

Syllabus

English 463.01: The Art of the Essay
Fall 2012, W 7:15-9:45 pm, University Hall 2002

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2-2:45pm and 4:30-6:45pm

Course Description and Objectives:

This course tracks the historical development of the essay from the late 16th century to the present, from Michel de Montaigne to Annie Dillard. We will put special emphasis on the ways in which the essay functions as a site for exploring issues of self and identity, while acknowledging how concepts of self change from one historical period to another.

This course is also a writing intensive course, designed to fulfill requirements in the Writing Emphasis and the Journalism Certificate. We will spend significant time studying different forms of the essay, developing rhetorical strategies for use in own essays, and discussing drafts of these essays with each other. By the end of the course, you can expect to have a body of work of publishable quality.

In keeping with the goals of the undergraduate program in English, we will take as our objectives: enhancing our knowledge of the history of literature in the English language, reading texts closely and carefully, writing creatively and effectively, and examining the ways in which literature represents the human experience.

Required Course Materials:

Bender, Sheila. *Writing and Publishing Personal Essays*. 2nd ed. San Diego: Silver Threads, 2010. ISBN 9781893067103
Gibaldi, Joseph. *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th edition. New York: Modern Language Association, 2009. ISBN 978-1-60329-024-1
Lopate, Phillip. *The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present*. New York: Random House, 1994. ISBN 038542339X

Grade Breakdown:

Participation	15%
Essayist's Notebook / Blog	15%
Essay #1	15%
Essay #2	20%
Essay #3	20%
Assessment Essay	15%

Course Requirements:

Participation: In upper-level undergraduate courses, participation is an absolute must. I expect you to come ready to discuss the readings for the day with enthusiasm, and I expect everyone to contribute to the discussion. Attendance is also a must. Because this course meets only once a week, you are allowed only two absences. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so you should save your absence for a dire emergency (death in family, severe illness, other professional commitments). Coming to class late or leaving early counts as

a partial absence. If you miss more than two classes, there will be a significant reduction in your participation grade.

Essayist's Notebook/Blog: Every good essayist has a place where he or she writes down, in an informal manner, his or her reactions to the happenings of the world. Some essayists still keep a traditional spiral notebook, while others have embraced the new technology and keep a blog. You may do either this semester, but your notebook or blog will need to include eight entries, which reflect your thoughts as an active or aspiring essayist. Each entry must be at least 250 words. At the end of the semester, along with printouts of the eight entries, you will need to include a 100-word statement, indicating the approach you took to your notebook/blog and how it was beneficial to you as an active or aspiring essayist. I will read you some samples in class, to give you an idea of what I'm looking for.

Essays: This semester, we will work on four essays: two personal essays (1500 words each) written on topics of your choice, a critical essay (1500 words) analyzing the work of one of the essayists we're reading in its historical context, and an essay (750 words) assessing your body of work as an active or aspiring essayist within the tradition of essay writing we have been studying. All of these essays must be written for this class only, not for other classes, co- or extra-curricular organizations you already write for, or internship/work organizations you're a part of. Rough drafts of the personal essays will be workshopped in class, so you will be expected to bring extra copies for this purpose. You must have a *complete* draft in order to participate in the workshop and get credit for the final, graded draft.

Grading Scale and Criteria:

The grading scale is based on the grading system approved by LMU. I will assign numerical grades for all assignments, and I will use the final grade sheet attached to this syllabus to figure final grades. The numerical/letter grade correlation is as follows: 94-100=A, 90-93=A-, 87-89=B+, 84-86=B, 80-83=B-, 77-79=C+, 74-76=C, 70-73=C-, 60-69=D, and 0-59=F. My primary grading criterion is this: for all major assignments, I am looking for writing that expresses a complex idea or argument via specific examples and does so in an engaging, sophisticated manner. See attached handout for more about this.

Late Assignments:

Expect deductions for late assignments. Typically, I deduct 10 points per 24 hours; for example, a paper that earns 90 points and is a day late will drop to an 80. No papers will be accepted via email, and no double submissions (same project submitted for another class) allowed.

