ENG 3903-001: Women, Literature, and Language: The Memoir

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Eastern Illinois University
ENGLISH 3903, Fall 2006
Women, Literature, and Language: The Memoir
T/TH 2:00 to 3:15
Coleman Hall 3609
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Office: Coleman Hall 3375
Office Hours: M 1:00 to 3:00, T/TH 9:30 to 11:00, and by appointment

Purpose of the Course
The emphasis in this course will be on memoirs written by women in English during the past 50 or so years. The purpose is to allow students to explore the various themes that women writers of the memoir have undertaken as well as the different forms and stylistic devices they have utilized in their writing.

Goals of the Course
By the end of the semester, students will be better able to:
1. view the memoir as an important literary genre that allows for a range of themes and stylistic devices;
2. perceive how the memoir fits into the larger framework of autobiographical writing;
3. understand the role that gender plays in the writing of memoir;
4. examine how race, class, and ethnicity can influence a memoir’s theme and tone;
5. explore how memoirists use fictional techniques to write about personal events;
6. investigate the blurring of boundaries between fiction and creative nonfiction;
7. understand the various ethical issues involved in the writing of memoir.

Books and Materials
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou (1969)
The Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston (1975)
The White Album, Joan Didion (1979)
Borderlands/La Frontera, Gloria Anzaldua (1987)
Girl, Interrupted, Susanna Kaysen
The Liar’s Club, Mary Karr (1995)
Don’t Let’s Go to the Dogs Tonight, Alexandra Fuller (2001)

Requirements
1. Write three papers. Two will be shorter papers, from 4-6 pages; the third will be somewhat longer (6-8) and will contain 2-3 outside sources. One of the shorter papers can be a personal essay dealing with a specific theme or time period of your life.
2. Keep a journal where you jot down insights from your reading, personal reflections on various themes, in-class writing responses, and, occasionally, short answers to questions. Although the journal will not be collected, your responses and insights as recorded in your journal and used to contribute to class discussion will determine a large part of your participation/attendance grade. We may also exchange journals.
3. Take a final exam.
Grade Breakdown
Essay 1 15%
Essay 2 20%
Essay 3 30%
Participation (including Journal use) and Attendance 20%
Final exam 15%

Evaluation of Essays
There will be particular criteria tailored to each assignment; we will discuss these in class. All final versions of written work must adhere to the conventions of Standard written English, follow proper format (see below), and have been carefully proofread.

LATE PAPERS: I realize that circumstances may prevent some of you from turning a paper in on time. Thus I allow one paper extension without penalty provided you talk to me before the paper is due (email is fine.) After that, your paper will go down one grade per day of class.

Format for Papers
Type your assignments on standard-size paper. Double-space. NO extra spaces between paragraphs, please, and NO oversized fonts. In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, type your name, my last name, course, and date. No cover page, please.

Plagiarism
I adhere strictly to the English Department policy on plagiarism:
Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Plagiarism is defined as “The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work” (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)

Writing Center
The Writing Center, located in room 3110 of Coleman Hall, gives you the opportunity to talk with a tutor about your writing, especially if you are having problems beginning a paper or know that you are weak in certain areas.

NOTES: It is your responsibility to contact me or a fellow student to find out what you’ve missed, including any handouts or assignment changes.

PLEASE TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES BEFORE COMING TO CLASS
CLASS SCHEDULE

#1  08/22  Introductions
     08/24  In-class writing

#2  08/29  Angelou, pps. 1-70
     08/31  Angelou, 71-136

#3  09/05  Angelou, 137-208
     09/07  Angelou, 209-289

#4  09/12  Kingston, No Name Woman and White Tigers
     09/14  Kingston, Shaman

#5  09/19  Kingston, At the Western Palace
     09/21  Kingston, A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe

#6  09/26  Didion, The White Album,
     09/28  Didion, On the Morning After the Sixties

#7  10/03  Didion, Sojourns
     10/05  Paper #1 due
     10/05  Anzaldua, selected sections TBA

#8  10/10  Anzaldua, selected sections TBA
     10/12  Anzaldua, selected sections TBA

#9  10/17  Kaysen, 1-93
     10/19  Kaysen, 94-168

#10 10/24  Karr, 1-68
     10/26  Karr, 69- 139

#11 10/31  Karr, 140-197
     11/02  Karr, 198-247
     11/02  Paper #2 due

#12 11/07  Karr, 248- 320
     11/09  Fuller, 1-84

#13 11/14  Fuller, 85-148
     11/16  Fuller, 149-228

THANKSGIVING BREAK

#14 11/28  Fuller, 229-301
11/30  Nafisi, selected sections TBA
#15  12/05  Nafisi, selected sections TBA
12/07  Nafisi, selected sections TBA
Paper #3 due

**NOTE:** I may make minor changes to this syllabus in order to suit the needs of the class. Changes will always be announced in advance.