English 202B: Writing in the Humanities
Histories and Theories of Literacy: Constructing Identity
202B.5 MWF 2:30-3:20 304 Boucke
202B.6 MWF 4:40-5:30 116 EE West

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Office Hours:
Monday 12:30-2
Tuesday 9-12
and by appt.

Course Description: Development, skills, and expertise in reading and writing can never be separated; therefore, Writing in the Humanities is an intensive reading and writing course. This section will focus on the theme of "histories and theories of literacy." Because English 202B "asks students to consider problems or issues of perennial concern to those in the humanities," we will concentrate on the connection between literacy and identity. Our reading across the genres on issues of what counts as "literacy," on reading and writing and speaking practices inside and outside the academy, within and across academic disciplines and various communities, and up and down socioeconomic categories will serve as a basis for our classroom discussions of what constitutes effective writing. I am hopeful that our readings, discussion, and writing workshops will enable you to become a stronger, more confident, and more flexible writer than you were when the term started.

I imagine that you will become more attuned to your goals as a writer in terms of any exigence for writing about a particular topic in a particular way, the on-going conversation surrounding the topic, the appropriate delivery of your information, the various appeals at your disposal, and the needs and expectations of your audience. Whether you decide to explore the issue of discipline-specific literacy, literacy narratives, literacy myths (get educated, get rich and powerful), historicized/contextualized literacy practices, community literacy, everyday literacy, literacy themes in contemporary literature, literacy in at-risk classrooms or communities, popular literacies, cultural literacy, critical literacy, workplace literacy, or transformative literacy, you’ll want to write with skill, conviction, and grace. Please note: if attendance might be a problem for you, or if you’re looking for formal instruction in resume/job letter writing, please seek out another 202 section immediately. However, I will be happy to give resume advice in individual office hours.

Texts:
Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (CAM)
Garnes, Humphries, Mortimer, Phegley, Wallace, Writing Lives (WL)
Gilyard, Let's Flip the Script (LFS)
Giroux, Channel Surfing (CS)
Rose, Lives on the Boundary (LB)
Turkle, Life on the Screen (LS)
Course Packet for 202B.9, available at Gnomon Copy, 130 W. College (CP)
Recommended: a good college dictionary and an MLA style handbook

Class List Serve: In addition to these texts, you need to have an email account. I will be sending announcements, updated assignments, and writing prompts through email. You may also find yourself using your email account to exchange ideas and drafts with your writing group for commenting. If you have not already activated your access account, please do so immediately. (Take Penn State ID to an automatic signature station [103 Boucke, 6 Findlay Commons, W111 Pattee, 112 Redifer Commons, 107 Waring Commons, 108 Warnock Commons, and 2 Willard] and follow instructions).
Additional Resources: If you make your way into Central Pattee Level 7 Blue, you'll have access to innumerable resources on histories, theories, and practices of literacy. This is the place you'll want to be as you begin working on your research-based assignment. For instance, if you look in the LCs and LBs, you'll find books such as More than Words Can Say, Adult Literacy, Literacy and Job Performance, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Savage Inequalities, Eating on the Street, Literacy in Theory and Practice, The Violence of Literacy, Toxic Literacies, Roles in Literacy Learning, and many many more.

Course Requirements:
Attendance:
You are required to attend and be prepared for class meetings. I allow two unexcused absences (Excused absences are documented illness or University sponsored activity with documentation). More than two unexcused absences will affect your final grade. If you will miss more than two consecutive class periods, whether excused or not, you need to inform me of the situation.

In addition, you will be expected to
1. Participate fully in class discussions, in-class writing exercises, writing workshops and group work. Homework and participation will count in your final grade.
2. Submit eight, one-page response papers (statements of understanding).
3. Propose, draft, and write five assignments of various lengths and purpose.

Late Policy: All assignments must be turned in on the stated due date. Extensions can be worked out with me before the assignment is due for serious conflicts. Assignments turned in late without an extension will be penalized one-half letter grade for every day late.

Grades:
8 response papers (5% each) 40%
4 short (3-4 pp.) writing assignments (10% each) 40%
1 research based assignment (10-12 pp.) 20%

Five formal writing assignments in all (4 short, 1 long): the literacy narrative, overview of research-based assignment, and research based assignment are required papers, with non-negotiable due dates. Choose two other assignments/due dates from schedule as your two optional assignments (9/28, 10/19, 11/9, 12/4). See attached grading standards.

Response Papers (Statements of Understanding): in one single-spaced page, demonstrate your understanding of that weeks readings and respond. Due on Mondays, no more than one each Monday, you pick the Mondays.

