

LITERACY AND WORKING CLASS: ASSIGNING MEANING TO MEMORY

SYLLABUS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

DR. NANCY MACK

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE:

Memoir is a non-fiction genre that is more rich and reflective than autobiography or narrative writing. Memoir writing engages the author in issues of culture and identity as the writer both records and interprets personal experiences for the reader. This course will focus on our experiences related to reading, writing, and learning over a lifetime. Participants will be asked to write several memoir pieces as well as reflections about life themes related to important identity issues such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, religion, occupation, physical ability, age, body type, geographic location, personality type, family role, etc. Since Wright State University's student population draws from the working class, this course will pay particular attention to issues related to class. We will read several literacy memoirs by other authors who discuss how their literacy experiences are affected by cultural differences. These reflections will lead us back to our literacy narratives so that we can rewrite them to represent the significant themes and changes that are developing in our lives. Two of the three anthologies that we will be reading are collections about life at the university and how class issues influence social practices.

Students participating in this seminar will engage in outside reading and journal writing; small group and whole class discussion; and individual and teacher presentations. We will experience multiple prewriting activities some of which will be quite unorthodox. You will start many more pieces of writing than you will complete. From these starts you will complete three memoir pieces of writing that will be developed through prewriting, drafting, revising, and sharing in writing groups. Your fourth hour project for this course will be a portfolio of your literacy memoirs. We will not write an academic, documented essay for this course. I am willing to negotiate changes in some of the readings, classroom activities, and assignments. We can negotiate such changes as a whole class or on an individual basis. I value student input about the direction and content of this course.

2. TEXTS:

Coming to Class: Pedagogy and the Social Class of Teachers edited by Alan Shepard, John McMillan, and Gary Tate.

This Fine Place So Far From Home: Voices of Academics from the Working Class by C. L. Barney Dews and Carolyn Leste Law.

Liberating Memory: Our Work and Our Working-Class Consciousness by Janet Zandy.

(Optional) The Working Class Majority: America's Best Kept Secret by Michael Zweig.

Additional articles given out in class.

3. MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Memoir Writings We will experience many prewriting activities that relate to your literacy and your various identities. Without these numerous starts, you would not know which topics to develop into polished writings. Since these prewriting activities are so important to the success of your writing, they will be given points that will add up to ten percent of your course grade. We will not be limited to writing just essays; for example, you will also write poetry and multigenre essays that incorporate photographs.

B. Reading Journal You will be reading a large number of memoirs and essays about teaching. Several of these will be designated for a reading journal entry. There will be a separate handout about your reading journal entries. These entries will ask you to combine critical analysis, citations, and your personal experiences. A few of these will follow a different format such as collecting quotes, highlighting, or a visual mapping.

C. Individual Analysis Activity One of your reading journals will be on an essay of your choice from our texts. You will analyze this memoir piece and design an activity for the class to do to foster our analysis of the author's writing techniques.

D. A Literacy Memoir Portfolio You will select three memoir writings to polish for your final portfolio. Your portfolio will also include an academic introductory essay which may be based in part on your reading journal entries. You may publish your portfolio in an artistic manner. There will be a separate handout about preparing your portfolio.

4. GRADES:

A. Percentages

Reading Journal Entries	30%	Due Weekly
Prewriting and Drafting Points	10%	Due Weekly
A Literacy Memoir Portfolio of Writings	60%	Due Tenth Week

5. BASIC POLICIES

A. Attendance Regular attendance is expected. Participating in classroom activities is essential to this course. You cannot miss class and fax your work into me: this is not a correspondence course. Missing one class will be equal to missing a half a week's worth of work. Poor attendance will dramatically lower your final grade. If you cannot attend class weekly or need to leave class early or need to come to class late every day, you should drop this course and take something else.

B. Class Cancellation Since Wright State rarely closes, we need a system for deciding when the weather is too bad for you to come to class. Rather than trying to call each one of you, I will follow the closing announcement for Sinclair University. So if the weather is bad, watch TV channels 2 or 7 or listen to the radio for an announcement.

C. Future Use of Your Work I like to use real student papers as good examples in class and in teacher workshops. Also, I write articles about some of my teaching strategies. If I would use your writing, you would be given full credit and would retain copyright of your piece of writing. If you do not want your writing published or shared in a future class, please notify me in writing on the cover sheet of your essay. You will not be paid for your writing, but such a publication could be listed on your resume'.

D. Incompletes Incompletes are rarely given for this class. If you feel that there are compelling circumstances to warrant an incomplete, contact me before the end of the quarter to make arrangements.

E. Recommendations If you need a recommendation for a scholarship, further graduate work, or employment, please request a letter several weeks in advance. You must have taken at least two courses with me in order for me to write an accurate recommendation.