ABSTRACT


This thesis is a first-year composition program that integrates the conventions of creative nonfiction and cultural studies to develop first-year students' logical and critical thinking skills, as well as their own voice through reading and writing practice. The curriculum for this semester-length course is grounded in critical theories claiming that personal narratives and students' experiences contain sufficient material to produce academic evidence and support claims. My course is also strongly aligned to cultural studies composition curriculums which use readings as a springboard for uncovering how the dominant culture marginalizes individuals based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Rather than use essays that are all from authors of the majority culture, this curriculum incorporates texts from authors who are all but one from marginalized populations to show students that writers can be people of color. As a result, students will be exposed to race, class, and gender issues in America through these required creative nonfiction readings and throughout the semester, students will practice writing with an effective voice, point of view, and dialogue structure as they form essays that investigate identity and race issues.

The proposed curriculum targets average students who may feel intimidated by writing and critical reading and may not be able to find success in a Writing in the Disciplines (WID) composition course where students write in specific academic genres and for particular audiences. In "Presence in the Essay," Gordon Harvey calls an essay a personal/textual model when the writer engages with the text as she presents her arguments.
The personal/textual model is rooted in feminist and critical theory and with strong
guidelines, it can be an effective tool for the composition classroom, and it is one of the essay
models I will use for this course. Students will support their main purpose by weaving their
own experiences and reactions to the text into their personal/textual essays. My other essay
models include the segmented essay and the multigenre essay, and students will also revise
two essays, as well as produce a Final Portfolio. During the semester, students will
participate in workshopping critiques, they will keep a journal, so that by the end of the
semester students should have gained an understanding of the creative nonfiction genre and
its ethical conventions.

The proposed texts include Rebecca Walker's *Black, White and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self* (2001), James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* (1963), Timothy B. Tyson's *Blood Done Sign My Name* (2004) and James McBride's *The Color of Water* (1996). I chose these particular texts from authors of diverse backgrounds so that students would be able to read these texts as examples and shape their essays around the
issues of identity politics and race relations. This course is ideal for a diverse student
population and is designed to meet twenty-first century students in their own territory.
DEDICATION

To the favorite men in my life, Keith and Daniel Wasserman — Love Always

To writers struggling to find their voice — never give up!

To Lisa Nicole Bryant (1972-1993) and Octavia E. Butler (1947-2006), who pushed me on the path to self-discovery

To Captain Philip R. Osborn, USN (1906-1998), my grandpa,

a master letter writer and note taker
BIOGRAPHY

Alice V. Osborn leads community based creative writing workshops, is a freelance editor and serves on the board of Carolina Wren Press in Durham, North Carolina. During her two years as a Master's Degree candidate, Alice was a NCSU's Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services tutor, earning her Master/Level 3 CRLA (College of Reading and Learning) certification. Her work appears in several publications, both in print and online, and she has published a book of poetry, *Right Lane Ends* (Catawba Publishing, 2006). Alice volunteers with the Raleigh Jaycees and with the Literacy Council of Wake County, and enjoys watching Carolina Hurricanes hockey, screening good films, and hiking and traveling with her husband along both coasts. She was born in Washington, D.C. in December 1972 and grew up in Annandale, Virginia and graduated from Virginia Tech with a B.S. in Finance. She now lives in Raleigh, North Carolina with her husband and son.
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INTRODUCTION

"What we want our students to gain from the first-year composition course is a balance of the critical and the persuasive, which they can value because it relates to their lives."

—Kimberly Freeman, "Your Life is a C+: Assigning and Assessing the Personal Essay in First-year Composition"

When first-year students enter universities, many have the potential knowledge and experience to create arguments and to develop thoughts through their writing, but many do not yet know how to actually accomplish this task. In recent years, English departments have asked what the goal is for a first-year composition curriculum, and how this required class can help students prepare for their college career. Is English 101 designed to prepare students to go out into the world and contribute their writing and thinking skills publicly and privately? If it is, an expressive and/or cultural studies-based model would accomplish this goal. Or is this class designed to prepare students to write in any of the professional disciplines (i.e. biology, computer science, mathematics) while giving them a proper introduction to academic discourse? In this case, a WID (Writing in the Disciplines) model would be the right fit. There are strong debates for and against both learning objectives, yet the teacher-scholars who disagree on the right method to teach English 101 would agree that first-year composition is supposed to give students reading and writing practice.

Central to this literature versus composition debate is how much literature should be taught in a first-year composition class without becoming bellettristic. This is a good point. Who decides what is "good" literature? In years past, teachers decided what to teach based
on their interests and they often misused their power by teaching books and essays at the expense of literature written by women and minorities. In the early to late 1880s, American colleges used Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783) as the primary rhetoric and composition textbook (Halloran 162). The reason Blair was so popular in the academy at this time was because his text encapsulated how style and taste could be taught through the imitation of written models, like those of Cicero and Quintilian. He did not emphasize the studied author's invention techniques, but rather that individual's style. In other words, Blair advocated the study of voice, although he did not call it such. In addition, his work also gave American English departments a canon to work from. As a result, students wanted to acquire "good taste" from the books they read. And, after expressing their sense of taste in writing, these students could seek upward mobility (one could also argue that today's students also seek upward mobility through education to gain earning and social power via their university education). Belletristic rhetoric ceded into current traditional rhetoric, with its emphasis on the composition modes (i.e. description, narration, exposition, and persuasion) with a greater concern with sentence-level issues over the higher-order concerns, such as invention (Winterowd 85). Process and expressivist theories espoused by Peter Elbow, Ken Macrorie, and Donald Murray then eclipsed current traditional practices in the 1960s and 1970s, thus making textual readings less and less important. Now, writing was emphasized, along with group work and peer collaboration. It is no surprise that since the advent of postmodern and process theories in the 1980s and 1990s, many English departments are hesitant to return their curriculums to a belletristic model that emphasizes reading and the author's style.
Requiring students to imitate Mortimer Adler's "Great Books of the Western World" or requiring students to read the somewhat insular essays of E.B. White may not be the best option for the twenty-first century composition classroom, yet, unfortunately, in many Writing across the Disciplines (WID) courses, students do not spend enough time studying literature because they are learning how to write for a specific audience in the academic disciplines. In many cases, students do not understand what they are reading, and may not know how to go about writing and reflecting upon the scientific article at hand. I believe there should be a balance between a writing and a literature curriculum and that it is possible through teaching a composition class using the conventions of creative nonfiction paired with multiple readings. There should also be a balance between requiring students to make a written product with a specific form while introducing students to the writing process. I also believe that the goal of a first-year composition class should be to prepare students to think critically and develop their ideas in a logical manner, so that they will be able to tackle upper-level classes in any discipline. Creative nonfiction lets writers create meaning from the world they know, which for students can translate into getting them to take risks with their writing within a safe zone of peers and a supportive instructor. The class will expose students to provocative issues and social concerns and perhaps lead students to find that reading essays is enjoyable. The first-year class is on the front line, and while it needs to encourage students to think critically, it can also be a place for students to think of themselves as student-writers. In short, this curriculum is both process and product-based with the students producing a product (i.e. their papers through the conventions of creative nonfiction) while experiencing the process of creating and drafting.
To prepare students for the "real" world, I feel that a first-year English curriculum should include readings, which will help students see how an effective essay is put together and how using the right language can affect a reader. I am not suggesting that students imitate the texts, but reading literature in the genre that the students are studying is what professional writers do to improve their craft and identify what in their own writing is lacking. I believe reading a well-written essay should not tamper with a student's voice; rather it should give her positive support and confidence in her own writing.

As a writing tutor, I have instructed several students who could not understand their assignments, and therefore did not know how to even begin writing their pieces. This proposed curriculum addresses several of these reading and comprehension concerns, and its aim is to target average students who may feel intimidated by writing and reading. If the reading assignments are accessible, yet suitable for an open discussion, then it follows that students should be able to have a way in to writing their essays. In order for students to develop these essay assignments, we need to re-examine the personal essay within the realm of creative nonfiction, which has been often relegated to creative writing or journalism classes, and not to the first-year composition classroom. Using creative nonfiction in the classroom goes back to classical times and even at the end of the last century, students were encouraged to share their personal experiences (Halloran 164). I believe it is time to reclaim creative nonfiction for the composition classroom. But what is creative nonfiction? Creative nonfiction is literature that is well researched, and holds the interest of general readers by telling a story that uses fictional elements such as characterization, setting and dialogue. This genre includes memoir, essays, autobiography, travel writing, histories, journalism, and magazine writing. Sometimes these authors cannot be totally accurate with their dialogues or
chronology, but the ethics of creative nonfiction demand that writers reveal the emotional truth of a situation or event.

My thesis project is based on both a creative nonfiction essay model, which already includes argument and persuasion, and a cultural studies model. Cultural studies models use readings as a springboard for uncovering how the dominant culture marginalizes individuals based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation while using classroom itself as a "contact zone" where students' disparate views on race and culture may intersect and be heard. Since I wanted first-year students to achieve a strong dialogue with the text, I devised my course's theme around race issues and how these issues affect identity politics in America. Although race is a controversial issue (some may say too controversial for the composition classroom), race is an issue for all Americans, and it should be a relevant topic for these first-year student-writers. White students may not even recognize that being white is privileged over being a person of color in the United States, and students of color may feel since that their ethnicity is so visible, they would rather ignore race issues than investigate them (Dombek and Herndon 90-91). Even if the student indirectly decides to address race, she could use a subtopic of race and the family as a way into this topic, since family matters are richly discussed in the course's selected texts. My hope is that the students' essay topics will rise organically and will not feel forced, although I realize at the beginning of the course students are trying to find their voice and feel comfortable using creative nonfiction techniques. These readings also invite critical thinking, which is one of this class's learning goals and a skill which the students will take with them as they continue with their upper level courses. In addition, requiring the students to connect with a text or texts will help alleviate the possibility that they will not know what to say in a more open-ended personal essay format.
This curriculum also includes elements of a social constructionist model, which situates the writer with her audience and social context, along with an expressivivist model, which emphasizes the writer's voice and style. Social context and audience consideration are important elements of this class, along with the writing practice that will lead students to find their voice.

In Chapter One, I begin with an outline the components of critical and feminist theory, along with the main tenets of creative nonfiction — voice and storytelling. Paulo Freire and more recently, feminist theorists, claim that students should not rely on a metanarrative or universal truth. I agree with their claims that personal experiences matter and that students need to find the right voice for their particular essay. Using critical theory helps people not think in absolutes and to define their own notion of what the "truth" is for them. This theory opposes traditional theory based on a universal truth, which explains and defines concepts based on logic, rationality, reason, and not on insight or intuition.

Traditional theory assumes we all live in a democracy where everyone is equal, while critical theory tells us that we do not. Critical theory also investigates how identity is constructed and who holds the power and knowledge in society. It reveals that there are many layers of difference in society and it seeks to question how some groups hold more power and privilege than others. Through self-reflection and using personal experience as evidence, critical thinkers are able to challenge and recognize the dominant social and ideological forces in society. This theory breaks down assumptions into a smaller parts and overturns the statement, "That's true because that's just the way it is" to encourage skepticism when dealing with authority. Writing essays can be a force for social change, but more importantly, essay
writing allows students to think as they compose and see how many social issues are not black and white.