Plagiarism: Talking over your ideas and getting comments from friends and tutors is not plagiarism. Taking someone else's published or unpublished words or ideas and calling them your own is plagiarism. All sources must be cited, for both paraphrasing and direct quotation. Plagiarism has dire consequences which can include expulsion from the University. Ignorance of correct documentation procedures is not an excuse for plagiarism. See me if you do not understand plagiarism and how to prevent it.

Accommodation: The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell me as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to provide your professors with formal documentation of your special need.
Class Schedule

This schedule is subject to change, so be sure to find out the assignment if you miss class. Reading and written assignments are listed on the day they are due. Additional assignments, prompts for formal papers, and peer-response workshops will be inserted throughout the term, as will frequent, unannounced in-class writings. Check your email regularly to keep current with the class schedule. And don't get too excited about the dates without entries—we'll find plenty to do to fill in those days, including continuing discussion of the readings, discussion of disciplines and discourse communities, and lecture on the nitty-gritty of rhetoric and composition.

8/26 (W): Introduction to the course. What have you gotten yourself into? In-class writing: "Tell me about yourself as a writer and what it means to be a writer--what's your history as a writer: where are you now? where are you aimed? What is the relationship between the language(s) you speak and write in your home communities and the writing you do at school (in a specific discipline) or on the job? How did you learn to function in diverse (and sometimes conflicting) communities?"

8/28 (F): **WL:** Orwell, "Why I Write"; Williams, "Topsy Turvy"

8/31 (M): **WL:** Scribner, "Literacy in Three Metaphors"; O'Brien, "The Things They Carried"

9/2 (W): **WL:** Mellix, "From Outside, In"; Rodrigues, "Aria: A Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood"

9/4 (F): **WL:** Douglass, "Chapter VII from Narrative"; Hart, "Literacy and the Lesbian/Gay Learner"

9/7 (M): **LABOR DAY: NO CLASS**

9/9 (W): In class draft workshop

9/11 (F): **Personal literacy narrative due (required).** **LB:** chapters 1-3

9/14 (M): **LB:** chapters 4-6

9/16 (W): **LB:** chapters 7-epilogue

9/18 (F): **NO CLASS**

9/21 (M): **WL:** Hughes, "Theme for English B"; Heath, "The Fourth Vision: Literate Language at Work"; Moraga, "It's the Poverty"

9/23 (W): **WL:** Royster, "Perspectives on the Intellectual Tradition of Black Women Writers"; hooks, "Confronting Class in the Classroom"

9/25 (F): More discussion

9/28 (M): **Optional essay due.** **CP:** Brueggemann, "On (Almost) Passing" and "It's So Hard to Believe That You Pass"

9/30 (W): **CP:** Kleege, "Voices in My Head" and "Call it Blindness"

10/2 (F): More discussion. Discuss research topics and bibliographies

10/5 (M):

10/7 (W): Bring initial bibliography and MLA handbook to class; work in groups.

10/9 (F): **Research topic and initial bibliography of ten specialized items due in perfect MLA format (required).** **CAM:** Foreword, Preface, Introduction

10/12 (M): **CAM:** "The Clean Slate," "Books," "Music"

10/14 (W): **CAM:** "Relationship," "The German Connection," "Two Revolutions"
10/16 (F): CAM: "The Self:, "Creativity," :Culture"

10/19 (M): Optional essay due. CAM: "The Nietzscheanization of the Left," "Our Ignorance"
10/21 (W): CAM: "From Socrates...
10/23 (F): CAM: "The Sixties," "The Student and the University"

10/26 (M): LFS: "Introduction," "Language and Politics," "Language and Literature"

10/30 (F): One-paragraph description of special topic, and annotated bibliography of ten items due (required)

11/4 (W): CS: "Bashing the Sixties," "White Noise"
11/6 (F): CS: "In Living Color," "Playing the Race Card"

11/9 (M): Optional essay due. CS: "Race Talk"
11/11 (W):

11/13 (F): Bring to class overview of research-based assignment (required). Broken into fully developed sections, each with a heading, this overview should include:

1. your discussion of the significance of your topic (why you're writing about it, why it's a worthy topic for this course.)
2. your conception and definition of your topic (how you're thinking of your topic and defining your terms.)
3. the relation of this topic to your intellectual, academic, literature, cultural or emotional development.
4. the ways you are entering the on-going intellectual (and perhaps emotional) conversation surrounding the topic (who are the leading spokespeople/researchers on this topic? What are their opinions? What are the main currents of thought with regard to your topic? In what ways are you joining into the scholarly conversation?)
5. your methodology and rationale for subject selection (how are you conducting your research? library? interviews? ethnographic research? classroom-action research? personal experience? What reasons do you have for choosing these sites)
6. your plan of work (what's your time line? what do you have left to do?)
7. your updated bibliography

