

Jerome Bruner, (2004). Life as Narrative. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 71 (3):691-710.

We will use the following interview tool throughout the class:

McAdams, D. P. (2008) The life story interview. The Foley Center for the Study of Lives, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University.

I may assign texts individually to students, based on the students' sensibilities and interests.

Music by various artists will be played in class as part of the writing exercises.

MICRO-GRANTS:

The College of Letters is pleased to offer micro-grants for students who need assistance purchasing books. Please contact the instructor or course assistant immediately if you need such assistance.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic/Element	Reading assignment
Class 1	Introduction to Memoir	Styron
Class 2	High point	Karr

Class 3	Positive Childhood Memory	Karr
Class 4	Negative Childhood Memory	Karr
Class 5	Turning Point	Plimpton
Class 6	Low Point	Plimpton
Class 7	Loss/Regret	Malcolm X
Class 8	Illness/Health	Malcolm X
Class 9	Wisdom event	Malcolm X
Class 10	Hopes and Dreams	Coates
Class 11	Final paper workshops	
Class 12	Final paper workshops	

Disability Resources

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