In Part I of Chapter Two, I discuss how the students will draft and revise their essays and how the proposed texts will be used to discuss issues of race and marginalization. Several theories of writing processes that connect with my curriculum are also discussed. Students will write three essays: one based on the personal/textual model, a form essay of their own choosing, and a multigenre essay. They will revise the first two essays and then construct a Final Portfolio. Although the students must deal with the sensitive topic of racism, having a choice of essay forms using creative nonfiction guidelines should generate essays that seek to produce reflections to some of the open-ended issues of racism, violence, and trauma. The selected texts include James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* (1963), Rebecca Walker's *Black, White and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self* (2001), James McBride's *The Color of Water* (1996), Timothy Tyson's *Blood Done Sign My Name* (2004) and excerpts from Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). Students will also read Zora Neale Hurston's essay "How It Feels To Be Colored Me" (1928). I chose these texts because they take an unflinching view of racism, all are written with a strong voice, exhibiting key elements of good creative nonfiction, and they are written by men and women who are white, black and Chicana. *Writing True* by Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwartz will serve as the students' primary textual resource. As the students study these readings, they will be responsible for answering several essay analysis questions in their journals. In these journals and during in-class exercises, they will note how the author's voice varies and how he or she uses details, sensory images, and narrative, so that when they prepare to write their essays, they will feel more comfortable with how that particular essay captures the reader's
attention. Students will also form four-person peer response groups to develop their first drafts and brainstorm when their own essays digress or lack adequate support. These peer groups will also reinforce that these students have the credentials from their experiences to create an essay. Also, in Chapter Two, I demonstrate how the personal/textual model can be structured, so that students will have a road map when they begin their first essay. This essay’s structure should help average students engage with the texts as they form their rhetorical arguments and weave their own experience and reactions to the text into their essays. Gordon Harvey coined the term for this model, and although there are many types of essays including the academic, the personal and the ethnographic, the personal/textual model is a hybrid that encourages the author to use personal experience to produce academic evidence. The personal/textual model is rooted in feminist and critical theory and with strong guidelines, it can be an effective tool for the composition classroom. When constructing these particular essays, students will develop claims, and they will need to support their claims with evidence from their personal experiences and from the texts when appropriate.

I also include a section on voice and how important voice is for the creative nonfiction writer in order for the reader to believe in the author and want to continue reading. I have included several examples of student writings, which are from several adult creative writing workshops I have conducted. Although the students in my workshops were all adults, and not first-year students, I believe that their writing samples provide a case study to my theories and allow readers to see how this class would work in the "real" world.
In Part II of Chapter Two, I discuss some of the ethical concerns surrounding the genre of creative nonfiction, while exploring the complexities surrounding the personal/textual model.

I conclude this thesis in Chapter Three with a discussion of how well this creative nonfiction curriculum will prepare first-year students for their upper-level classes, along with my pedagogical recommendations that should be in place in order for this curriculum to succeed. Many composition scholars believe that teaching essay writing fails to prepare students for academic writing. I believe this view is problematic because creative nonfiction requires a rhetorical strategy from the students, demanding that they select a voice for their piece that fits the material and their audience. In addition, practice with creative nonfiction prepares students to translate difficult subject matter from a scientific text so that makes it sense to them and allows them to tell their own story around sometimes difficult material. Using creative nonfiction techniques will seep into these students' upper-level course work, because creativity matters even in the applied sciences and mathematics. Studying creative nonfiction also helps students discover how the writer can influence a reader to his case by presenting a balanced point of view that gives enormous credibility while presenting objective information. Writing creative nonfiction essays will make students realize how important revision is to not only writing in their English classes, but in everything (including personal statements for graduate school, for job applications, and for upper-level classes). Another benefit of this class is that when students read papers in their upper-level classes, they will be able to analyze what is left in or left out and realize how writers shape their pieces, since they have done the hard work of shaping their own essays. Ultimately, creative
nonfiction techniques will help students read better and help them become more analytical as readers.

By the end of the semester, students should recognize the general essay form and will be able to compose a personal essay that uses support from the text as well as from relevant experiences in their lives. They will also be able to compose essays which converse with their audience through persuasion and argument. Finally, they will be able to distinguish who their audience is and what material is appropriate for that particular audience. As one of their learning objectives, I want students to understand that their experiences can create meaning in their world and can be a source of knowledge for other students, as well as for their instructor.

Reading is a vital part of my curriculum, but so is the writing, which will allow students to support their topic and feel more confident in their writing abilities. My selected texts all include points of view and political stances that may differ from the students' own, which should activate their critical thinking skills. My proposed curriculum may not address every single composition and rhetoric concern, but it does strive to strike a balance between student reading and writing, along with writing as a product and as a process. I believe that students should read the type of writing that they currently composing, and in this case it is the essay. While I know that using personal experience in the composition classroom has been done before, the new twist for my curriculum is using the conventions of creative nonfiction writing along with selected texts about race, class and gender in America.

James Berlin extensively studied the history of the essay and how essay writing was popular in the late nineteenth century, before the advent of current-traditional rhetoric. Even after current-traditional rhetoric was a fixture in colleges and universities, Berlin found that
John Dewey and Fred Newton Scott in the 1910s vouched for the essay on the grounds that it enabled students to express themselves both privately and publicly. Cast into the public sphere, the essay could enact social change and unify the community (Berlin 194). Today, in many first-year college curriculums, students enter classes that teach genre-specific writing, and not essays. Unfortunately, students miss out on exploring their thoughts, mastering their voice, testing their creativity, and reflecting upon their subject matter in a clear and concise way. In short, they miss a chance to make their writing stronger and to work on their critical thinking skills — a necessity for their college success. Creative nonfiction’s role in the English composition classroom has been problematic, yet everything old can be new again, especially in light of Blair’s lectures on nonfiction essays. Says Doug Hesse, "Nonfiction, grounded in the problematic ‘real’ and ‘true,’ stands closer to rhetoric’s traditional domain" (261). At the beginning of this century, it is time to think about the essay again.
CHAPTER ONE

Many student-writers feel that their writing has no significance when they compare themselves to published writers. In addition, these beginning writers also feel that they must borrow the tone or voice of someone else so that their writing will be taken seriously or will receive a higher grade. My thesis seeks to disprove these notions by arguing that students need to find their own voice that fits their essay. I also argue that through creative nonfiction, a student can use their own voice and personality while constructing a valid argument using their own experience with storytelling techniques. Finding one's own voice gives life to one's own experiences and validates those individual experiences, thus making the reader care. Once the reader cares, he or she may start seeing the world with a different kind of truth than before. This truth can include a different perspective on race, gender and social class.

In the history of teaching process theory, which began in the early 1970s and is still prevalent today, writing is privileged over reading because process scholars want students to have enough time in class to freewrite, draft, collaborate with a small peer group, and revise. Relevant topics pertaining to the papers can also be discussed, such as narrowing the topic, using research tools, and how to conduct a peer review. Outside of class, the students continue to revise their papers, and when they do turn in their papers, their drafts are attached to the final paper. In some classes, portfolios are used to assess the student's semester-end work. Readings are a part of the content in these process classes, but the readings used may be short articles that represent writing across the disciplines from a larger text. Process scholars want students to not study the texts as literary critics, which was the norm in post World War II composition classes, but to use them for their own reflective and cognitive
writing practice. How these process pedagogies are taught varies from class to class and some classes may use more or less time on drafting or group collaboration. Usually, an entire text of literature is not taught in class, since its length may take away time from in-class writing and discussion. Today, process theory classes may teach personal expressive writing or they may be used exclusively for academic writing. Most compositionists in the field relate process theory back to the expressivist school of James Britton, Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, and Donald Murray (Fulkerson 669). In fact, it was Murray's manifesto, "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product" that started the process revolution. This revolution may not have taken place had not the City University of New York (CUNY) adopted the open admissions policy when it opened its eighteen tuition-free colleges to every city resident with a high school diploma in 1970 (Shaughnessy 1). These colleges had to quickly adapt to a diverse range of academic abilities, as they required all incoming students to take a reading test and write a placement essay. Because of concerns that students could not write well enough for college-level work, writing as a process gained steam. James Britton's theory of expressive function became the much-emulated model for expressive writing as he defined it as "writing using language close to the self." In his model from Language and Learning (1970), he shows how expressive writing is in the middle of the continuum between poetic writing/spectator role and transactional writing/participant role. Poetic writing is the language reserved for creative kinds of writing, while transactional writing is used in the professional world. Expressive writing has the job of negotiating between the two points, from generating ideas to expressing them in a way that they can be understood by the intended audience (Burnham 26-27).
Peter Elbow's *Writing with Power* (1973) brought process writing to the general public by discussing how the writing process is located within the self, and how if a person knows how to use the right tools, then she, too, can write well. Process studies critics soon pointed out that this theory paid too much attention to the individual and did not address cultural issues such as race, gender, or power relations (although some critics now argue that these cultural issues were all tacitly present in Elbow's work). We are now in the post-process world, since composition scholars have established over the last twenty years that writing is not done in isolation and that our writing is influenced by our environment and by our audience. Sondra Perl also recognized that writers do not always think linearly in terms of first freewriting, drafting, and revising. Instead, she claims that writers can arrive at their meaning in a circular, or "recursive" fashion and go back and forth between the revising and drafting stages (Tobin 11). In late 1980s and early 1990, many scholars felt that just having the students draft and revise did not provide enough content. To remedy this issue, cultural studies scholars examined how they could include content, such as cultural and mass media studies, into composition classes as they continued to use writing process theories alongside the required readings. A wave of textbooks arrived including *Media Journal: Reading and Writing about Popular Culture* by Harris and Rosen (1994), *Left Margins: Cultural Studies and Composition Pedagogy* by Fitts and France (1995), and *Reading Culture: Contexts for Critical Reading and Writing* by George and Trimbur (1999). All of these texts use a mixture of creative nonfiction essays, fiction, and magazine articles for students to respond and interpret the texts. This cultural studies trend in composition studies uses more reading than writing in these first-year classes, which matches what I want to do in my proposed curriculum.
As more reading is introduced in composition, students ideally interpret their assigned texts and as they write, initiate a dialogue with the issues within the text. In this dialogue, students are required to include their own experiences, and think about how their writing and views are socially constructed. Weaving in their own experiences gives students authority, since they know more about these experiences than the teacher grading their assignment. Another reason for using personal experience as evidence in a composition class is that the students will not feel that their instructor will know more about the subject than they do. David Bartholomae states, "The central problem of academic writing [is when a] student must assume the right of speaking to someone who knows more about baseball or 'To His Coy Mistress' than the student does" (65). I believe average students will be better able to compose their essays if their own experiences are privileged over a text's. The texts in my curriculum were selected because they address the theme of race relations, family relationships, and what it means to be white and/or a person of color in the U.S. These readings are designed to make the students think about how these authors made their readers care about the subject of race, and they will provide "contact zones," which are safe environments that allow controversy and differing perspectives inside of the classroom. Mary Louise Pratt defines her term as the "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (34). A CCS (critical/cultural studies) curriculum such as this one makes students aware of relevant cultural issues as they incorporate their course learning with learning experiences from their own lives and relationships. Like in other CCS courses, the goal for this class is to inform and empower students who may not realize how the white dominant culture has marginalized minority groups. From the readings, students
will learn how racial identities are formed and how the authors have negotiated their own identity or identities within their race and culture which may lie outside out traditional norms.

In order to facilitate the kind of learning environment that invites discussion, dialogue, and reflection, the instructor for this curriculum needs to be aware of current cultural issues and should demonstrate a decentralized form of teaching, as supported by critical theory, cultural studies, and feminist theory pedagogies. She needs to be thoroughly familiar with writing process theories, since this is the pedagogy that the students will pair with the above theories. In addition, the instructor should be willing to expend the energy for modeling creative nonfiction techniques, she should write in her own notebook while the students write in theirs, and spend the necessary time reading their journals.

A discussion of CCS would not be complete without mentioning how this theory overlaps feminist and critical theories. These two social theories question the status quo and dispel the notion of "That's the way things will always be" and that we are all linked to a single identity marked by our race, class and gender. Critical theory stems from the teachings of John Dewey, who studied the connections between language and thought and believed that a healthy democracy needed knowledgeable and well-informed constituents (George 97). This informed citizenry emerges as a result of deconstructing the power structure through language study and realizing that there is no single truth out there — there is a truth for everyone that applies in different situations. For example, in a group of all women, all have experienced different things and may come from different races and backgrounds. They do not share one universal truth, and their learning and writing should not reflect a single truth, either. Also, the instructor in a CCS or feminist theory classroom cannot be the primary
authority figure — the students need to realize that they bring their own authority and experiences into the classroom. Although the instructor may not be the sole authority figure, he or she must still maintain the facilitator's role in order for the learning to take place. The instructor's job is to question the students to think differently about their environment, their social class, and their race. For this kind of critical theory pedagogy which embraces social change, the students in this classroom are more challenged than in a traditional classroom where the teacher does only lecturing. Now, the students must respond to class discussion and think about situations which may make them uncomfortable, so that they can experience hands-on critical thinking.