Electronic Equipment and Visitors in the Classroom:

No cell phones, pagers, CD players, tape recorders, or other electronic equipment in the classroom. If you want to bring a laptop to class, record lectures, or bring a guest to class, you must get my approval first.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's ideas or words as your own. It is a serious academic offence and may result in a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, and/or university disciplinary action. For more details about the university's policy on this issue and other forms of academic dishonesty, see the Undergraduate Bulletin. If you are unsure about how to integrate others' ideas or words into your work without plagiarizing,

consult your English handbook and/or come talk to me. I'll be glad to help you avoid plagiarism!

Drop policy:

If you do not want a "W" on your record and want a full tuition refund, you must drop the course before the end of the first week of classes. From week 2-10, you may drop, but you will receive a "W" and will not receive a full tuition refund.

Resources for Students:

Tutoring Center: The Tutoring Center is located on the second floor of Daum Hall. Experienced tutors are available to help students who wish to improve their writing. For an appointment, call 338-2847.

Advising: For questions about the undergraduate English curriculum, see an adviser in the English department. If you are an English major and you haven't talked to an adviser yet, you should do so as soon as possible.

Disability Support Services: Persons with disabilities are welcome in this classroom. If you have a disability and need specific accommodations, please register with DSS as soon as possible and then come talk to me. DSS is located in the Academic Resource Center, Room 224 in Daum Hall. The phone number is 338-4535.

Class Schedule

The dates and activities listed below are subject to change, but I will do all I can to keep us on schedule. You are responsible for noting any changes in the syllabus.

- W, 8/29: Introduction to the course
- W, 9/5: Forerunners to Montaigne: Seneca and Sei Shonagon
Lopate, pp. xxiii-liv, 3-15, 23-28
Bender, pp. 21-57
- W, 9/12: The Rise of the Informal Essay: Montaigne, Addison, and Steele
Lopate, pp. 43-57, 122-126, 129-133
Bender, pp. 59-71 and 103-115
- W, 9/19: 18th-Century Essayists and the Periodical: Haywood and Johnson
Handout with Haywood's essays
Lopate, pp. 136-140
Bender, pp. 73-85
Discuss Essay #1 assignment in class
- W, 9/26: The Romantic Essay: Lamb and Hazlitt
Lopate, pp. 158-159, 165-169, 172-189
Bender, pp. 87-102 and 129-149

- W, 10/3: Rough draft of Essay #1 due; in-class workshop
- W, 10/10: The Victorian Self: Smiles, Ellis, and Stevenson

Handout with Smiles's and Ellis's essays
Lopate, pp. 212-228
Bender, pp. 117-128 and 151-170
- W, 10/17: Final draft of Essay #1 due; discuss Essay #2 and #3 assignments
- W, 10/24: Early 20th-century essayists: Woolf and Orwell

Lopate, pp. 255-302
Bender, pp. 221-236
- W, 10/31: Mid 20th-century essayists: Ginzburg and Baldwin

Lopate, pp. 422-430, 586-604
- W, 11/7: Rough draft of Essay #2 due; in-class workshop and discuss assessment essay assignment
- W, 11/14: Late-20th century essayists: Didion and Dillard

Lopate, pp. 680-688, 692-706
- W, 11/21: NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK
- W, 11/28: Final draft of Essay #2 due; work on remaining essays in class
- W, 12/5: No class—open office hours to discuss last-minute questions and concerns about remaining assignments

Essayist's Notebook/Blog, Essay #3, and Assessment Essay due on Wednesday, December 12 at 7:15 pm.

**Molly Youngkin
Grading Criteria
English 463**

Below are the grading criteria for Essay #3. Below, when I refer to the paper's thesis, I am referring to the main statement of your argument, which I expect to see early in the essay. When I refer to the argument, I mean the way in which the thesis is developed in the rest of the essay, through clear statements about where the argument is going at key points in the essay. Finally, when I refer to supporting evidence, I mean the specific examples from the text you are using to flesh out your argument. If you have not written this type of paper before, feel free to come talk to me about how to go about it.

A= All material required for the assignment is present. The paper's thesis goes way beyond the obvious, and the argument presents a precise, informed, incisive, and satisfying critical investigation of the topic. The implications of the thesis are fully developed through the use of supporting evidence. The ideas within the essay are well-organized, and the language used in the essay is appropriate to the audience. The essay is written in MLA format, with in-text citations and a Works Cited page.

