

University of Washington, Winter 2015
ENGL 200 B: Reading Literary Forms
Writing Lives: Women Warriors, Memoir, & Autofiction

Instructor: Alissa S. Bourbonnais
Office & Hours: PDL B5D // Tuesdays 10:30am – 12:30pm, and by appointment
E-mail: abourbon@uw.edu
Location & Time: LOW 113 // Tues & Thurs 8:30 – 10:20am
Class Website: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/946875>

Course Overview:

How would you write your life story? Where would you begin? How would you paint the people in your life as characters? Would your tone be formal, personal, dramatic, sarcastic, comical? What events would you highlight? What would you choose to leave out? Consider the most emotionally heightened experiences—positive and negative—you’ve ever had. How might your friends or family write about those same events in different ways? Telling a story about actual lived experience demands a writer to make deliberate choices, and sacrifices, in each and every sentence. This course will explore these challenges in diverse texts by women writers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Course texts focus especially on place, displacement, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and identity.

The dizzying list of critical terms falling under the umbrella concept of “life writing” goes on and on: autobiography, autofiction, memoir, literary biography, biographical fiction, autobiographical fiction, graphic memoir, autoethnography. What drives the desire to categorize and qualify such specific genres when it comes to writing about life experiences? Are these labels helpful or limiting? What does it mean to obsessively pursue truth, fact, and history in a document of subjective narrative? How do we understand the relationship between individual and cultural memory through these genres? In what ways do documentation and artistic expression converge in various forms of life writing? How do different forms—prose fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, spoken word, comics—allow authors to write their lives in different ways?

Readings will include works by Zitkala-Ša, Zora Neale Hurston, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Michelle Cliff, Marjane Satrapi, Azar Nafisi, and selections from *The Moth: True Stories Told Live* podcast.

Course Objectives:

This course will develop students’ critical reading, thinking, and writing skills through class discussions; low-stakes writing in weekly blogging and in-class writing assignments; and formal writing in a creative multimodal project, and a final essay that will expand on and revise material generated in previous assignments. Students will also learn to articulate an understanding of their own reading and writing processes, and how these processes shape the original lines of inquiry students choose to explore in their essays.

Successful completion of this course means that:

- Students are able to contextualize and analyze the materials or topics covered, historically, politically, or culturally.
- Students are able to perform competent close readings of course texts and similar texts.
- Students have an appreciation for and knowledge of literature's relationship to related areas or disciplines.
- Students improve their writing skills generally, and with regard to writing about literature and culture.

This course fulfills the University's W (writing) requirement, as well as the VLPA (visual, literary, and performing arts) requirement.

Required Materials:

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976)

Michelle Cliff, *Abeng* (1984),

If I Could Write this in Fire (2008)

Marjane Satrapi, *The Complete Persepolis* (2000)

Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003)

Other materials will be made available electronically.

Assessment:

Participation	30%
Weekly Blogging	20%
Midterm Project	25%
Final Paper	25%

Participation:

Please note that this course requires a heavy reading load and meets at **8:30am four days a week. Participation in every single class period is crucial to your success in this course.** If you fall behind in the reading, just come talk to me. Do not miss class. If you think making it to every session at 8:30am will be a problem for you, you may want to consider finding another course.

Active participation means:

- Coming to EVERY class on time and prepared
- Listening actively to your classmates' ideas
- Volunteering comments regularly in discussions
- Making a sincere contribution to the success of this course

Late Work Policy:

All writing assignments are graded on the university's four-point scale. For each day an assignment is late, one-tenth of a point will be deducted (for example, if your midterm earned a 3.5, but was submitted two days late, the grade will be reduced to 3.3). No assignment will be accepted more than one week late, unless you have extenuating circumstances.

If you experience extenuating circumstances at any point in the term, please contact me immediately to arrange for extensions and any extra help.

Writing Resources:

I encourage you to take advantage of the following writing resources available to you at no charge. If you attend a writing conference, write a one-page, double-spaced summary of who you worked with, what paper you focused on, and what you learned and I will add a point to your participation grade.

- **The CLUE Writing Center** in Mary Gates Hall is open Sunday to Thursday from 7pm to midnight. The graduate tutors can help you with your claims, organization, and grammar. You do not need to make an appointment, so arrive early and be prepared to wait.
- **The Odegaard Writing and Research Center** is open Sunday to Thursday from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm and 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. This writing center provides a research-integrated approach to writing instruction. Make an appointment on the website: www.depts.washington.edu/owrc.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people's thoughts and writing—as long as you cite them. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review.