Paulo Freire in his groundbreaking work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), states that in the traditional mindset of education, what he terms the banking concept, an educator will, "'fill' the student with the contents of his narration — contents which are detached from reality…words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity" (57). Before Freire's problem-posing pedagogy, students were taught to revere a Universal Truth with vague language and never to question why it is in place. Perhaps to a member of the majority culture, the Truth works to his benefit, but to a member of a marginalized group, he or she needs to find new meaning and new answers for problems so that social change can happen. For effective teaching within a problem-posing classroom, Freire asked his students questions about concrete subjects, so that the students could develop their topics using their own experiences (A Pedagogy for Liberation 28). He also adds that the teacher must direct the process, and not the students, so that healthy dialogue emerges from prompts and discussion topics. As a result, both the teacher and the students learn from each other, since this discussion can become a dialogue with political implications existing
both inside and outside of the classroom (47). He also taught his students to create meaning by naming their world with specifics to build "critical consciousness" (Berthoff 188). Like in Freire's classroom, my hypothetical classroom will also give the students prompts so that they can develop their essays. I will also encourage concrete language within the essays themselves and have the students really think about how they may describe their experiences. For example, I would encourage the student to describe a rainy day as "that day it rained so hard my white socks turned blue from my sneakers," rather than just write, "It was rainy that day."

Feminist theory, which emerged in the 1980s, teaches students about power and their identity in society. Attention is also paid to how some groups hold more power in society than others, and how with this power, these groups have greater influence through the media and politics. Echoing many of Freire's concepts, this theory discusses how people can belong to many categories of identities and how the sharing of individual experiences can shorten the power distance between privileged and marginalized groups. Incidentally, feminist theory is used more frequently in adult education classes than in first-year composition classes since the adults taking these continuing classes are older and have more experiences than eighteen-or nineteen-year-olds. However, concepts from the feminist classroom, such as the importance of telling stories, can also be incorporated within the first-year composition classroom (Tisdell 276). The feminist classroom respects these student experiences and a measure of equality is felt in the classroom space as the instructor acts as a facilitator and validates her students' experiences. For instance, students in this class will reflect upon and interpret their experiences, and through using creative nonfiction storytelling techniques, the students will be able to share their own perspectives and points of view in writing. However,
a stumbling block may be reached when students who do not come from privileged backgrounds may feel that their stories do not matter or they may feel shy when sharing before the group. Elizabeth Tisdell introduces the "three-times guideline" which sets a limit on how frequently a student can discuss any single topic before she must give a turn to a student who has not spoken (280). Through this practice, power dynamics within the classroom can be shifted towards traditionally marginalized students. The feminist and critical theory classroom is an ideal setting for introducing texts such as Anzaldúa's Borderlands and Walker's memoir because they teach students about nontraditional perspectives from women of color. For instance, Anzaldúa emphasizes the history behind the Chicano culture and how her people became displaced as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848 after the U.S.-Mexican war (29). Many American students may not have realized the history behind this war and its consequences for the Mexican people, and this class serves as a site for knowledge and information about other cultures.

Rooted in both feminist and critical theory, Gordon Harvey's personal/textual model, which will be used in the students' first essay, can be an effective tool for the composition classroom, if taught well. This model mirrors feminist theory by bringing the learning power to the student, rather than keeping it with the instructor, so that the student has the power to create meaning through her personal experiences. For example, in a student's essay about how African Americans feel justified using violence against white men, the student can refer to Timothy Tyson's Blood Done Sign My Name where he discusses how Martin Luther King, Jr. carried a gun and used body guards and even used violence when acting in self-defense and when furthering his cause (72). Using the text in this fashion supports the student's argument, earns credibility, and gives room for the student to also use personal experiences.
After discussing King, the student may also want to discuss how he or she used violence and felt that it was justified for that situation (more details about the personal/textual model will be discussed in Chapter Two).

While the personal/textual model is a more subjective form of academic writing, the students for Essay #2 will also have an opportunity to write an essay that can take any form from the examples in the Writing True text, by using either the traditional chronological essay or the more modern segmented or multiple perspective form. They will also create a multigenre essay that can be in hard copy or digital format (more details on form essay and multigenre essay will be discussed in Chapter Two). But, before students can even write these essays, they will need to study and practice the basics of creative nonfiction. Learning these techniques as first-year students will help them prepare to write for different audiences and will also teach students the basics of writing process theory, along with using style, setting, point of view, and above all, voice.

Voice is the central tenet and theory behind creative nonfiction. Similar to every person owning his or her conversational style, every writer needs a voice that is solely the author's. The hard part is trying to find that voice without making it sound forced or borrowed or something that a teacher would like. Without the right voice, an essay will sound flat or clichéd, or too pompous or arrogant for the piece. Writing True by Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwarz states, "In creative nonfiction, the who does matter…voice also helps writers sort out their basic relationship to the material" (64). Most students will be challenged to find the right voice, but hopefully by the end of the semester, most students will have found the right voice for at least one of their essays. Finding the right voice for the essay is made easier when the student describes her experiences in detail, since no one else
will have experienced those situations like she has. In order to sound authentic and to
connect and convince the reader, the writer needs a strong voice, which is done through the
command of language, dialogue, detail, and scene setting. To avoid sounding arrogant, a
student can also show doubt and question beliefs in her writing. To avoid a flat voice, the
writer needs to use the first-person point of view (many students think they cannot do this),
so they can avoid using the passive voice in statements like "one believes that." Sometimes
the right voice will come to the writer during the revision process, when the writer reads the
essay out loud and says to herself, "This word sounds off and doesn't fit here." Peter Elbow
adds that writing needs voice because it does not contain any visual or aural cues. He states:

To write well is also to do a lot with less. If we are angry, we sometimes press harder
with the pen or break the pencil lead or hit the keys harder. In such a mood our
speech would probably sound very angry, but none of these physical behaviors shows
in our writing. ("What Do We Mean" 5)

Choosing voice is also based on the language of the essay and the audience. Writers
construct their voice, but that does not mean that their voice is a false one. After all,
language is constructed and writers are a product of their race, gender, culture and class and
according to the critical theory supporting this curriculum, there is no one Universal Truth.
However, it is up to the writer to find a voice that best fits the piece and creates for the
audience a version of the author's own personal truth based on experience. Students will
discuss how speaking and writing voices are different and how writing practice and revision
will reveal the students' writing voice, which may match their speaking voice. This voice
will be evident in the student's choices of words, syntax and sentence construction, since a
good voice makes the writing distinguishable from others (Krawiec and Nydick 69).
Already when students describe a personal experience, their voice is enmeshed within these experiences because of the words they choose and the emotion they feel when they write about an event that they have reflected upon for perhaps several years. As a result, voice gives the writing authenticity and helps build the readers' trust. This trust comes from the author's presence when the reader makes a connection between the text and the author, and the words ring true for the reader. This means that the words do not come out sounding too formal for a piece that requires informal language, or that the writing is trying to cover up what the writer does not know.

According to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of discourse and heteroglossia, which can be used to illustrate the multiplicity of voices, voice can also be altered according to the tone of the writing, and can be adjusted to fit the audience. Bakhtin also argues that our voices originate from other voices that are around us and we filter these voices to "make them our own" ("What Do We Mean" 30). Another aspect of voice that the students need to be aware of is that they use different voices in their daily life for different occasions. Bruffee notes, "Knowledge is maintained and established by communities of knowledgeable peers" (405), meaning that the voice students use to express themselves both privately and publicly (usually quite different) are social constructions originating from their communities.

During the semester, the students will learn how to add dialogue, quotes, and opposing viewpoints to enrich their voice and listen to the other voices around them. Finding the right voice is about taking risks, at the expense of not sounding "academic enough," but is also about practicing writing in a collaborative community of peers who give constructive feedback. If students listen and respond to this feedback, as well as the feedback from their
instructor, a strong draft can be shaped as the students consider how they want their voice to reflect their experiences to lend the most meaning to their writing.
"Write to the emotional center of things. Write towards vulnerability….Tell the truth as you understand it." — Anne Lamott

First-year composition students come from mixed backgrounds and educations and some will be stronger writers than others, but I feel that my curriculum can work effectively in a diverse classroom, as long as the students build upon early successes and claim their voice through storytelling and making connections with the assigned reading. Each reading and writing assignment will give students the chance to find this voice, which is a result of an individual's self expression and a product of his social environment. During the semester, students will read about how the different authors constructed their identities and are able to find the right language and voice to share their stories with their readers. Dan McAdams, *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (1996), mirrors this claim when he states "identity is a life story" and that "[identity] is a personal myth that an individual begins working on in late adolescence and young adulthood in order to provide his or her life with unity or purpose" (5).

The challenge in this class will be integrating a Freirian teaching style, one in which class knowledge is derived more from the students, and not entirely from the instructor, with one that gives first-year students adequate structure to succeed. However, the instructor must still function as the gatekeeper. All of the class authority should not emanate from the instructor and by the collaborative nature of the peer workshops, students will be able to converse with each other about their writing and the texts, and they will also be able to change some components of the curriculum if they are not effective. For example, if the
students point out to the instructor that they need more time to work on Essay #1, then the instructor may need to eliminate a reading, and modify the course to suit the students' needs. The instructor can model how the class should function by participating in the timed writings portion of the class and by sometimes sharing her work. Lynn Z. Bloom encourages this practice as she allows her students to see her write as they write in class. Her efforts led to greater class trust and confidence ("Monsters" 8). On one hand, I want the students to think critically and independently, but on the other, they may fail to do the work without firm guidelines which explain exactly what I expect. I have tried to bridge this gap between theory and method by having the students use their own experiences as support, which addresses the critical and feminist theory tenet of exploring one's own truth. The strong structure in this course will give these beginning writers a foundation for reading and writing, and for realizing that revision is a necessary process. And if students do the work, this class should prepare them for upper level classes in both the sciences and humanities where critical thinking and problem solving are valued.

In this chapter, I outline how I will apply the theories from Chapter 1. Part I demonstrates how I apply the readings to this process-based course and how the students will draft and revise their essays. Part II expands this discussion into the pitfalls and ethics of creative nonfiction.
The required readings of
ENGL 114 —Finding Voice and Identity Through Creative Nonfiction

This is the primary text for the class. The text discusses the craft of creative nonfiction in detail and also offers a diverse anthology separated by memoir, personal essay, portrait, essay of place, literary journalism, stories of craft, and short shorts.

(Students will also be asked to reference The Longman Writer's Companion, (3rd Edition) by Chris M. Anson, Robert A. Schwegler, Marcia F. Muth for sentence-level questions and MLA citation guidelines)

The Fire Next Time by James Baldwin (1963)
Baldwin's unflinching reflection on race, Christianity, and Black Muslims

Walker describes her coming of age as a mixed-race child of an African-American mother and a white Jewish father.

The Color of Water (1996) by James McBride
This memoir is told from two points of view: McBride, a mixed-race child, and his white Jewish mother, Ruth McBride.

Blood Done Sign My Name (2004) by Timothy B. Tyson (All except Chapters Three "Too Close Not To Touch" and Eight Our "Other South")
Tyson discusses how his father handled racism in North Carolina in the late 1960s and early 1970s and how the history of the south with racism at its crux formed his worldview.

