English 30  Fall 1998
Instructor:  J. Ackerman  Office hrs.: MW, 2:30-4 and by appointment
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Texts:
Frederick Douglass.  Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.  Signet.

Pro-Copy packet materials:

Course Objective:  We will explore a central issue, the idea of the "self" as unique and also as defined by historical situations, by language patterns, and by cultural expectations.  Our assigned texts are autobiographical (in the broadest sense of the term) in which an author recollects a life and structures its events, all in an attempt to make a life meaningful, and to speak to a particular audience who might be moved by his or her story.

We will study these texts as arguments written within a rhetorical situation--addressed to a particular audience for a particular purpose.  Each of our texts will define the self and the nature of memory; they will make causal connections between the past and the present; and they will evaluate some events as significant and argue for that selection.

Of course, we will not only analyze texts written by others but also construct some arguments of our own, addressed to various audiences.  In our last project, for example, you will write your own personal autobiography and a commentary on what you do (what audience you're speaking to, why you've selected a particular story or stories, and what idea of recollection is stated or implied in your writing).  All of our writing projects lead up to this one.
If we live and write within historical situations and within language structures, we also live within a world of time and change. One of our ongoing texts will be The New York Times. Bring it to class, especially during our second, third, and fourth writing projects. The Times will remind us constantly of the rhetorical situation within which we write and expand our sense of audience beyond our classroom.

The aim of this course is to sharpen your thinking-writing skills. Our classroom will be a writing community in which we constantly respond to each other's work during each of its stages. For each paper, you are required to write a proposal, outlining your strategy of argument. And before each paper is due, there'll be a peer review in which fellow classmates give you needed feedback on your work. After your work has been completed, we'll put papers on transparency for more class response and possible help with revisions. And you'll have the chance to revise some of your work to change your audience or clarify your argument or substantiate your development.

Grades, Revisions: Your best and last papers will each count for 20%; the two next best will count for 15% each; the remaining two papers will each count for 10%; participation and peer review will count for 10%. You may revise two of your papers for a better grade. Talk to me before you begin your work so we can agree upon a revision strategy. You can turn in your revised work as late as the last day of class.

Late Papers, Absences: Talk to me if you cannot complete a paper on time. (Do you have 2 major exams on the day a paper is due? Or a major semester project?) E-mail if a problem arises. If you don't make these prior arrangements, I'll be forced to dock a late paper one letter grade per class period.

Also, three or more unexcused absences can result in grade deductions.

Note: 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 talk to me as soon as possible.

Daily Syllabus:
Aug. 26(W) Course Introduction.
Aug. 28(F) Frederick Douglass, Narrative. Preface through p. 32. On historical memory; on the genre of autobiographical writing; on audience; on logos and pathos.
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| Aug. 31 (M) | FD, chapters 3-8  
On the structure of his argument            |
| Sept. 2 (W) | FD, Structure, cont.                                                   |
| Sept. 4 (F) | FD, chapters 9-10: patterns of recuperative vision  
PROPOSAL DUE.          |
| Sept. 9 (W) | Labor Day Holiday, September 7, Monday  
FD, chapter 11 and appendix                                           |
| Sept. 11 (F) | Peer review for paper #1:  
an analysis of FD's Narrative: a definition or a causal analysis  |
| Sept. 14 (M) | Paper #1 due. Introduction to Editorial Essay  
and The Times. (What is Said's argument? His style of argument? In the autobiographical section of his essay, how does he relate his "life" to his overall argument? We'll use the Times to update Said's argument and to support or counter his position.) |
| Sept. 16 (W) | Said's "American Ascendancy" (Pro-Copy packet)  
and The Times.                                                             |
| Sept. 18 (F) | Said's "American Ascendancy"                                          |
| Sept. 21 (M) | Said and the Times                                                     |
| Sept. 23 (W) | Said and the Times                                                     |
| Sept. 25 (F) | Said and the Times PROPOSAL DUE.                                       |
| Sept. 28 (M) | Said and the Times                                                     |
| Sept. 30 (W) | Peer review for paper #2. This paper will be your own editorial essay, an argument for or against Said's position. |
| Oct. 2 (F) | Paper #2 due. Introduction to encomium                                 |
| Oct. 5 (M) | Gerda Lerner's "Of History and Meaning" (Pro-Copy)  
a study of obituaries in the Times                                             |
| Oct. 7 (W) | Obits in the Times. Argument and style: who gets eulogized and for what?  |
| Oct. 9 (F) | Obits, cont. PROPOSAL DUE.                                              |
| Oct. 12 (M) | Obits, cont.                                                           |
| Oct. 14 (W) | Peer review for paper #3: An encomium that might serve as an obituary for a public figure. |
| Oct. 16 (F) | Paper #3 due. Introd. to cultural analysis.                             |
| Oct. 19 (M) | Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Wait Till Next Year*, chapters 1 and 2, and the sports section of the Times. (What is the relationship between religion and sports? between community and sports? between sports and the larger world of the news? How is Kearns Goodwin's story similar to and different from your own?)  |
| Oct. 21 (W) | Kearns Goodwin, chapter 3, and the Times. On the |
Oct. 23(F) Kearns Goodwin, chapters 4 & 5 and the Times.
Oct. 26(M) Kearns Goodwin, chapters 6 & 7 and The Times.
      PROPOSAL DUE.
Oct. 28(W) Kearns Goodwin and the Times (cont.).
Oct. 30(F) Peer Review for paper #4. A cultural analysis of
one aspect of sports.
Nov. 2(M) Paper #4 due. Introd. to critical perspectives on the
autobiography.
Nov. 4 (W) Gerda Lerner, "A Weave of Connections" (Pro-Copy)
Nov. 6(F) Lerner, "Living in Translation" (Pro-Copy)
Nov. 9(M) 1 page analysis of an idea in one of Lerner's essays.
Nov. 11 (W) Alan Shapiro, "In Awkward Reverence" (Pro-Copy)
Nov. 13(F) 1 page analysis of Shapiro essay
Nov. 16(M) Chapter 7 of W. P. Sebald's The Rings of Saturn and
Robert Silman's review (Pro-Copy)
Nov. 18(W) Sebald and Silman
Nov. 20(F) Peer review for paper #5: Definition of an idea in 3
autobiographical essays and a concluding application.
(Which of the 3 critical perspectives is most
interesting to you? Relate your story to Lerner's or
Shapiro's or Sebald's.)
Nov. 23(M) Paper #5 due. Introd. to your autobiographical
narrative.

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY, Nov. 25-29 (Wed-Sunday)
Nov. 30(M) PROPOSAL DUE for autobiographical narrative.
      In-class: your application paragraphs on transparency
Dec. 2(W) Your application paragraphs on transparency
Dec. 4(F) Peer review for paper #5: your auto. narrative plus
a commentary on your writing.
Dec. 7(M) conferences
Dec. 9(W) conferences
Dec. 11(F) Paper #6 due. Last day for possible revisions of 2
      other papers.
      Class evaluations.