

LIFE WRITING IN THE MARGINS

Instructor Name: Remus Jackson

Course meeting times & locations: MWF Period 2, MAT 0006

Office Location and Hours: M/F 9:30AM-10:30AM, Location TBA

Course website: Canvas

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Autobiography has long been an important cornerstone of American literature as a place for negotiation of “American” identity. Life writing began to take recognizable form during the Enlightenment, when a concept of the soul—the *self*—was first articulated in Eurocentric tradition. However, oppressed peoples within American have long used life writing as a tool of resistance against dominant ideologies, and as a way of articulating selfhood in the face of opposition and erasure.

Our class takes a dual approach to American autobiography “in the margins”: it explores writings by marginalized authors, and writings that do not take the form of a full-length memoir, such as poetry, zines, autofiction, and texts that combine different writing genres. By considering autobiography as a *mode* of writing rather than a fixed genre, we will begin to think through what it means to construct a life in writing.

We will consider how different life-writing modes have been developed by various subgroups within America, from Black slave narratives, to immigrant experiences, to queer and trans subjectivity; we will also pay special attention to the tensions inherent in the American autobiographical format caused by the continued existence of settler colonialism, white supremacy and patriarchy. As we explore our texts, we will also engage with some autobiographical theory and history, in order to more robustly analyze our primary sources as we develop our own understandings of life writing. In sum, this course asks us to consider not only how life writing is deployed in the margins, but *why*.

Course Objectives: During the semester we will develop our critical reading skills across mediums, through our writing assignments and class discussions. We will engage in the ongoing scholarly conversation about autobiography and the making of genre, learn effective research skills, and learn to craft effective and meaningful analyses in our argumentative and analytical

writing assignments. In doing so, we will also engage with multiple diverse and marginalized viewpoints within American culture and learn to analyze social and political issues through our texts.

GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) *or* Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Any edition of these texts is acceptable, listed in order of schedule. Most will be available in our course reserves or through our library, though you are welcome to purchase them if you prefer a print or e-copy of your own.

- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, ISBN-13 978-0-486-28499-6

- James Baldwin, *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, ISBN 978-0-345-80654-3
- Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, ISBN 978-1-879960-85-5
- Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee*, ISBN 978-0-520-26129-7
- Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*, ISBN 9788498671230

Additional texts and secondary readings will be available through Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS (SEE BELOW FOR GRADING RUBRIC):

Short Responses (3 x 400 words: 1200 words total, 150 points total)

Throughout the semester students will select one of our discussed texts and develop a short response that critically examines the text, using the secondary sources we've read and class discussions we've had. These responses will be part of the Scrapbook assignment, explained below.

Analytical Papers (2 x 1000 words: 2000 words total, 250 points total)

Close reading (700 words, 125 points)

Students will select **one** of our assigned texts and develop an in-depth and persuasive close reading analysis drawing on the secondary literature we've discussed in class.

Comparative analysis (1300 words, 125 points)

Students will select **two or three** of our assigned texts and develop a comparative analysis that considers how each text constructs identity through the autobiographical medium.

Research proposal (300 words, 50 points)

Prior to beginning the final research paper, students will be asked to complete a short proposal to help outline their ideas. The proposal should explain what text(s) you intend to work with, what questions or themes you want to think through, and at least 1 preliminary source you've chosen. We will discuss your proposal together in class later in the semester.

Research paper (2000 words, 200 points)

In this final paper, students will draw on the skills they've developed throughout the course in order to create an in-depth, original, researched analysis of one or more of our class texts. Students will write on a topic of their choosing with instructor approval; final papers will include a minimum of 4 scholarly and peer reviewed sources, and should demonstrate strong critical analysis and close-reading skills.

Scrapbook (200 words, 200 points)

The scrapbook is a semester long project designed to help build our analysis skills and develop an easily referenced body of knowledge. We will use our scrapbooks in class discussion and in our analytical writing assignments. As part of the scrapbook you will complete:

- * Three critical responses (see above) of 500 words ea.
- * A minimum of 15 dialectical entries throughout the semester totaling a minimum of 200 words. A dialectical entry is a reader-response entry: you will refer to a specific moment in our texts and write a short response giving your personal analysis and linking it to what we've discussed and read in class.
- * A multimedia component.

Further details will be given in class.

Zine Project (300 words, 100 points)

Our final project will be to create a perzine that explores an aspect of our personal identity or history, drawing on all that we've studied and learned throughout the semester. We'll first learn about perzines and read some from the Travis Fristoe Zine Library's collection. Then we'll discuss strategies for zine-making. Each zine should be accompanied by a 300 word write up that explains your thought process and goals for creating the zine.

Participation (50 points)

Because this course is designed to be collaborative in nature, 50 points will be put towards participation. Students should come with their assigned work completed, ready to engage in dialogue with their peers.