Borderlands/La Frontera (1987) by Gloria Anzaldúa. (Excerpt)
Chapter One (The Homeland)
Chapter Five (How to Tame a Wild Tongue)
Chapter Seven (La conciencia de la mestiza)
Poems: Cultures (142), We Call Them Greasers (156), To Live in the Borderlands Means You (216)

Anzaldúa discusses the mestiza and Chicano culture and the struggle of women and identity in her culture—she grew up on a ranch settlement in South Texas and was a seventh generation American.
Handouts

"Shitty First Drafts" by Anne Lamott (Bird by Bird, 1994)
Lamott proves that great writers struggle, too, with early drafts and that it is more important that a first draft get written, than be a great work of art

"How It Feels To Be Colored Me" (1928) by Zora Neale Hurston.
Hurston probes how she feels as a black woman against white culture.

"Write from the Inside Out" (2006) by Alice Osborn
Tips and techniques for writing creative nonfiction

Suggested Readings

"Independence Day, Manley Hot Springs, Alaska" by Lisa D. Chavez
"Notes of a Native Speaker" by Erik Liu
(Both essays are found in Writing True)

Mixed (2006) by Angela Nissel
Nissel, a producer on Scrubs, recounts how it was coming of age in the early 90s as a mixed child who has a black mother and white father.

Curriculum Overview

This first-year composition program uses the conventions of creative nonfiction to develop first-year students' logical and critical thinking skills, as well as their own voice. The curriculum for this semester-length course will be grounded in critical theories claiming that personal narratives and students' experiences contain sufficient evidence to produce a balanced position for the piece. My course is also strongly aligned to cultural studies composition curriculums which use readings as a springboard for uncovering how the dominant culture marginalizes individuals based on race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. In "Presence in the Essay," Gordon Harvey calls an essay a personal/textual model when the writer engages with the text as she presents her arguments. Since the
personal/textual model is rooted in feminist and critical theory and with strong guidelines, it can be an effective tool for the composition classroom and it is one of the essay models I will be using for my course. My other essay models include the segmented essay and the multigenre essay, and students will also revise two essays. In my proposed curriculum, students will study and critically read several creative nonfiction texts that all revolve around the theme of race, class and gender in the United States. By studying these texts, the students will also gain more familiarity with the creative nonfiction genre. Ann Berkthoff claims reading allows students greater opportunities to reflect and to develop writers who "tolerate chaos, then analogously the reader must learn to tolerate ambiguity, to allow for competing meanings to develop" (110). Students will be instructed to read their texts at least twice: once for comprehension and twice for critical analysis. When they read critically, students will be encouraged to underline favorite passages, dialogue and quotes that seem to reflect the work’s theme. When they underline, students should also make notes in the margins and bookmark these pages as well. Bartholomae and Petrosky in Ways of Reading (1987) call the connections students make with the text and their experiences framing. In other words, framing helps the student see what parts of the reading are relevant to her (Qualley 114).

As students examine what makes for a successful piece of writing, they will learn how these authors set their scene, use their voice, and how they persuade their readers. Reading and reflecting on these essays will also help the students understand the importance of using details, sensory images, and narrative in an essay. Their essays should become stronger and tighter throughout the semester.

I chose these texts because the authors write about their own racial awareness and reflect on how they view race in America. Through the lens of looking at race, class, and
gender, the student will discover how these writers must negotiate their identity, for example, as a black Jewish woman, as a black Christian man or as a Chicano, who is also a lesbian. To further complicate identities, two of the texts address mixed-race children (black and Jewish) and how the authors negotiate their space in society.

Students will generate ideas for their essays through their journals and will collaborate with their peers to gain feedback to see how their piece works with a reader. They will be assessed using the semester-end portfolio, which gives them the opportunity to build upon past work and to effectively connect their individual pieces into their final project. By the end of the semester, students will understand that the voice on the pages of their assigned texts stems from the author's personality and style. As a result, students will be able to see how they can project their own voices into their essays.

Journals

A vital part of this writing class is having students use their journals to generate ideas, as well as build their memories and details from observations. The reasoning for recording writing in a notebook is not new. Long before the advent of writing process theories and the use of journals in these classes, field notebooks or logs were vital tools for scientists performing observations in biology, sociology, and anthropology. In social work and in nursing, journals were used during internships to record personal growth and learner observations (Fulwiler 3). Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) classes may also use journals to engage students in the act of "writing to learn" to encourage reflection and critical thinking (McLeod 151).

In Europe and America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, diaries were published in record numbers and writers influenced by the Romantic age and individualism
recorded their reflections and feelings in journals. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, journals became vital tools in process writing classes for recording freewrites, brainstorming notes, and notes on research and topic construction. Today, outside of the writing classroom, journaling is also used for spiritual quests, while a large number of women use journals to record their thoughts, feelings and observations. Psychotherapists recommend journaling to their patients, so that they can record their thoughts prior to their appointments, and thus speed up their treatment time (Lowenstein 94).

Many times journaling centers writers who are working on a problem and need the space to develop their thoughts. Ken Macrorie likens a journal as a "seedbed" that needs watering and time to develop into a mature piece of work. In Keeping Writing, he states, "Keeping a journal forces a writer to put something into the sock every day or so. Often when he reviews what is there, he sees materials that fit together and build" (129). Peter Elbow discusses how a journal can become a "freewriting diary" that entails a commitment:

If you are serious about wanting to improve your writing, the most useful thing you can do is keep a freewriting diary. Just ten minutes a day. Not a complete account of your day: just a brief mind sample for each day. You don’t have to think hard or prepare or be in the mood: without stopping just write whatever words come out.

(Writing Without Teachers 9)

Taking the journal discussion further than Macrorie or Elbow, Toby Fulwiler states that a journal lies in the middle of the continuum between a diary and notebook kept for a class. He states that the language should be informal and that the writer needs to use first person pronouns, so that she is personally reflecting on an issue, and not using other sources that would distance her from the material. Fulwiler also lists that a "good" journal should contain
observations, questions (and more questions than answers), speculation, self-awareness, digression, synthesis, revision, and information. In addition, the writer should make frequent entries, and these entries should take some space on the page so that more thoughts and speculations can be captured (2-3).

From the first day of class, the students will start writing 500 words in their journals per sitting. I prefer that the students use "writing journals" that are found in the journal section of any bookstore, rather than a spiral bound notebook. My reasoning behind this is that if the student writes in a journal that is for writers, she will start thinking that she is a writer. I plan on discussing with the students that most serious writers maintain journals to keep their pen flowing and to generate ideas, even if these writings do not give immediate results. Sometimes real world writers may not even use what they are working on until a year or later. Mary Jane Dickerson claims that students feel more comfortable with their own writing style as they write more frequently in their journals. She echoes Britton’s expressive writing function that as the student becomes a successful journaler, she also becomes more aware of herself. "The journal in the writing class can become a repository of the self that enables play with language as well as control over language, a place for writers to grow and expand their capacities as shapers of the self" (135). She also adds that journaling aids in active learning, records growth throughout the semester, and helps the student become more self-aware (130).

I suggest that the students keep their journal with them at all times because they may never know when the next great idea will strike. A student may even realize that her best essay ideas arrive when she is driving, or in the shower or getting dressed. When inspiration
hits, the student needs to keep plenty of paper and pens around so these idea scraps can later be taped into the journal.

After their assigned readings, the students will be required to spend fifteen minutes writing in their journals and trying their best to answer the Journal Questions (see below for these questions), along with my prompts that are listed in the syllabus for that class day. Fifteen minutes is usually all that is needed for some primary ideas to form. The first time the student writes, it may feel awkward, but as the semester progresses, she may feel that the journal is the best method for cultivating ideas and connecting thoughts. Ideally, notes from the journal will help the students form their first drafts.

The following are examples of Journal Questions, which will guide the students as they reflect upon their readings and see the relevance of these readings as they think about the direction of their essays.

- What about this book/essay held my attention?
- Was bothered me about this essay or book?
- Was there anything in this essay that I experienced myself?
- What rang true for me in this essay?
- What do I think were the essay’s strengths and weaknesses?
- What qualities in the writing did I enjoy the most and why?
- What did I think of the author's voice? Can I describe it?

In addition, the syllabus contains several questions, such as, "What is Whiteness in America? What is Blackness?" which should elicit a strong response from the students.
Says Dickerson, "Journals encourage dialogues between the writers and the texts being written so that writers can gain a richer understanding of themselves as makers and shapers of meaning" (131).

**Freewriting**

Popularized by Peter Elbow in *Writing Without Teachers* (1973), freewriting was actually introduced as a writing technique by Dorothea Brande (*Becoming a Writer*) and Brenda Ueland (*If You Want to Write: A Book about Art, Independence and Spirit*) in the 1930s (Schneider 35). In freewriting, the writer tries to write without stopping for a timed period, usually ten to fifteen minutes. Here are a few of basic concepts of freewriting, advocated by several nationally known writing teachers such as Natalie Goldberg (*Writing Down the Bones*) and Julia Cameron (*The Artist's Way*):

- Keep your hand moving across the page
- Don’t cross out — this leaves you too much time to self-edit
- Don’t worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar
- Don’t think, don’t get logical

In this class, the students will be prompted to write about anything for fifteen minutes (see *Exercises for Creating First Drafts* for prompts), along with answering the *Journal Questions*.

Freewriting and sharing are important components of Peter Elbow’s process theory which is designed to help direct creative and critical thought, and make writing more of a practice than an afterthought. Freewriting keeps the student focused on putting pen to paper for fifteen uninterrupted minutes. Using this method, students "Just Do It," fill up their paper, and create threads that will eventually lead to a rough draft. Freewriting prevents premature revising and discourages correcting, which may cause the writer to hold on to
material that should be thrown away. If the student revises too early, the creative juices are staunched, and the writer cannot come up with any novel ideas. According to Elbow, freewriting teaches the writer how to separate the producing process from the revision process (Writing With Power 14). Ken Macrorie describes how the writer can first write freely without a focus during a timed writing session that can contain several subject threads, and then go back and freewrite with a purpose on one topic (8,12). In this curriculum, the instructor will conduct frequent timed in-class writings to help students focus on a particular object or event.

Crafting in the genre of creative nonfiction

One of the best ways to understand and appreciate creative nonfiction is to read it. That is why I am having reading being such an integral part of this course, so that the students see how a piece can grab the audience and persuade them to act or feel or to change their mode of thinking. After the students read their first three assigned readings, they will have a first draft due. I plan on spending more time in getting this draft ready than any of the other essays because the students will need to build their writing confidence. With this first essay, students will begin to feel comfortable with the genre of creative nonfiction and with how they can incorporate some of the craft they are learning in class.

Creative nonfiction is a "true" story, as opposed to a fictional one and it is also writing that provides storytelling techniques with a distinct voice and style. Storytelling techniques include setting a scene, using dialogue, providing backstory, creating conflict, and producing characterization. While creative nonfiction should be true, it is more important that the essay is emotionally true because the writer is recreating experience for the reader.
In other words, the writer is viewing the past and other events through his or her eyes and he/she chooses what to leave in or take out and what to expand. Creative nonfiction is all around us: in the newspaper, in magazines, and on the bestseller list. Memoir, travel essays, personal essays, portraits/profiles, Op-Ed pieces, and even blogs are some popular examples of creative nonfiction. Another lesson in crafting creative nonfiction is to turn the objective into the subjective, so that the author is filtering what he or she is feeling and sensing, which makes the writing original and that voice strong. A writer in this genre must also pay attention to the small details that may be outside of the norm, which usually make up the most interesting material. She should also be aware of her senses and remember to include what she hears, tastes, or smells, along with visual cues.

Creative nonfiction should describe the emotion and truth behind an event, even if some facts and characters are compressed (more on this in Part II). Details can be changed, as long as they are as close to the truth as possible. For instance, if a student does not remember what she was wearing on that particular day, she should take an educated guess so that the essay has strong details and a credible voice. For example, my student Conrad, was not sure if the car his father drove was a Model A or Model T. I suggested he select one of these car models, so that he gains reader credibility.

First version:

Darlene, my sister, and I were in the back seat of the clunker Dad called a car. I think he said it was a Model ‘A’ or ‘T’.

