RHET 3110 Course (3 credit hours): SPRING 2018
The American University in Cairo
The Department of Rhetoric and Composition

Course information
- RHET 3110 01 The Writer's Workshop: Life Stories
- MR 3:30 – 4:45
- HATEM C207
- Prerequisite: RHET 1020

Instructor information
- Kathleen Saville
- ksaville@aucegypt.edu
- HUSS – Associate Chair’s office next to the RHET main office
- Office Hours: MR 10 – 11 am

Course Description
This course, which is centered on the genre of nonfiction, offers students a unique opportunity to learn the fundamentals of nonfiction writing, to grow as critics, both on the page and in the classroom, and to develop leadership and public speaking skills. Although in recent years the genre of literary nonfiction has experienced a commercial explosion and subsequent backlash, it is deeply rooted in the field of prose. Literary nonfiction is a classic genre with a wide range of sub-genres, from the personal essays of Montaigne and Seneca, to the satires of Addison and Steele, to the memoirs of contemporary writers such as Patricia Hampl and Geoffrey Wolff. Students in this course will learn and practice the fundamentals of nonfiction narrative writing, which has a history, evidenced by the tiny sampling of the above writers, for engaging life questions in a number of personal contexts. Students will also learn and practice writing formal critiques of peers’ narratives and will participate in class workshop discussions of their peers’ work. Students interested in literature, writing, journalism, mass media, art, theatre, language, psychology, philosophy, and anthropology, among others, may find this course content (narrative nonfiction for engaging with life's questions, critiques and workshops for developing formal and conversational critical skills) applicable in a number of contexts. The course will help students become more cognizant of their life experiences in a number of narrative contexts, will help them develop critical skills necessary to carry wide-ranging discussions in upper-level and graduate courses, will further develop critical writing skills in the context of a rigorous schedule, and will present opportunities to acquire leadership and public speaking skills.

Learning Outcomes

Module-specific skills. By the end of the course students will be able to:
- demonstrate an informed appreciation of specific pieces of life writing.
- demonstrate an informed appreciation of the literary history of life writing.
- demonstrate an understanding of key theories and terms for the study of life writing (e.g. confession, autobiographical, relational self, dialogism, ethics).

Key skills. By the end of this course, students will be able to:
- demonstrate advanced communication skills, and an ability to work both individually and in group and seminar work.
- demonstrate appropriate research and bibliographic skills, an advanced capacity to construct a coherent, substantiated argument, and a capacity to write clear and correct prose in essay-writing and other written work.
- demonstrate advanced proficiency in information retrieval and analysis through research for seminars and essays.
- demonstrate advanced proficiency in information retrieval and analysis.

Course Material

A Few of Our Readings
- *Your Life as Story* by Tristine Rainer (excerpts to be posted on Blackboard)
- *Tell It Slant: Writing and Shaping Creative Nonfiction* by Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola (excerpts and exercises posted on Blackboard)
- *Writing Memoir* by Judith Barrington excerpts to be posted on Blackboard
- *A Book of Silence* by Sara Maitland (excerpts to be posted on Blackboard)
-Season of the Body: Essays by Brenda Millar (excerpts to be posted on Blackboard)
-Threading My Prayer Rug: One Woman’s Journey from Pakistani Muslim to American Muslim by Sabeeha Rehman (excerpts to be posted on Blackboard)

Instructor’s Policies and Expectations
Conferences: I am available on Mondays and Thursdays to meet with you about your stories or about ideas you might want to discuss with me. If you make an appointment, let me know ksaville@aucegypt.edu if you must cancel or will be late.

Deadlines and Late Work: For the class to function successfully as a workshop, students must submit their essays on time so that the teacher and other students have time to read the essay. It is your responsibility to e-mail your essay to other students a week before the workshop. * You need to bring me a hard copy for me. If you are late, your essay will be marked down 10 points for every day. *You will also be marked down for participation. If you fail to show up on the day that your essay is being discussed, you will be given a zero for the essay.

Grades and Grading in this Course
A. Available Grades in the Course (Note: D- and IP grades are not available in this course)