COURSE POLICIES:

1. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance:* As this is a collaborative, discussion oriented class, your attendance is both required and a key component to your success, and hopefully, you want to be there! As per UF's policy **you are permitted up to 5 absences throughout the semester**. 6 absences without a University approved reason will result in an automatic failure of the course, or an incomplete if documentation is provided after the fact.
3. *Tardiness:* Arriving to class more than 5 minutes late counts as being tardy. Latecomers should come into class quietly so as not to disturb their peers, be prepared to participate, and see me after class so I know you've attended. **3 tardies constitutes one absence**.
4. *Late Papers/Assignments:* Assignments are due by the start of class on the day indicated, unless otherwise noted on the syllabus. **Late work is not accepted**. If you have extenuating circumstances that require an extension, reach out to me **before** the deadline to discuss.
5. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities.* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
6. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism.* UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following

pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’”

The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/scsr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.

UF Student Honor Code:

A Student must not represent as the Student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
 - b. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student’s own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student’s own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
 - c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
 - d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.
7. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor early in the semester.
 8. *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF's Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>
 9. *Students experiencing food insecurity* may visit the Field and Fork Food Pantry. There is no proof of need required in order to shop at the Pantry; you need only bring in your valid UFID card. For more information: <https://pantry.fieldandfork.ufl.edu>
 10. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
 11. *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.
 12. *Course Evaluations*. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.
 13. *Inclusivity*: This classroom affirms diversity, including but not limited to race, gender, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and intersections therein. Because the nature of the course is oriented towards issues of identity, students should feel comfortable sharing their personal

experiences, and should be willing to approach their peers with an open mind. Many of the works we will work with contain potentially difficult material; where possible, content warnings will be provided, so that students can be prepared to engage with our texts appropriately.

14. *Classroom Etiquette*: Students are expected to conduct themselves maturely, contribute to class discussions and activities, and refrain from infringing on their peers right to learn.
15. UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/>
16. *Policy on environmental sustainability*. Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)

CLASS SCHEDULE

Readings and Assignments are due by the start of class time on the date listed.

This schedule may be subject to change – refer to Canvas for the most up to date schedule.

Week One

<i>DATE</i>	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
<i>Wednesday 8/21</i>	Introduction to class & syllabi	
<i>Friday 8/23</i>	anna anthrophy's dys4ia Writing: Reading "in the margins" – strategies for close reading & annotating	Play "dys4ia" by anna anthropy

Week Two

<i>DATE</i>	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
<i>Monday 8/26</i>	Sidonie Smith, "Autobiographical Acts" & "Tool Kit" Writing: Close reading practice with Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" & the analytical circle	
<i>Wednesday 8/28</i>	Anne Bradstreet, "To My Dear Children" Topic: "Western" and "Nonwestern" models of life writing Introduction to our Scrapbook; pre-writing strategies	
<i>Friday 8/30</i>	<i>Native American Autobiography</i> pp. 3-10 & "Crow Heart's Reminiscences and Personal Experiences" Topic: Settler Colonialism	

Week Three

DATE	CLASS TOPIC	DUE
<i>Monday 9/2</i>	No Class	
<i>Wednesday 9/4</i>	Frederick Douglass, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass” Short selection from <i>American Autobiography</i> “Spiritual, Secular, and Enslaved Selves”	<u>Short Response #1</u>
<i>Friday 9/6</i>	Zitkala-Sa, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” Topic: continue discussion of “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass”; the formation of “American” identit(ies)	

Week Four

DATE	CLASS TOPIC	DUE
<i>Monday 9/9</i>	James Baldwin, <i>Go Tell it on the Mountain</i> pp. 3-128 James Baldwin, “Notes for a Hypothetical Novel” Topic: The autobiographical pact	
<i>Wednesday 9/11</i>	Baldwin, pp.129-224 Writing: Thesis & structure	
<i>Friday 9/13</i>	Baldwin, pp. 225-262 Peer discussion: Close Reading paper	<u>Working draft/outline for close reading paper</u>

Week Five

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
<i>Monday 9/16</i>	Gloria Anzaldúa, <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i> , pp. 23-120 Selections from Adrienne Rich, “Notes Towards a Politics of Location”	<u>Close reading paper</u>
<i>Wednesday 9/18</i>	Anzaldúa, pp. 121-174 Topic: David Vázquez’ “triangulations” theory	
<i>Friday 9/20</i>	Anzaldúa, pp. 175-225 Topic: Chicax feminisms	

Week Six

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
<i>Monday 9/23</i>	Diane Wood Midbrook, “What was Confessional Poetry?” Sylvia Plath, “Daddy”, “Tulips”, “Edges”	
<i>Wednesday 9/25</i>	Marsha Bryant, “The Confessional Other”	

	Anne Sexton, “A Story for Rose on the Midnight Flight to Boston”, “The Room of My Life”, “The Truth the Dead Know”	
Friday 9/27	Adrian Louis, “The Sacred Circle”, “Sonny’s Purple Heart”	<u>Short Response #2</u>