Second version:

Darlene, my sister, and I were in the back seat of the clunker Dad called a car. I think he said it was a Model ‘A’.
Voice, Point of View (POV) and the Constructed "I"

Most essays take the first person singular, but in varying degrees. For this class, all of the essays will be written in first person, so that students will have a strong and immediate connection, along with a vested interest, with their writing. First person also requires students to think about how they should own their experiences and reflect upon these experiences in their essays.

Some essays are very personal, while in others the "I" is further away and is only noticeable through the voice and style of writing. This "I" is a fictional construction which allows students to create their narrative with a single voice that includes and excludes details of the student's self. In addition, this constructed "I" is targeted towards the intended audience and should use language that reflects the "I" persona and voice.

Since these experiences in the essay are unique to the student, only the student can describe them to the reader using his or her own voice. Therefore, the author's writing style must also show a sincerity that appeals to her audience and considers what information needs to be known at the moment. Aristotle in his *On Rhetoric* urged his student rhetors to speak with intelligence, show good moral character, and possess good will towards their audiences (Spigelman 42). Aristotle also urged his students to cite approval from respected sources and authorities, which is what I want students to do with their primary texts. By the end of the semester, the students will learn that when writers describe their experiences with a strong voice, they demonstrate ethos and credibility, and that a writer's "I" is his/her rhetorical strategy (Miller and Paola 76-77).

Once students understand that the voice on the page stems from the writer's personality and style, then the students will be able to see how they can project their voices
into their essays and realize that they all have different voices that are appropriate when
writing in different settings (for example, writing an e-mail to a friend as opposed to writing
an application letter for a job). Writing teacher Pat Schneider says that writers must learn to
accept and trust their voice by acknowledging that they have an Original Voice, a Primary
Voice, and several Acquired Voices (93). The Original Voice is the product of the writer's
hometown and the culture he or she was born into. Schneider comments that this voice is
used, "when you talk to the people with whom you lived as a little child" (93). The Primary
Voice is the voice a writer uses with friends and family as an adult. Lastly, the Acquired
Voice is the one used in an academic or professional setting. For this course, students will
gain practice and familiarity with all three voices in the context of the assigned essays and
journaling work.

Before the second day of class, the students will e-mail a paragraph about themselves
to their groups. Once in their groups, the names will be blacked out, and the students will
determine which ones show a clear identity and which ones could be stronger (Elbow and
Belanoff 397). Voices can also show a range of emotions from being happy to being sad or
ironic. In this exercise, students will also ask which voices show strong emotions. At this
point in the groupwork, I will tell the students that a strong voice is one that is consistent
throughout the essay and fits the theme and word choices in the essay. For example, Zora
Neale Hurston's essay, "How It Feels to be Colored Me" exhibits her strong and confident
voice with dashes, short sentences, and descriptive language. Upon reading this passage, one
can feel her sense of humor, her passion, and her zest for life.
Opposing Points of View (OPV)

Since essays do lean heavily on the first person, they sometimes need an opposing viewpoint for balance, so the speaker does not hold the sole viewpoint, which will undermine her credibility (Pearl and Schwartz 75). For example, if I wrote, "My mother only said bad things to me," that would ignore OPV, while a statement like, "Although my mother rarely expressed her emotions and seemed gruff most of the time, she enthusiastically praised my baking skills because her cookies and muffins were either burnt or misshapen." By giving balance to the characters, the writer earns credibility from the reader, especially when the reader knows that the writer is trying to show a balanced world. This credibility is akin to ethos in rhetoric, which is important for the writer or speaker to establish trustworthiness so that she can convince her audience that her facts are accurate and her rhetorical appeal is genuine. Readers want to read about all facets of a character — good and bad — even if the student thinks she has nothing nice to say about her character. However, the writer needs to find something positive, so that the character is projected onto the page with balanced traits. A so-called mean character can hate people and be emotionally abusive, but he may still give donations to the humane society or he may love tending their garden.

This is an example from one of my student's essays which discusses her younger sister. At the time Nancy was writing this essay, she was trying to figure out why she and her sister are so different. I encouraged her to use OPV, to show both the negative and positive traits Nancy sees in her sister.

My sister and I rarely spend time together; more rarely, we enjoy being together when we do. One of those times is the time we spend together at my request shopping for her grandchildren at Christmas. She helps me find things for them, but she has already bought things for my grandchildren, which is fine. I need her help; she doesn’t need mine. Unlike me, she shops instead of worrying about whether it is something the children want or need.
She seems to have a knack for getting things done. She keeps her house straight at all times, everything in its place. She is a list maker and is also really good with numbers. She took after my father in that respect. He could calculate anything in his head and come up with the right answer. He could barely read but he could sure do the math. The love of money and his obsession with it may have contributed to this gift with numbers, one I don’t have. My sister is also obsessed with money and saving and deciding what is foolish to spend it on, but if you mention giving her something or paying for something for her, it is a different story.
— Nancy

The following is an excerpt from Suzanne's essay, which is a profile about her Aunt Hattie, her mother's sister. Suzanne describes how Hattie was not treated well by the rest of her family because of her mental illness and her indifference towards others. As Suzanne's essay developed, I encouraged her to bring out some of Hattie's characteristics that would make her more of a whole person, and one that was not just defined by her mental illness.

I do have memories of her smiling and laughing. Hattie’s eyes would close right up as she smiled her bright smile and released her breathy laugh. It’s strange to think now, that despite the little interaction we had, the few memories I do have are quite clear and I am surprised that I can almost hear her laughing. But her overall demeanor was distant, detached and often ‘smug’ (one of her favorite words to criticize others). I don’t think I trusted her to be warm towards me. As I’ve said, my personal memories of Auntie Hattie from childhood are few. Once when we went skiing with her, my parents let her drive my sister and me home from the hill – an hour’s drive at least. I was about 5. I think I must have begged my sister to come in the car with me. I wasn’t too comfortable with the thought of being alone with her in her light blue, mid-1960’s Mustang. I presume we went with her for company – as if children could warm up a cold character; but Hattie was pretty indifferent to everyone. I doubt I bothered to tell her that I needed to go to the bathroom. I think I was afraid that she would be angry with me if we had to stop on the way home. I pulled my legs up on to the seat under my bottom hoping all the layers of clothing and my snow pants would keep the pee from reaching the light blue vinyl seat.
—Suzanne
Details and description

An essay only comes alive for the reader through details. For if the writer uses abstract concepts to develop her point, the reader will be left without a clear picture of what the author is trying to convey. Says Barbara DeMarco-Barrett, "Details animate life and make your writing come alive" (175). Without details, the writing lacks a clear voice and sounds generic, like "small talk," DeMarco-Barrett explains (174). When describing the kitchen where her mother sits balancing the checkbook, the student could describe the kitchen's windows and what they look like. Are there curtains? What does the kitchen smell like? Is there plenty of food in the refrigerator, or hardly any at all? What is her mother wearing? These are the kinds of details students need to write, while avoiding common nouns such as food, trees, shoes, or jacket. The student needs to describe what she ate, what kind of tree she sat under, what she was wearing on her feet, and what color her jacket was. These details are captured immediately when they are written down in our journals or on scraps of paper when they occur, so that when it comes down to write, the detail is as exact as possible. And when it is as exact as possible, the details bring the story to life and help the author relive it and describe it for her readers (Perl and Schwartz 23). However, students need to be aware when describing a scene not to tell the reader what to think or how to feel. Instead, they can use an image or a metaphor to capture their thoughts and their tone (see below) (Miller and Paola 89).
Metaphors and Images: Basics of Figurative Language

Using figurative language is another way of communicating with the reader and strengthening the writer's voice. It is also a technique to enable a reader to understand something new in the form of images, metaphors, and similes. An image can be a mountain, a flower, a desert, or a certain landmark that gives the reader a clear picture of the writer's words. Metaphors and similes build upon images by providing tighter connections for readers. Robert Frost defines a metaphor as "saying one thing in terms of another" (Boisseau and Wallace 185). There are two parts to a metaphor: the tenor, which is the subject, and the vehicle, which the writer uses to describe the subject. For instance, in the phrase "that ray of sun is a spear," the ray of sun is the tenor and the spear is the vehicle. A simile uses "like" or "as" and is not as direct as a metaphor. Students will learn that not everything can be made into a metaphor and that the tenor and the vehicle should have some similar properties. For example, when describing "waves driving erratically like New York cab drivers," taxicabs are not a good vehicle, since they would not be found in the ocean or in nature. Students also need to be sure that they do not overuse metaphors and similes in their writing, since doing so will bog down the reader and will distance the reader away from the story.

On the third day of class as a way to practice using images and metaphors, the instructor will bring in artwork on postcards (an examples follows below) and have the students describe the images and also reflect on what images appeal to them and why.
Exercise:

Please reflect on these questions with as much detail as possible:

- Who is in the picture?
- What is happening around the edges of the picture?
- What is the subject's frame of mind in the picture?
- What kind of mood or tone does this artwork evoke for the viewer?
- If there are people in the picture, what do you think they're saying to each other?
- Why are they dressed like this?

(Dombeck and Herndon 77)

Writing dialogue

The most important thing to remember about writing dialogue that it is not a complete transcription of a conversation. Students are not expected to remember everything from a past conversation, but they need to write down the best words to adequately convey the scene. Good dialogue distills the spoken word, so that the key elements drive the essay or story and make the reader care about what is going on (DeMarco-Barrett 164). "As writers of creative nonfiction, our aim is to capture the essence of what transpired, the felt truth of what was said and heard" (Perl and Schwartz 73). Many writers have said that writing dialogue is tough, and that it takes practice. I know from my own experience with dialogue that this is true. It is easy to make the dialogue "flat," which means that every character is sounding the same and the dialogue is being used to give information (like in an expository essay, for instance), rather than giving the characters the chance to reveal their personalities
and their own way of speaking. Extra information cluttering the dialogue should be included in the narration. Many authors also suggest that beginning writers eavesdrop on conversations in bank and post office lines, at lunch, at dinner, and in coffee shops. Another suggestion is that students study plays, since plays are mostly dialogue interspersed with narrative and stage directions. By developing one's ear towards good dialogue, which is defined as a conflict between the two people and having one person not saying what they really mean, a writer can model their own dialogue off of these conversations. Dialogue can also be the place where a writer can insert action. For example, a farmer is talking with his son and he says, "Looks like the drought is going to last another month," (as he shook the dirt out of his cap while kicking the tractor tire). Here the action reveals a bit more about the character without the author giving the reader a dry description.

In the syllabus, the fifth day of class will be spent discussing dialogue and how to make it drive the action and reveal character traits. Students will practice their dialogue skills with a brief in-class exercise shown here:

Using one sheet of paper, create an interaction between two characters, written all in dialogue. Here are a few examples, but feel free to create your own. (Please remember to have one speaker want something the other does not)

- A worried parent tries to convince their child that her (or his) boyfriend or girlfriend is a poor choice
- A person no longer wants to live with her/his roommate
- A diner finds an insect in his/her food and wants to be compensated for this meal. The manager doesn't see this as a problem.
• Two people meet each other again after they had been lovers. Now twenty years later, one of them wants to resume the relationship, and the other does not.

• A very persistent guy at a bar sits down next to you and you want to tell him to leave you alone, but he's not leaving so easily.

(Percey 83)

Once students complete this exercise, they will act out one of these scenarios in class, which will show how dialogue can enhance an essay. Students are encouraged to practice their dialogue out loud at home as an effective way to see if the conversation is dull and if more drama and action are needed.

**Exercises for Generating First Drafts**

Much scholarship has been done to help students with the writing process and to get them to incorporate the triad system of writing: prewriting, writing, and revision. Janet Emig devised the recursive model of writing in 1971 by showing how writers use planning in both the prewriting and writing stages. The writing stage can also include silences and hesitations, and even in the revision stage, writers may need to prewrite to look deeper into a subject and expand it (Bishop 29). Sondra Perl defines her theory of "felt sense" as "the physical place where we locate what the body knows" (4). Perl notes that students feel when their words are working and they are in their "groove" when their bodies feel calm. Students should call on their felt sense when they start writing a sentence and immediately feel
uncomfortable. This is the signal that they need to search for another word that does fit what they are trying to convey in their writing.