Concerns:

If you have any concerns about the course or your instructor, please see the instructor about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the instructor or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the Director of Undergraduate Programs: Colette Moore, (206) 543-2634, cvmoore@uw.edu.

Accommodations:

If you need accommodation of any sort, please let me know so that I can work with the UW Disability Resources for Students Office (DRS) to provide what you require. This syllabus is available in large print, as are other class materials. More information about accommodation may be found at <http://www.washington.edu/students/drs/>.

Zero Tolerance Policy:

Racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination and bias are hurtful and unacceptable. There is no tolerance for words, speech, behavior, actions, or clothing/possessions that insult, diminish, demean, or belittle any individual or group of persons based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual preference, ability, economic class, national origin, language, or age. Academic freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of discourse DO NOT protect racism or other acts of harassment and hate. Violations of this Zero Tolerance Policy may result in removal from the classroom and actions governed by the student code of conduct will be taken.

Campus Safety:

Preventing violence is everyone's responsibility. If you're concerned, tell someone.

- Always call 911 if you or others may be in danger.
- Call 206-685-SAFE (7233) to report non-urgent threats of violence and for referrals to UW counseling and/or safety resources. TTY or VP callers, please call through your preferred relay service.
- Don't walk alone. Campus safety guards can walk with you on campus after dark. Call Husky NightWalk 206-685-WALK (9255).
- Stay connected in an emergency with UW Alert. Register your mobile number to receive instant notification of campus emergencies via text and voice messaging. Sign up online at www.washington.edu/alert

For more information visit the SafeCampus website: www.washington.edu/safecampus

Course Calendar:

All readings and assignments are due on the day they are listed. If you miss class, you are responsible for contacting a classmate for notes. This schedule is tentative and subject to change.

ENGLISH 200 B: WINTER QUARTER 2015

WEEK 1	READING / IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES	WRITING
Tue 1/6	Introduction & Syllabus	
Thu 1/8	Available on course website: Zitkala-Ša, "School Days of an Indian Girl" Zora Neale Hurston, excerpt from <i>Dust Tracks on a Road</i> (recording) Amy Tan, "Mother Tongue"	
WEEK 2		
Tue 1/13	<i>The Woman Warrior</i> , "No Name Woman," and "White Tigers" (1-53)	First Readers
Thu 1/15	<i>The Woman Warrior</i> , "Shaman" (57-109)	Respondents
WEEK 3		
Tue 1/20	<i>The Woman Warrior</i> , "At the Western Palace" (113-160)	First Readers
Thu 1/22	<i>The Woman Warrior</i> , "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" (163-209)	Respondents

WEEK 4		
Tue 1/27	<i>Abeng</i> , I (1-46)	First Readers
Thu 1/29	<i>Abeng</i> , II (48-108)	Respondents
WEEK 5		
Tue 2/3	<i>Abeng</i> , III (110-166)	First Readers Rough Draft: Parts 1-2
Thu 2/5	<i>If I Could Write This in Fire</i> , “Journey into Speech” “And What Would it Be Like,” and “If I Could...,” (vii – 31); “Sites of Memory” (49-63)	Respondents
WEEK 6		
Tue 2/10	<i>Persepolis</i> (1-71)	First Readers Rough Draft: Parts 3-4
Thu 2/12	<i>Persepolis</i> (72-153)	Respondents Midterm Project Due Friday, Feb. 13
WEEK 7		
Tue 2/17	<i>Persepolis</i> (155-206)	First Readers
Thu 2/19	<i>Persepolis</i> (207-257)	Respondents
WEEK 8		
Tue 2/24	<i>Persepolis</i> (258-311)	First Readers
Thu 2/26	<i>Persepolis</i> (312-341)	Respondents
WEEK 9		
Tue 3/3	<i>Reading Lolita in Tehran</i> , “Lolita” (1-39)	First Readers
Thu 3/5	<i>Reading Lolita in Tehran</i> , “Lolita” (40-77)	Respondents
WEEK 10		
Tue 3/10	Available on course website: Selections from <i>The Moth: True Stories Told Live</i> podcast	Rough Draft Final Paper
Thu 3/12	Reread your writing from the term, and come prepared with questions on the final	Blog Reflection
WEEK 11		
Finals Week: 3/16 - 3/20		Final Paper Due Tuesday, March 17