Week Seven

DATE		DUE
Monday 9/30	Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, <i>Dictée</i> pp. 1-60	
Wednesday 10/2	Hak Kyung Cha, pp. 61-118	<u>Scrapbook Check-in</u>
Friday 10/4	No Class	

Week Eight

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
Monday 10/7	Hak Kyung Cha, pp. 119-181	
Wednesday 10/9	Hito Steyerl, <i>How Not To Be Seen</i> (video on Canvas) & “A Thing Like You And Me” Writing: They Say/I Say activity	
Friday 10/11	Peer discussion: Comparative Analysis	<u>Working draft/outline for comparative analysis</u>

Week Nine

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
Monday 10/14	Susan Sontag, <i>On Photography</i> (selection on Canvas) Topic: Introduction to the final Research Report	<u>Comparative analysis</u>
Wednesday 10/16	Cindy Sherman “Untitled Film Stills” series & Del LaGrace Volcano <i>Sublime Mutations</i>	
Friday 10/18	Elisabeth El Refaie, <i>Autobiographical Comics</i> (selection on Canvas) Topic: Comics as autobiography	

Week Ten

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
Monday 10/21	No Class	
Wednesday 10/23	Alison Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> pp. 1-54 Writing: They Say/I Say cont’d	
Friday 10/25	Bechdel, pp. 55-150	<u>Research proposal</u>

Week Eleven

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
<i>Monday 10/28</i>	Bechdel, pp. 151-232	
<i>Wednesday 10/30</i>	Cristy Roads, <i>Indestructible</i>	
<i>Friday 11/1</i>	Cristy Roads, <i>Indestructible</i> Topic: John Fiske's "Ex-Corporations" & Jose Munoz's "Dis-Identifications"	<u>Short response #3</u>

Week Twelve

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
<i>Monday 11/4</i>	Carta Monir, <i>Don't Fucking Touch Me</i> Riki Anne Wilchins, "What Does It Cost to Tell The Truth?"	
<i>Wednesday 11/6</i>	Conferences	
<i>Friday 11/8</i>	Selections from the POC Zine Project & the Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) Anaïs Nin, "The Personal Life Deeply Lived"	<u>Progress Report for Research Report</u>

Week Thirteen

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
<i>Monday 11/11</i>	<i>No class</i>	
<i>Wednesday 11/13</i>	Perzines from the TFZL with a collective curator of the special collection	
<i>Friday 11/15</i>	Alison Piepmeier, <i>Girl Zines</i> (pages TBA) Topic: Zine-making	

Week Fourteen

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
<i>Monday 11/18</i>	bell hooks, "Choosing the Margins as a Space of Radical Openness" Topic: Why life writing in "the margins"?	
<i>Wednesday 11/20</i>	Zine project presentations	<u>Zine Project</u>
<i>Friday 11/22</i>	Cindy Sherman's Instagram & Molly Soda's website Writing: Revision strategies	

Week Fifteen

DATE	CLASS TOPIC/READING	DUE
<i>Monday 11/25</i>	Workshop: Final papers & editing activity	<u>Working draft/outline of final paper</u>
<i>Wednesday 11/27</i>	<i>No Class</i>	
<i>Friday 11/29</i>	<i>No Class</i>	

Week Sixteen

<i>DATE</i>	CLASS TOPIC	READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS
<i>Monday 12/2</i>	Mini-conferences for final paper	
<i>Wednesday 12/4</i>	Work day for final paper Evaluations	<u>Final Research paper & Final Scrapbook</u>

GRADING/ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

A work shows a clear, well-thought out thesis, supported by specific, adequately cited primary and secondary sources. Additionally, this work engages with the rhetorical, formal, and when applicable, visual properties of the primary sources, is original in its approach, and demonstrates mastery over grammar and writing conventions.

B work shows a clear thesis, supported by adequately cited primary and secondary sources. Additionally, this work engages with the rhetorical, formal, and when applicable, visual properties of the primary sources, and mostly demonstrates mastery over grammar and writing conventions.

C work contains a thesis, though it may not be clear or fully realized yet, and attempts to support it with primary and secondary sources. Additionally, this work references the rhetorical and formal properties of the primary sources. Grammar and writing conventions may not be fully mastered.

D work may not yet present a thesis, but does attempt to engage with primary and secondary sources, and reference the rhetorical and formal properties of the primary sources. Grammar and writing conventions may not be fully mastered.

E work does not engage with the formal or rhetorical properties of the primary sources.

Grading Scale

A / 100 - 94

A- / 93 - 90

B+ / 89 – 86

B / 85 - 83

B - / 82 - 80

C+ / 79 - 76

C / 75 - 73

C- / 74 - 70

D+ / 69 - 66

D- / 65 - 60

E / 59 - 0