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>89-87</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>86-83</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>76-73</td>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>72-70</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>66-60</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59</td>
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B. Grade Breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentag e of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Short Exercises</td>
<td>Throughout the semester, students will do a number of short in and out-of-class exercises. Failure to submit these exercises will result in a lowered grade. I may not give lettered grades on each exercise, but they must be completed.</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Narrative 1</td>
<td>Topic: Your role in the family  Form: narrative essay  Focus: Description  Word Count: 750 words</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>3 Narrative 2</td>
<td>Focus: Any topic you wish. To brainstorm, first write a list of 5 topics that you’ve been avoiding and choose one for your essay.  Form: collage essay  Focus: scene, juxtaposition of structure  Word Count: 750 – 1000 max.</td>
<td>15%</td>
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| **Narrative 3** | **Topic:** Your choice  
**Form:** braided essay:  
**Focus:** setting, voice, dialogue  
**Word Count:** 1000 - 1200 | 20% |
|---------------|----------------------------------|-----|
| **Narrative 4** | **Topic:** Your choice  
**Form:** Your choice  
**Focus:** Time  
**Word Count:** 1200 – 1500 | 20% |
| **Workshop Critiques** | For every story that is workshopped in groups of 4, students must submit a 250 -word critique, discussing in detail the strengths and weaknesses of each story.  
The purpose of the critique is for you to think and reflect on the student’s essay. You never know who will give you the most insightful feedback on your story. | 10% |
| **Participation** | Pay special attention to this because it can raise or lower your grade. Every semester students are shocked to learn that teachers take the following into consideration at the end of the semester.  
Here is what I consider when I calculate your participation grade:  
**Attendance:** Your daily attendance in the class is required. This means, coming prepared to class ready to either write or participate in a discussion. You must bring the readings and stories with you to class. **Punctuality:** I will take attendance at the beginning of the class. If you are ten minutes late, I will mark you for ½ absence absent. If you are late for 30 minutes, you are absent for the class. It is disruptive for students to come in late. **Mobile phones:** Your phone should be on silent. If you keep texting during the class, I will either take your phone away or ask you to leave the class. **Leaving the classroom:** Students should be prepared to stay in the classroom the entire time. If you leave without permission, you can be counted absent. **Impoliteness or a rude attitude:** Students should treat their teachers and other students with respect. Students should not talk when others are talking or act insensitively toward others. Students should critique other students’ essays in the same way that they would like to be treated. | 10% |

C. **Explanation of Final Grades**  
I will be available online for 24 hours after grades are posted.

For additional information about grading and to get answers to questions like  
- How will I know at what level (or grade) I am performing during the semester?  
- I’m having trouble completing all the work by the end of the semester. What options do I have?  
- Can I appeal a specific assignment grade?  
- Can I appeal the final course grade given to me by the faculty?  
  Visit this link or scan this QR code.
Attendance, Absences, and Tardiness
Students are highly encouraged to attend all classes, as regular class attendance can significantly help a student do better in the class. A student is not allowed to miss more than six classes without severe consequences, up to and including, failing the course. Also, missing more than 10 minutes of a class counts as half of an absence and missing more than 30 minutes of a class counts as a full absence.

There are many important additional guidelines related to this area. To read complete details and to get answers to questions like

- Who is responsible for keeping attendance?
- What happens if I miss a class? What happens if I exceed six absences?
- What is the policy on tardiness or missing part, but not all, of a class session?
- What happens if I have a medical excuse, family crisis, or extracurricular activity?

Visit this link or scan this QR code.

http://schools.aucegypt.edu/academics/rhet/FAQ/Pages/Attendance.aspx

Academic Integrity
In accordance with the AUC’s efforts to promote a culture of academic integrity on campus, the Rhetoric and Composition Department strictly enforces the academic integrity principles found in AUC’s Code of Academic Integrity. Instructors are trained to ensure students are doing their own work; additionally, students must also use Turnitin.com for all drafts of major assignments. Violations of academic integrity can lead to serious consequences, including failing the course and having notes about violations added to your permanent transcript.

For further details about academic integrity and to get answers to questions such as

- How do I know what is legitimate borrowing from a source and what is plagiarism?
- How will the instructor know if I have copied my paper from the Internet, had the paper written by a professional writing service, or tried some other tricky thing?
- What are the consequences of violations of academic integrity?
- What are the procedures for using Turnitin.com?

Visit this link or scan this QR code.

http://schools.aucegypt.edu/academics/rhet/FAQ/Pages/Academic_Integrity.aspx

Dropping, Failing and Repeating Courses
While we hope that you complete and pass your RHET course, sometimes disruptions do happen, and students, at times, drop or fail RHET courses. There are a number of important policies that affect these situations.

For further details about dropping, failing, and repeating and to get answers to questions such as

- I’m thinking about dropping my course. What should I do?
- What happens if I miss the drop deadline?
Visit this link or scan this QR code.

http://schools.aucegypt.edu/academics/rhet/FAQ/Pages/Dropping.aspx

**Special Needs, Concerns, or Additional Support**
The Department of Rhetoric and Composition provides practical support to all students in a fair and equitable manner. Students who have special needs or concerns about the class should talk to their instructors the first week of classes or as soon as possible. AUC complies with the American Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

For further details about special needs, concerns or additional support and to get answers to questions such as:
- I have a documented special need. What should I do?
- I feel that I will need some additional support. What should I do?
- I have a concern about the instructor or the course. What should I do?
- What does the writing center offer? How can the writing center help me?

Visit this link or scan this QR code.

http://schools.aucegypt.edu/academics/rhet/FAQ/Pages/Special_Needs.aspx

**Research in RHET**
Research is highly valued at AUC, and students are encouraged to participate in research during their time at AUC, however, research, both on-campus and off-campus, MUST comply with a number of important policies and regulations for security, legal, and ethical reasons. Students who plan to do ANY on-campus research involving people (surveys, interviews, etc) or ANY off-campus research of any nature MUST receive approval PRIOR to starting their research. To begin this process a student should discuss their plans with their instructor as well as be familiar with the policies found at the link below.