B= All material required for the assignment is present. The paper's thesis goes beyond the obvious, and the argument presents a clear and accurate investigation of the topic. There is some strong supporting evidence for the thesis, but the ideas may not be fleshed out as fully as they might be, or some readings may not be as precise as they could be. The ideas within the essay are well-organized, and the language used in the essay is appropriate to the audience. The essay is written in MLA format, with in-text citations and a Works Cited page.

C= All material required for the assignment is present. The essay has a thesis and details to support that thesis. The argument is adequate, but does not fully explore the implications of the topic or does not present a critical viewpoint that goes very far beyond the obvious. The supporting evidence for the argument may be adequate but not as fully developed as it could be and less convincing than it could be. The ideas within the essay are appropriately organized, and the language used in the essay is appropriate to the audience. The essay is written in MLA format, with in-text citations and a Works Cited page.

D= Material required for the assignment may be missing. The essay has a weak thesis, and details to support the thesis are not developed adequately. The thesis does not go beyond the obvious or is more descriptive than analytical. Supporting evidence for the thesis may be missing or is so far off-base to be unconvincing. The ideas within the essay are not well-organized, and the language used in the essay may not be appropriate to the audience. The essay may lack items related to MLA format.

F= Material required for the assignment may be missing. The essay has a very weak thesis or no thesis, and details to support the thesis are not developed adequately or are missing. The thesis does not go beyond the obvious or is more descriptive than analytical. Supporting evidence for the thesis may be missing or is so far off-base to be unconvincing. The ideas within the essay are not well-organized, and the language used in the essay may not be appropriate to the audience. The essay may lack items related to MLA format.

**Molly Youngkin
Grading Criteria
English 463**

The grading criteria for Essays #1 and #2 are similar to those for Essay #3, except that I will use principles appropriate to writing personal essays. Again, if you have not done this type of writing before, feel free to come talk to me about these principles.

A= All material required for the assignment is present. The creative vision of the essay goes way beyond the obvious, and the essay presents this vision in a precise and compelling manner. The complexity of this vision is fully developed through the use of specific essay conventions. The ideas within the essay are well constructed, and the language used is inventive.

B= All material required for the assignment is present. The creative vision of the essay goes beyond the obvious, and the essay presents this vision in a clear manner. The creative vision of the essay is well developed through the use of specific essay conventions, but some aspects of the essay may not be fleshed out as fully as they might be, or some aspects may not be as precise as they could be. The ideas within the essay are well constructed, and the language used is interesting.

C= All material required for the assignment is present. The essay has a creative vision and uses essay conventions to present this vision. The vision and the conventions used to express this vision are adequate, but the vision is not strong enough and/or the conventions are not crafted well enough to present this vision in more than an obvious way. The ideas within the essay are appropriately constructed but not well constructed, and the language used is appropriate but not interesting or inventive.

D= Material required for the assignment may be missing. The essay has a weak creative vision, and the conventions to support this vision are not developed adequately. The work may be an unthoughtful use of essay conventions rather than use of these conventions in connection with a creative vision. The ideas within the essay are not well constructed, and the language used in the essay may not be appropriate to the audience.

F= Material required for the assignment may be missing. The essay has a very weak creative vision or no creative vision, and the conventions are not developed adequately or are missing. The work may be an unthoughtful use of essay conventions rather than use of these conventions in connection with a creative vision. The ideas within the essay are not well constructed, and the language used in the essay may not be appropriate to the audience.

**Molly Youngkin
Grade Calculation Sheet
English 463**

Student _____

	Numerical Value		Percentage Weight	Total Weight
Essay #1	_____	x	___.15_____	= _____
Essay #2	_____	x	___.20_____	= _____
Essay #3	_____	x	___.20_____	= _____
Assessment Essay	_____	x	___.15_____	= _____
Essayist's Notebook/Blog	_____	x	___.15_____	= _____
Participation	_____	x	___.15_____	= _____
			Numerical Total	_____
			Final Grade	_____

Final Grade Scale

94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
0-59	F

Directions

1) Fill in the appropriate numerical value for each assignment; 2) Multiply that value by the percentage weight in the second column; 3) Add the amounts in the "total" column; 4) Use the "final grade scale" to calculate your final letter grade.