Workshop in Nonfiction, Eng 380L111
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Required texts:
The Elements of Autobiographical Narrative, Hobbs (Longman)
The Truth of the Matter, Moore (Longman)
A grammar handbook such as Woe is I, or your College Writing handbook

COURSE PHILOSOPHY:

This is an upper-division workshop that will explore various forms of nonfiction writing. You will be required to write essays in the genres of autobiography, feature articles, and whatever else may interest you. It may be surprising to find that there will be some reading for this course. My personal point of view about writing is that it requires a certain amount of talent and dedication, (and possibly a particular form of mental imbalance), but it also requires models. If you were to take an art course in painting or sculpture, regardless of your skill level, the teacher would not tell you to "go and paint something." More than likely you would be given a model, or an object to focus on. Consider the text to be full of models. Some you will like, some you won't, but by the end of this course you will have "cranked out" several pieces of nonfiction writing that correspond to some of the more popular forms of the genre. Similarly, I hope that you will consult a writing handbook if you run into problems of grammar, punctuation or style. You can use your college writing handbook, or buy any of the excellent books available.

NUTS AND BOLTS:

This course will be run as a workshop, so be prepared to produce a fresh piece of writing about every two weeks. Sometimes I will give you a word count; other times I will just leave length up to you. As a professional writer, you will have to become very conscious of length. We will critique your works in class; this will require you to make copies of the work that we will review. You can make copies for five cents a page at the Copy Center in Donnelly.

You must be in class. I do take attendance, and it does impact your grade. It's not fair of you to come to class when we read your work, yet not be here to comment on others. In fact, it's rude. I encourage you to meet me outside of class. See my office door for my posted office hours.

All work must be typed, and it should be as close to perfect as you can make it. This means that I am not interested in seeing your first rough draft, unless it is outside of class. Remember that the rest of the class will see your work, so
don't embarrass yourself. Writing an essay with poor grammar and bad punctuation is like going out in public in your underwear.

Peer critique is one of the basic elements of writing. As we learn how to do this, please remember to be courteous. In fact one of your assignments will be to read and write a review of a book outside of class. I will bring in articles from current magazines such as Harper’s, or The New Yorker. Both are available in the Library, or you may subscribe at a student discount.

Grades will be based on a portfolio. You will be required to hand in a sample of your strongest pieces, (which must include your Praxis Paper) for your final mark. You may rewrite them as much as you like. I will collect the portfolios at midterm, and during final exam week. A percentage of your grade is based on class participation.

The Praxis Paper is a requirement for all students in the course. You will go to a Marist Praxis Site as a practicing observer, and write about the experience. The angle is entirely up to you.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. A plagiarized paper will earn you an "F" for the paper, and may get you expelled. (See the Student Handbook for the official policy).

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Although it is not likely in the fall, if the weather is snowy and icy, I may cancel class. Please check my phone mail extension. If class is cancelled, I will change my answering message and give you instructions for the next class. Any schedule change will be made 1½ hours before the start of class.

OTHER POLICIES

Feel free to email me at any time if you have a question, or have text you want me to look at. Email text as a Word Attachment. I will get back to you as soon as possible, but I do not return emails over the weekend. I am available during office hours, which are posted on my office door in Fontaine. Try to make an appointment

Assignment 1
For the first week, please read Sections 1, 2, and 3 of The Elements of Autobiography. We will discuss the book at our next meeting. The first writing assignment is an autobiographical essay.