For important information about the research process, ethical research, extracurricular research opportunities, and to get answers to questions like
- When I conduct a survey or an interview, can I collect data from subjects off-campus?
- Do I need any approvals if I collect data from subjects on-campus?
- What is the IRB and what is CAPMAS?
- What presentation or publication opportunities do I have?

Visit the following link or scan this QR code

http://schools.aucegypt.edu/academics/rhet/FAQ/Pages/Research.aspx

**Scope of this Syllabus and Contingency Plans**
This syllabus includes all written content, graphic displays, as well as the content referenced in the links/QR codes included in this document. Any student who continues in the course is expected to understand and abide by all policies, guidelines and schedules mentioned therein. However, in the event of the suspension of normal university classes, the initial plan is to continue with the course as long as there is internet accessibility in Egypt, but this may require adjustment to policies, guidelines, and schedules. Thus, in the case of the suspension of classes, please check your email and course website for details about how the course will continue.
**Course Outline**

**RHET 3110 Tentative Schedule:**

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings Due</th>
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DUE: fairy tale and letter exercises assigned in hard copy |
| **Week 2** | Getting Started: Writing the Family. Permission to Speak. Bearing Witness. Description | READ:  
“What is Memoir?” from *Writing the Memoir* by Judith Barrington. Posted on Blackboard.  
“The Fine Art of Sighing” by Bernard Cooper  
-If you have time, start *The Glass Castle* (on Blackboard)  
REVISE to submit on turnitin.com:  
The Gesture exercise begun in class.  
Word count: 500 |
| **Week 3** | Point-of-View. How do we write about ourselves? Our Historical, Universal Selves. Ourselves at a particular place in history. The narrative essay. | READ:  
Review critique guidelines  
Discuss first assignment – Writing the Family, Critique Guideline  
In-class writing exercises |
| **Week 4** | Writing About Family & Visual Cues  
Hand out First Assignment & critique guidelines | DAY 1 – Discuss *Glass Castle* and family, In-class writing exercise  
DAY 2: Workshop – Essay # 1 D1  
Copy for Ms Saville  
READ:  
pp 47 – 65 *The Glass Castle* |
| **Week 5** | The Bigger Story Inside Your Experience. Who are the other important characters in my story? Developing Characters. | DAY 1 – Character development exercises  
Essay 2 Assignment handed out  
DUE: Essay # 1 Final Draft Turnitin.com  
READ for Oct. 9:  
“My Children Explain the Big Issues” by Will Baker |
DAY 2 – The Collage Essay  
READ:  
“It’s Arranged” in *Threading My Prayer Rug* by Sabeeha Rehman |
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>DAY 1</th>
<th>DAY 2</th>
<th>DAY 3 - DAY 5</th>
<th>DAY 6</th>
<th>DAY 7</th>
<th>DAY 8</th>
<th>DAY 9</th>
<th>DAY 10</th>
<th>DAY 11</th>
<th>DAY 12</th>
<th>DAY 13</th>
<th>DAY 14</th>
<th>DAY 15</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Story, Detail</td>
<td>Discussion of “It’s Arranged” and in-class writing exercise</td>
<td>Workshop Essay # 2 D1</td>
<td>Copy for Ms Saville</td>
<td>&quot;Three Voices&quot; by Bhanu Kapil Rider (Blackboard)</td>
<td>&quot;Three Fragments“ by Charles Simic (Blackboard)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Story, Detail</td>
<td>DAYS 1 &amp; 2 – Discussion and in-class writing exercises</td>
<td><strong>DUE: Essay # 2 Final Draft Turnitin.com</strong></td>
<td>READ:</td>
<td>&quot;A Field Guide to the Desert” in Season of the Body by Brenda Miller (Blackboard)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Time &amp; the Braided Essay</td>
<td>DAY 1 &amp; 2 - Discussion and in-class writing Essay 3 Assignment handed out</td>
<td>READ:</td>
<td>&quot;The Desert Fathers“ in A Book of Silence by Sara Maitland (Blackboard)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>DAY 1 – Discussion and in-class exercises</td>
<td><strong>Day 2: CONFERENCES:</strong></td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>DAY 1: Essay # 3 D1 Workshops, Copy to Ms Saville Essay 4 Assignment handed out</td>
<td>DAY 2: In-class exercises on voice and the braided essay form</td>
<td>READ:</td>
<td>&quot;Anatomy of a Scene: Description, Inner Responses, Dialog and Structure” from Your Life as Story by Tristina Rainer</td>
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<td>11/14, 17</td>
<td>11/28, 12/1</td>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>DAY 1: Discussion ands in-class writing</td>
<td><strong>DUE: Day 1 Essay # 3 D2 turnitin.com</strong></td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Suspense and plot. How do I create tension in my narrative?</td>
<td><strong>DAY 1 – CONFERENCES</strong></td>
<td><strong>DAY 2 Essay #4 D 1 Workshops</strong></td>
<td><strong>DUE Essay # 3 final</strong></td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td><strong>DUE Essay # 4 2nd draft (DAY 2)</strong></td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Sharing my finished story. How do I find an audience for my work?</td>
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<td><strong>DUE Essay 4 FINAL</strong></td>
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