Taking into account these invention and freewriting theories, this curriculum will not work if the students do not know what to write the first sentences of their essays. On the first day of class, I will pass out a handout that has twenty-five questions. Students are to pick one question that elicits a strong response and write about that question for fifteen minutes in their journal without stopping. Some of the questions include

- Who reaches you?
- What haunts you?
- What irritates you?
- What are your obsessions?
- What do you wish to forget?
- What will you become?
- When were you misunderstood?

After the first day of class, students are encouraged to use their journals to generate ideas and explore how they will approach their essay topics. They should also use their journals to study the details in their lives by noticing the small things that other people miss. For instance, the students could study their kitchen or bedroom, or they could describe the details of a loved one without using any clichés.

To ensure that all of the students are writing in their journal and none of them are falling behind, I will have an in-class prompt-writing workshop three class days before Essay #1 is due. Students will write for fifteen minutes, and afterwards everyone will discuss what they thought of the exercise.
Here are a few suggested prompts:

- Write about the origins of your name (Perl and Schwartz 15).
- Describe a situation where you were uncomfortable around another culture and describe how you dealt with the situation.
- Mine your childhood: Where did you live? What did you do for fun? What was your backyard/front yard like? How did your family interact? Where is your family originally from?
- How do you define yourself: please describe your class, ethnicity and race. How comfortable do you feel with your identity? (Dombek and Herndon 96)
- Start a sentence with "I remember" or "I don't remember."
- List your first experiences: riding a bike, sleepovers, plane trip, etc.
- Sensory Details: What were you eating last summer? Describe the taste, touch, smell, and sound with as much detail as possible
- List ("Notes of a Native Speaker" by Eric Liu in Writing True begins with a list)
  - Places I've lived
  - Jobs I've had
  - My favorite TV shows, movies, music
  - Things I've lost/Things I've found
  - Things I'm proud of/Things I regret

Here are a few examples of several student prompts from a prompt writing workshop where I encouraged my students to write down as many details as possible during a ten-minute timed writing on the listed emboldened themes.
Describe your first apartment or any apartment you lived in

It was always shady when I made my way home in the late afternoon. Even though my apartment was on the East side of the street, the sun would be gone down behind the greystone houses and apartments all in a row across the street from where I lived. I can't remember the street address any more, but there were 4 numbers... 1632 Stanley Street or 1426. I lived almost at the top of the block and the walk was a good climb up from Sherbrooke St. My one room apartment on Stanley Street was as urban as you can get but there was still a bush or two framing several of the doorways. The stone and the doors and the occasional gateways; the large solid door handles and the marble and stone entrance ways were all comforting and solid, and their age and history always made me feel rich with atmosphere even if I paid less than $400 a month to live in my one-room in this exquisite old house that had been divided into apartments. Beyond the 12 foot heavy black door - so thick I left the street noises behind with certainty once the door closed behind me - was a rod iron gate that opened with a key, or a buzzer from the apartments. I lived on the second floor... but it was two flights of stairs to get there...first door on the right at the top of the stairs. The hallways were large like they led to ballrooms and the ceilings were lifted beyond any house built in my generation.

—Suzanne

I lived in a flat until I relocated to another country in another continent. We, the four siblings and a set of parents, lived in a 90-square-meter bedroom apartment. The boy got the smallest room, yet he had his own, while the three girls shared the laughter, the gruesome fights, the secrets, and all the forbidden books in one OK-sized room. It really didn't matter if the light stayed up almost all night because of the next day exams or cigarette smoke filling the room because the oldest girls bad habit of finishing one more before falling asleep. It never feeled (sic) that we crammed in one flat as a family of six. It was the most happy, fun-filled, unforgettable time of my life living in that sun filled flat!

—Fatosh
I lived in an old condo in downtown Chicago once. The front door was in a small hall with dusky pink flocked and taffeta wallpaper. Glittering crystal chandeliers hung over the floor in front of the elevator and the two doors at each end of the hall.
The back door opened onto a dark brown landing in an ill-lit stairwell. The trash bins were there. A chicken wire window looked out into a central square of like-minded windows, all cracked for ventilation. The smell, not bad exactly, this was a nice old building, but redolent of Matzo balls and gefilte fish and every other meal for the last 75 years.
—Ginger

Things I’ve Lost

My virginity
Lots of money
Friends
Family
My temper

With the exception of my virginity, I have found all of those things, as well.
—Ginger

Jobs I’ve had

I've been working since I was twelve: In the 17 years since, I've been:
1) A radio broadcast operator
2) A subway sandwich maker
3) A pizza delivery man
4) A banquet server
5) A deli worker
6) A 7-11 clerk
7) A cigar store clerk
8) A movie theater usher
9) Door-to-door salesman
10) Assistant manager at a video store
11) TV broadcast operator
12) News cameraman
13) Plasma clinic worker
14) Gas station attendant
15) Mastering technician
16) Tech support operator
—Manning
Rivers I have known

I grew up by the Hudson River, so the pathetic things they call rivers down here, I'd call them streams. Maybe. The Hudson River is wide and navigable, cuts deep into the hills, with real, significant bulges and vistas — prime property.
The phobia, absolute phobia people in NY had about crossing the East and the Hudson to come to NJ, when we lived there, but we could be expected to come to them, no problem. They SAID things like that, like, uh, we can't get there. It's across the river, you know. You'd think we were only asking them to swim!
— Geni

Memories of childhood/family

I am an only child living in a home with my mother and a man I thought was my father. A man who got drunk and we would run out of the house and hide. After he left when I was about 8 years old, my mother had to go off to work and I spent days alone. I remember eating at a neighbor's house everyday and they had butterbeans everyday. We didn't have a car or very much money. When I got older and had a child of my own, my mother told me the man I thought was my father, wasn't my father. That my father was a doctor she had worked for. I was able to meet him. He was old and retired from his profession. He was glad to see me, but didn't want his wife and other children to know who I was. I didn't hold this affair against my mother because I knew the kind of man she was married to. Both men eventually died.
— Judy

Organizing the Draft

Once the first ideas are formed, students will need to narrow their topic and find supporting claims. Organizing an essay is quite similar to organizing an academic paper. In both, the student needs to locate the thesis and develop the supporting evidence, yet the main difference with creative nonfiction as opposed to an academic essay is that the student needs to find the right form that will convey the information adequately.
The following are several questions the student needs to ask herself when she sits down to organize her essay:

- What's my story really about? Can I summarize it in a few sentences? To help find her overall theme, the student can pick a favorite image or quote and see if her story's point comes into focus. Once she finds her focus, she can then write her thesis statement, which should inform and guide the reader.

- Can I find any patterns in my essay? The student should analyze her notes to see if there are any recurrent themes and if the same issues come up. If they do, then she should list the basic conflicts and challenges on one side of the page, and their resolutions on the other side (Massé 26).

**Collaboration, Group dynamics and Peer Reviews**

Collaboration in composition emerged in the early 1970s after the influx of community college students and first generation college students entered urban schools. They were not prepared academically and they struggled with the writing in their courses. Although these students were offered writing and counseling help from their teachers and from graduate students, they refused to seek help from these services, probably because this traditional help intimidated them and they knew that these services would speak to them in a language they did not understand. As Kenneth Bruffee describes, peer tutoring in writing centers proliferated as a result of these students, since tutors represented a different power structure and a way for these new college students to get help. As the peer tutors model the different forms of academic writing, they use conversation and collaboration to help get the student's questions answered and to provide immediate feedback (396). Bruffee claims,
"Mastery of a knowledge community's normal discourse is the basic qualification for acceptance into that community" (402). He also states that students gain authority as they learn how they can write within their discourse community. As a writing tutor, I can vouch that students do feel more confident about their writing when they talk about their papers and presentations with another student. During a session, I have students read their papers out loud, and as they do so, they catch errors such as awkward phrasing and organizational problems. Through direct and indirect questions, I initiate a discussion about these issues with the student, so hopefully she can arrive at an answer on her own, which corresponds with Bruffee's statement, "What students do when working collaboratively on their writing is not write or edit or, least of all, proof. What they do is converse" (403).

Writing groups give writers an audience and a source of reader-based and criteria-based feedback, which helps students determine how they can make their writing more clear. According to Peter Elbow, reader-based feedback is the reader's reaction to the writing as it is being read, and criteria-based feedback is the reader's reaction to the writing based on her past experiences of writing in that genre (Brooke 190). Anne Ruggles Gere states writing groups "highlight the social dimension of writing" and lessen the distance between the reader and writer (3). These small groups also force students to share with other students who are different from themselves; they bring out commonalities and they also build trust, which is important in this writing course which has critiquing and discussion at its core.

After the first week of classes (I am accounting for students dropping the class), four students will be assigned to one of four to five groups. On the fourth day of the class, these groups will brainstorm and generate ideas for Essay #1 (the personal/textual model essay). On the day the assigned essay is due, the groups will workshop their essays with each other.
Since the process of a writing workshop will be new to most of the students, I will refer them to Chapter 6 in Writing True, which discusses how to workshop drafts through active listening, well-worded questions, and I-based comments (87-96). I will also devote part of a class to discussing workshopping guidelines before the groups conduct a workshop and suggest that the students refer to Chapter 6 frequently as they workshop. Each student will also be responsible for turning in a handout to the student whose work has just been discussed that lists "What works well," and "What needs work," and "My Comments." This form will be kept in the writer’s comment folder for the Final Portfolio, and will also help determine class participation. An electronic forum board will be set up for each of the groups, so that the instructor can see if the groups are critiquing effectively, and if they are being positive and helpful to one another. Each group member will be required to post a critique summary for each of her group members (to be seen by only the addressee and the instructor) the week of the workshop day and these posts will be retained for inclusion in her Final Portfolio.

Once the four-person groups are formed, the students will share their early drafts with their group and receive and give feedback. The purpose of these groups is to learn from the other students and to learn how to critically read and analyze a creative nonfiction work. The groups will e-mail their drafts to each other and to the instructor, so that the group will have a chance to read over drafts and take notes prior to the class meeting time.

In the first round of critiquing a draft, the reader's task will be to actively listen to the writer and then tell the writer what he or she thinks the essay is about and what is at stake. The reader will ask, "So your story is about…?" Adding a voice inflection at the end of this sentence leaves the writing open to possibilities from both the writer and the reader. Active
listening also helps the writer feel more confident about his or her work since the group is not allowed to share what needs to be worked on at this point in the workshop. The instructor will need to frequently remind the groups that listening to each other's writing, and offering encouragement is vital for building trust, and it also allows students to feel that this is a positive environment where their work can be shared and not negatively criticized. This kind of writing environment will help to create a feminist classroom, where knowledge stems from many voices, and not just from the instructor.

Guidelines for the active listening round (first round):

- Listen carefully without interruptions
- Refer to the writer as the "speaker" and not as "you." For example, a reader would say, "On page three, the speaker wants to stop eating."
- Don't offer any suggestions in this round

Once the writers have noted the comments from the first round of groupwork, the essays are workshopped again with a more critical eye. In this second round, the readers are given a handout with a set of these critiquing questions and the writer takes notes besides the questions. Students will hold on to their handouts until they turn in their Final Portfolio, so that the handouts can help them with their revisions (see Contents of Final Portfolio).

Students should lead with a positive comment and then give recommendations for improvement. In order for these collaborations to be successful, the instructor needs to create a supportive environment where trust is encouraged and positive feedback is modeled.

Here are a few examples of guided critiquing questions (second round):

- What are the strengths of the piece? And the weaknesses?
- What parts in this piece slowed me down or confused me?
• Is there too much or too little description?

• Is the writer developing an argument and is she using OPV?