11/16 (M):
11/18 (W):
11/20 (F): Overview of research based assignment due (required)

11/23 (M): LS: "Introduction"; CP: "Selected Internet Glossary"
11/27 (F): NO CLASS--THANKSGIVING

11/30 (M): LS: Part II, "Of Dreams and Beasts"
12/2 (W): LS: "Aspects of the Self," "TinySex and Gender Trouble"
12/4 (F): Optional essay. LS: "Virtuality and Its Discontents," "Identity Crisis"

12/7 (M): In class draft workshop
12/9 (W): Special Topics paper due (required)
12/11 (F): Evaluations. Course wrap up. Special guest stars and magic tricks. Prizes.
Writing the Personal Literacy Narrative
(adapted from Dr. Cheryl Glenn)

On September 11, the first of your formal written assignments is due, the personal literacy narrative. I strongly recommend that you get your writing group up and active so that you can workshop your writing, making sure you meet the following criteria and address the following issues.

Please write a four to five page, double spaced essay describing yourself as a literate person, both individually and communally literate. You will undoubtedly have to edit down to make the page limit. Your essay should have:

1. a title
2. an introduction
3. a thesis
4. well developed and focused paragraphs that support, expand, develop, and illustrate that thesis (topic sentences help)
5. transitional words and phrases that help the reader through the essay
6. a point/conclusion (not a repetition of the introduction)

Your essay should have purpose, meaning, and movement. In the broadest sense, this assignment asks you to reflect upon the roles that reading, writing, and community have played in your life—to consider, in other words, how you became the literate person you are now and are still in the process of becoming.

There are a number of ways that you might want to approach this assignment—and there is no "right" way. But to help you explore the various ways that you might develop this essay, I am sketching out some ideas/prompts for you. (Note that WL, pp. 133-5, offers additional ideas.) These various prompts may help you with the invention of your essay, but they won't help with the arrangement. Therefore, you may want to freewrite responses to several of the prompts, look over what you've written, talk with your writing group, and then strategize an effective argument. Some students have successfully described their literacy development chronologically, but that organizational pattern may not be best for you. Whatever pattern you employ (chronological, material, spatial, developmental, relational, whatever), choose and use it consciously.

Prompts:
*Focus on one or more significant experiences in your development/identity as a reader/writer. For example, you could focus on a particular time period or discuss several different times in your life and the relationship among them. You could develop a theme, or you could explore dissonances. How has/does your literacy relate to your identity?

*What is the relationship between the three metaphors of literacy that Scribner describes in WL and your own literacy development? or What is the relationship between Orwell's reasons for reading and writing and your own?

*Explore the relationship between schooling and literacy in your life or between schooling/literacy and identity. What emotions do you associate with various moments in your development as a schooled reader/writer? Some theorists believe that schooling attempts to 'tame' reading and writing: how did/do you respond to those efforts? Can you recall specific acts of resistance to schooled literacy and schooled literacy practices? As a university student, what role does literacy play in your life or your identity?
*Explore the relationship between public and private uses of reading/writing in your life. Our earliest experiences are often private—listening to bedtime stories, half-scribbling/drawing stories for our family. Over time, a shift occurs, one that makes more public our literate identity. What has that shift meant to you? Has it been dramatic? Have there been multiple shifts? Has it left you with questions or answers?

*Reflect on social, cultural, or political influences on your reading/writing or upon your identity as a literate person. How did/does your family view/value literacy? If you have claimed an identity as a literate person or a writer or a reader, how did/does that identity connect or separate you from your home and other communities? What does claiming an identity as a _______ mean to you? What influences have caused you to feel as you do? What role has literacy played as you have established relationship with others at various points in your life? Has your reading/writing/literacy meant different things to you at different times of your life? What influences have others--friends, coworkers, teachers, etc.—had on your literacy identity?

Additional tips:
*Don't go for the obvious and don't be afraid to invoke difficult experiences. Some of the most powerful moments in our development are quiet moments, easily passed by, tempting to forget.

*Look for dissonance, what you don't understand, what's always puzzled you, what still feels uncomfortable. Try to get beyond the "normal" story of literacy-as-progression.

*Don't trivialize your conclusions by summarizing your essay; you don't want to simplify the complex issues that you may be considering. What kind of experience do you want your readers to have as they move through your essay? What persona are you creating for yourself.

*Start now. Start relying on your group and freewriting ideas.

*Email me, or visit my office hours, with questions and ideas.