• Is there a place in the essay where the action could be slowed down or sped up? (In a scene where there is a lot of tension, it is a good idea to slow down the pace of the essay by using dialogue and heavier description and reflection)

• And the most important question: How is the writer using his or her voice in this piece? What suggestions do you have for improving the voice? Does the voice (angry, sad, ironic) match the overall tone of the essay?

This form of peer review, or workshop critique, which is the usual format in creative writing classes, helps students create their own knowledge and makes questions the means for finding connections with each other's drafts and with the texts they are studying. Collaborative learning and its socially constructed idea of knowledge makes drafts more finished and gives writers the space to make their writing more complete (Gere 75).

**Encouraging Research**

Students will learn that the trick with research in creative nonfiction is that it must weave seamlessly into the text, so that the facts and figures are not obvious to the reader. Although not required for this course, research does add layers to an essay and makes the writer more trustworthy and credible. For instance, in Essays #2 and #3, some research may be necessary. The students may want to explore what was happening in history at the time of their essay, or they may want to interview their parents or other relatives to find out more information from their points of view. Some class time will be devoted to research (Chapter 9 in *Writing True*), with a reminder for the students to use the MLA citation guidelines. Ken
Macrorie devised the I-Search for students to use personal interviews and other first hand sources to find out more about a subject they choose (54). He also recommends having students organize their paper by asking:

- Why am I writing this paper?
- What I know and what I need to know
- Description of the search
- What I learned or did not learn

**The Assigned Essays**

At least two weeks before each essay is due, each student will receive a detailed handout describing each essay, what it should contain, and how it will be evaluated (See Appendix — Essay Handouts). I feel that a structured handout is a good idea in a first-year class, since many of these students may not feel they are strong writers, and will feel more comfortable knowing what their instructor expects.

**Essay #1: the personal textual model**

Texts used: *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin  
*The Color of Water* by James McBride  
"How It Feels To Be Colored Me” by Zora Neale Hurston

My proposed personal/textual model can be successfully implemented for the first-year two-semester curriculum by having the students become familiar with the personal essay and giving them prompts to generate thoughtful responses. The personal/textual essay uses situations from the assigned creative nonfiction text (in this case, *The Fire Next Time*, "How It Feels To Be Colored Me," and *The Color of Water*) and then students support their theme with examples from the text along with the students' own personal experiences to create
academic evidence. Academic evidence is constructed when the student makes a claim and then uses an example from the text or from experience to back that claim. Additionally, when students write their claims they will be instructed to either agree or disagree with the text. Students must include at least three examples from the text source and two examples from personal experience.

Having students include experiences from their childhood and from their recent past will help them develop their essays to create academic arguments that connect with the texts. For example, after reading The Color of Water, a student could support her theme of finding her identity by referring back to the text:

Like James McBride, I needed to know more about my mother before I could know more about myself. My mother never talked about her childhood and I never saw pictures of her as a little girl. After she died last year from cancer, I visited my grandmother and we pored over her pictures. My mother even kept a journal! That day I felt like McBride when he traveled to Suffolk, Virginia to find his mother's roots...

Another student could use this same text to discuss racism by starting off with a quote to generate discussion.

James McBride says, "[Racism] smashed me across the face like a bottle when I walked into the real world" (204). I never thought racism could happen to me here in college. I guess I was insulated by my parents, and by my neighborhood. Then the real world happened. Here in college, there's a definite separation of black and white. Just the other night, I was walking to my car and two white girls crossed the street to avoid me. ...But Like Zora Neale Hurston says, "I'm not tragically colored" and like her, I can fit in with whites or blacks, but I have to change the way I talk and the way I interact with each new group of people.

The students can also explain how the text does not connect with their experiences:

I'm a white Italian, and although I couldn't relate to McBride's experiences growing up in New York, I still could somewhat relate to this book because he came from a large family, like me. I'm not the middle child like McBride, but
the oldest, and could understand how his older siblings had to "rule" over the household while his mother worked.

In order for their essays to succeed, students must use concrete details from the text that relate to their own experiences, and they must also properly structure their essay so that it has purpose and shows development. After the students state the purpose for their essay, they will also need to give the reasons behind this choice, and then they must give adequate support in the form of quotes from the text or by using personal experience examples to illustrate these reasons. Students will be encouraged to use their essay to teach, build trust, and to reflect. From the readings and their journals, students will develop their creative language skills and learn how important it is to use sensory images that evoke emotion. They will also be encouraged to use metaphors and similes, when appropriate, to create vital images in the reader’s mind. Ultimately, students must demonstrate how they can sustain a theme and give examples and personal reflection to support this theme and persuade their audience.

For instance, a student could describe her trip to the Bahamas as "fantastic" or she could say, "It was my perfect day: I woke up at noon, and after tossing aside the ivory, 200-count sheets, I explored the beach covered with pink conch shells. I sipped my rich Colombian coffee in a white mug and heard the parrots (or is it the parakeets?) warble with joy." Once the reader believes the student and her experiences, ethos and character building has been achieved. Just by using concrete details and description, the writer is on her way to persuading the reader.

For the personal/textual model, students need to know that they do not have to reveal extremely personal details about their life to make a point in their essay, but that they should
include experiences that heighten their arguments and connect with the text. Students must consider their audience to ensure that the reader can follow the narrative and is given enough information in the essay to be persuasive. They also should consider what assumptions the audience, or "ideal reader" brings to the writing (Elbow and Belanoff 421) and either agree or disagree with those assumptions. For example, a student could write, "You might think that the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island belong to the state of New York, but they actually belong to New Jersey."

**Essay #2: Choose your own form essay**

Texts used: *Blood Done Sign My Name* by Timothy Tyson  
*The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin

In this essay assignment, students have an opportunity to tell their story by experimenting with form. In *Writing True*, these forms are thoroughly discussed (54-61). In Essay #1, the students integrated the texts with their writing, and in this essay they will use more of the conventions of creative nonfiction to tell a story that does not need to have any textual references. To make this essay a little more structured, students can use metonymy, in which they choose an object to stand in for a larger object. For example, they can use the image of the Confederate statue (from *Blood Done Sign My Name*) in Oxford's town square and the different perspectives it generates from the people who live there. The learning objective for this assignment is to have the students pull together a theme from a relevant object which represents class, race or gender and have the form they choose best make their meaning.
The students can pick any form they like for their second assignment and they will learn from Chapter 4 in *Writing True* that creative nonfiction does not need to always be told chronologically (like "Once Upon a Time"). For example:

- The segmented form moves from past to present using markers such as dates and places with white space to separate the segments. It is a popular format because the writer can group events and show relationships through segments. These segments must move the story forward and must have some connection to the overall theme of the piece. "Independence Day, Manley Hot Springs, Alaska" (*Writing True*) is an example of a segmented essay which using different time frames and weaves between the past and present, while developing its discrimination and coming of age theme.

- The epistolary format uses letters or e-mails to tell the story.

- The multiple perspective format shares the point of view among several people who experience the same event.

- The framed essay can start in either the past or present, but it must weave back and forth, so that the reader can see how the past has shaped the author's life.

- A compare/contrast essay (see below with *The Fire Next Time* and *Blood Done Sign My Name*) can either weave two views together or it can use a block-by-block structure, where one issue is developed, followed by the competing issue. At the end of the essay, the author would sum up the two views.

*The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin is a different text from the others I selected in that it is more of a personal essay than a memoir, meaning that Baldwin is telling the reader what he thinks, rather than showing the reader his perspective through images, metaphors, and dialogue. In addition, his text does not contain a great deal of OPV, which can be a strategy
for students to see how a text is constructed without using OPV. I selected this text because it offers students a strong background in race relations in the U.S and serves as an introduction to Blood Done Sign My Name, which is a historical memoir based on the events of the killing of Henry Marrow in 1970 Oxford, North Carolina. Students could possibly combine these two texts in a compare/contrast structure to investigate how race relations have or have not changed from 1963 (pre-Civil Rights Act) through the 1970s and 1990s. For instance, Tyson describes an incident that took place in the early 1990s where his African American friend could not enter a bar. Baldwin also describes similar incidents when black soldiers returned home from fighting in World War II.

**Essay #3: Multigenre essay with an oral presentation**

Texts used: Black, White and Jewish by Rebecca Walker
Borderlands by Gloria Anzaldúa

For this essay assignment, students will need to focus their theme so that all of the elements of their multigenre assignment will work together. They need to consider the order and mode of their essay, so that each segment will support the overall theme, and they will need to provide enough text containing details that match their visual presentation, so their audience is informed and not confused. This essay will encourage students to see how the elements race, class and gender can be found in many places, if one would only look closer. For instance, if the student is focusing on Hurricane Katrina, then she could include newspaper clippings, website articles, blogs, photos, poems, and songs in her essay. Other found objects can be used as well: menus, matchbooks, programs, playbooks, and ticket stubs. Students will also share their essay with the class as a three to five minute presentation in PowerPoint or in a digital movie file (such as Windows Movie Maker). They may also
want to write a preface which grounds the reader in the subject and gives him/her some
day perspective on the presentation. When the students present their essay to the class, they will
use a visual aid (which can also be their project).

A multigenre essay is very much like a scrapbook. A scrapbook must have a theme,
or the pieces within it will not support it. The challenge of making the multigenre essay work
is ensuring that all of the elements support the theme and they are not extraneous. Tom
Romano, who teaches multigenre writing says, "Each genre is a color slide, complete in
itself, possessing its own satisfying composition, but also working in concert with the others
to create a single literary experience" (Perl and Schwartz 140). The syllabus shows two class
periods that will address the multigenre essay to help the students brainstorm their themes
and ask any questions about the technology or what they should include. For example,
students will be encouraged to use different points of view or they can write their essay using
different voices. As an example, a student could build her presentation/essay around this
passage from Black, White and Jewish:

Now as I move from place to place, from Jewish to black, from D.C. to San
Francisco, from status quo middle class to radical artist bohemia, it is less like
jumping from station to station on the same radio dial and more like moving from
planet to planet between universes that never overlap. I move through days, weeks,
people, places, growing attached and then letting go, meeting people and then saying
goodbye. Holding on makes it harder to be adaptable, harder to meet the demands of
a new place. It is easier to forget, to wipe the slate clean, to watch the world go by
like a film on a screen, without letting anything stick (117).
Using this quote as a model, the student could reflect on the diversity or lack of diversity in
the neighborhood where she grew up or in the schools she attended.

In Black, White and Jewish, Rebecca Walker (who is the mixed-race child of Mel
Leventhal and Alice Walker) is on the edge of the black and white world, which places her in
a position to see different perspectives on race and to experience first-hand how race-
conscious America is. She says "my color defines me" and she identifies as an African-
American because of her darker skin and because of her mother's cultural influence, although
her appearance invites many questions to what comprises her ethnic background. She notices
that when she travels to other countries, especially to countries with many people of color,
she is defined by her interactions with people rather than by her skin tone. Walker asks her
readers, "What do we become when we put down the scripts written by history and memory,
when each person before us can be seen free of the cultural or personal narrative we've
inherited or devised" (307) In an ideal world, no one would be defined based solely on their
color, but since we live in a culture that does privilege white skin over black, writers like
Walker use their skills to inform readers and try to change historical perspectives. She calls
for learning how to reach a "differential consciousness" as advocated by Chela Sandoval,
who wrote Methodology of the Oppressed, so that one can be both black and white,
depending upon individual situations that the person encounters. Deploying a differential
consciousness is much like an author shifting perspectives and using different voices
depending upon the rhetorical situation. Similarly, Anzaldúa advocates creating a borderland
that is between white and Chicano cultures. This class also serves as a borderland and/or
contact zone where discussion about different cultures is encouraged and where provocative
issues are brought to light. This borderland may be fragmented with different views and
truths and it may be contentious, but these views are originating bottom-up from the students and not from a traditional top-down authority.

Essay #4: Revision of Essay #1 and #2

Many beginning writers think that once they are done with a draft, "That's it!" However, it is only through revision that the writer sees how themes can be further developed, how details can be added, and how either tightening or expanding the writing can strengthen the organization of the paper. In short, revision helps the writer communicate what he is trying to convey to his audience.

The following are several elements that the students need to be aware of when they start reworking their essays. As they are studying these points, they should also read all of their critiques and see if the same problem is being addressed. If it is, then their peers' points may be valid and they will need to incorporate those suggestions into the revision. During an in-class revision exercise, the students will use colored markers and scissors to cut up their drafts and see how they can improve their work. During this class time, revision methods will be discussed, such as printing out a hard copy to revise or emboldening the revisions, so that they are separate from the original.

All of the following revision guidelines will be discussed in-class before the first revision essay is due and students will be assigned Chapter 7 in Writing True for further reference.

- Voice — reading your work out loud determines if your voice is too casual or too formal for the piece. You should also note if you shift from past to present tense or if your voice changes from the beginning to the end of the piece.
• Add tension — Be sure not to rush through a scene that is heavy with conflict. You need to slow down the pace with detail, description and possibly dialogue. Slowing down the pace of the scene will heighten the suspense and will keep the reader interested.

• Audience — Who is your audience and have you used the right language and tone to fit this audience?

• Find the Focus — Read over your essay and see if it has a split personality. Could this essay become two essays? If so, cut and reorganize so that your essay only has a singular focus. Ask yourself, what is this essay about? Perhaps a smaller part of the essay holds more interest for you now and you want to see it developed.

• Develop the Back Story — You may introduce a character and the reader will not know how this person fits into your overall theme. To fix this, you can add a little information about this character's past and his or her relationship to the speaker in the essay.

• Adding Reflection — As events occur in your essay, reflect upon them and how you felt at the time. Adding reflection adds to your voice and credibility and makes your story truly your own.

• Adding OPV — If your speaker is the only one who is talking, then you may have a problem of having only one viewpoint, which can make your audience suspicious. Consider adding a character who opposes your viewpoint or who challenges your assumptions. Adding OPV gives your essay layers and depth, and it also strengthens your credibility and builds upon your reader's trust.
• Adding Details — Do you see where you can add concrete details or figurative language? Adding details gives the reader the sense of being there with you, which makes the story come alive. If you talk about a tree, give the reader the name of the tree, along with giving naming flowers, cities, stores, clothing, food, drinks, etc.

• Beginning/Ending Lines — These are often the most difficult, yet they are the most important. The beginning line is your reader's first impression. Do your first lines drag, yet your story picks up the pace in the second paragraph? You may need to cut the first paragraph and jump to the second. Or perhaps, you can start your first paragraph with a short scene that shows, rather than tells. For the ending line, try to end on an image or try to connect the ending with the beginning, so that you make a frame for your piece.

• Larger-order concerns — These include giving enough examples and detailed descriptions, while achieving balance with your points. Ask yourself if your logic is valid (this applies to Essay #1). Also, check to see if you have used enough transitions (although," however," and "in contrast") to give your work coherence and flow.

• Sentence-order concerns — Examine your writing at the sentence level to check for grammar, punctuation, word choice and style. Take your time and read your paper out loud to catch mistakes and awkward phrasing. Choppy sentences need to be combined with a conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet or so) and they should be varied between long and short. All of the "to be" verb forms produce weaker writing and should be replaced with stronger verbs along with (same with "there are" and "there is" constructions, although having a few "to be" verbs in your work is
necessary). Trim the fat off of any words that are vague or redundant, such as "interesting" and "meaningful" and writing "very unique" or "past history." Watch out for over using speech qualifiers such as "surely," "just," "really," and "very."

Contents of Final Portfolio

A portfolio that best represents the student's learning, growth, and mastering of the writing process comprises of a collection, reflection, and selection of the student's best work (Hamp-Lyons and Condon 118). The students' Final Portfolio, which will be submitted in hard copy, will include their drafts of their selected essay (I will remind the students that they will need to keep all of their drafts throughout the semester), workshop critique summaries (both from class and online), relevant discussion board postings, a photo of themselves (to show that they are the author of this work, much like an author photo on any published book), and their autobiographies (1-2 pages). Their autobiographies would include information about where they grew up, what they want to accomplish while in college, and a brief mention of their interests and hobbies. The Portfolio will also include a reflection paper (three pages) and a revision of either the first and second essays, including that essay's drafts. By giving the student the choice of which essay to include in the Portfolio, the student has the opportunity to select the one which best reflects growth and development in this class. In the reflection paper, students will answer "What did I learn most from the readings in class?" and "How did I use the readings for my essays?" and when they answer these questions, they must also quote heavily from their journal to show that they have put the necessary time into their journal and have done the writing and thinking work for this class. The purpose of this Final Portfolio is to document, collect and assess a student's progress throughout the
semester, and to give the students an opportunity to reflect and build upon their previous work, and see for themselves how their writing has grown since the beginning of the semester. They will hopefully see that writing is a never-ending process, in which the keys to writing well cannot be learned in one semester. The Portfolio will be graded on how well the students have used the components of creative nonfiction, how well they have woven their own experiences in with the text, and how well they communicate their learning with their instructor in their reflection paper.

Using creative nonfiction to help the students learn how to tell their story will guide them to find their voice and make them realize that their experiences are unique. Creative nonfiction also allows students to build self-awareness and reflect upon the small moments and details that make up their lives. It can also be a way of righting misunderstandings and sharing a point of view with the world (which the students will come to understand as they read the assignments and learn that the authors offer their side of the story with their readers). This curriculum is weighted heavier on having students expressing their thoughts and their opinions, rather than having students use others' arguments to make their claims. Yet, since this course also involves much reading, students must also read for comprehension to find out what choices the authors make to further their arguments and shape their story. If the students succeed in their reading efforts, meaning if they read both for comprehension and critically, they will have gained an understanding of how to write effective creative nonfiction.
CHAPTER TWO

Part II — Ethics and Pitfalls of Using Creative Nonfiction in a First-Year Class

In this proposed course, first-year students compose three essays and revise two essays using the first person point of view to support their purpose with personal experiences. The selected readings should intersect with the students' writing, so that the students begin and continue a dialogue from these texts so that they can construct a narrative essay using personal experience as evidence. In the case of the personal/textual model essay, these personal experiences are supplemented with support from three possible texts. Although I strive to provide this curriculum with enough structure and creative opportunities for the students to feel comfortable with the assignments, I recognize that many students may need additional help achieving the course's objectives. The students' concerns may range from not knowing how to weave their experiences in with the text, such as with the personal/textual model, to not knowing what they should reveal about themselves in their essays. They also may feel more comfortable with traditional essay structure (i.e. the five paragraph essay model) that they learned in high school and do not know how to experiment with form. They may also want the instructor to tell them what themes they need to write about, rather than come up with a topic on their own.

Problems with writing creative nonfiction arise because quite often essays and memoirs discuss real people who are still living and may not appreciate having their lives opened on the page. Another problem is that the authors deliver more fiction than nonfiction, after billing their work as creative nonfiction. James Fry of A Million Little Pieces (2003) and Anthony Godby Johnson of A Rock and A Hard Place (1994) come to mind. Both authors fictionalized their experiences so that they could sell more books. Mary Karr, who
wrote her memoir, *The Liar's Club* (1998), about her dysfunctional family comments, "My experience is there's no way you can manufacture events and find the truth. Great memoirs don't take bizarre experiences and make them more bizarre and outrageous. They take bizarre experiences and make them familiar" (Dotinga). Writers of creative nonfiction make a tacit pact with their readers that their story is a true one, and readers often feel lied to if they learn that the story they spent time reading is fiction. The author promises to tell his or her version of the truth using details, facts, and real experiences. This truth is, of course, filtered through the author and is subject to the author's worldview. When the reader reads an essay, he or she assumes that the work is true, while allowing for time and character compression and name changes, which allow more creativity for the writer. The following storytelling techniques help creative writers negotiate this creativity versus truth issue:

**Compressing time**

Sometimes compressing or collapsing time is necessary in order to keep the flow of the story and to ensure that the reader will not get lost in extra details. Changing the time of when events occurred is acceptable, as long as the truth of the story is not lost (Perl and Schwartz 171). For example, if a writer is describing her time in Seattle on a trip, she may want to combine details from her first and third day, for organizational purposes and to keep her reader involved in her story. However, if she made up what she did on her trip, then her essay would be fiction, not creative nonfiction.
Compressing characters and changing characters' names

Compressing and changing characters' names is on the verge of turning an essay into a fictionalized account, but many authors believe that changing a character's name or consolidating characters does not distract from the verisimilitude of their story (Perl and Schwartz 171). When some readers do find out that an author has changed a name or two to protect a family member or friend, they may feel that the author was justified for doing so, while others may feel that the author has changed the nature of the story. I feel that changing a character's name from Sally to Jane should not take away from the author's narrative intentions. Furthermore, many authors address the composite character issue up front by letting readers know either in the preface or in the acknowledgements that they have changed their characters' names. In memoirs, authors generally acknowledge when they have changed names either in the preface or in a footnote, so that their credibility with the reader is not shattered and that they look like they are not hiding anything from the reader.

Disclaimers

Using disclaimers and markers also adds to an author's credibility because the author is stating that she is not really sure something took place. For example, the author can write, "I imagine that my mother first felt scared when she came to America," or "I can't remember everything about that day, but here's what I do remember." In this case, the author chooses to acknowledge doubt and continue with her story. However, writers need to be careful to not show too much doubt before their reader, because the reader will not believe the writer as much. For example, if the student cannot remember if her family's car was a Mustang or a Charger, she should pick one of these models and keep this car's name consistent throughout
the piece. Students may want to write a brief disclaimer before or after their essay which explains to the reader what truths have been changed or modified.

I acknowledge that there are pitfalls with using creative nonfiction in a first-year composition class because while this genre gives a writer unlimited choices to share her story, it also requires the writer to make an implicit pact with the reader that the contents of her work are indeed nonfiction. Many composition instructors also feel that creative nonfiction does not belong in the first-year composition classroom because they believe that personal essay writing makes students more self-absorbed because it encourages confessional, and therefore simplistic writing. Other critics contend that the students' experiences are so subjective, it would be difficult to grade the essays. Still others like Gordon Harvey, in "Presence in the Essay" believe that these mostly young students do not have enough life experience to write about anything insightful (648). He also believes that these students are not old enough to fully learn from their experiences and to critically reflect about them. Harvey offers the personal/textual model as an alternative to the personal essay, yet he does so with reservations. A more supportive view of the personal/textual model is provided by Lynn Z. Bloom and Wendy Bishop who discuss how students are certainly able to write about their own experiences, and use these experiences as evidence, if they are given the right tools to do so. This is where my curriculum's creative nonfiction guidelines and readings, along with the freewriting exercises, would serve as the structure for these students. Through using the guidelines of creative nonfiction (voice, dialogue, description, figurative language), the instructor will find a balance between providing the students with too much structure or not enough. Writing True, the text for this class, is also a valuable resource, since it discusses ways into a draft and gives a thorough background and terminology for creative
nonfiction students. Another benefit of using the creative nonfiction genre is that students will find that the ways into writing their first draft are accessible, since writing about what they know will build their writing fluency (Julier 7). Furthermore, when the students are encouraged to keep using their own experiences, they will eventually find their voice and not write in the voice of the teacher or of a famous author, such as Hemingway.

First-year students may often feel that essay writing equals writing confessions because they do not know how they can shape their essay without revealing everything about their lives. In my class, I will emphasize throughout the semester that students can reveal certain aspects of their personal life without revealing everything. For instance, students need to know that the "I" in the essay is their persona and with that persona, they can choose what they can leave out in the essay, as long as they project a balanced view. However, some students may feel that their writing justifies a confessional tone because they are the people they are today because of a traumatic or trying experience. As long as students support their purpose with experiences which do not go off the topic, then the telling of these experiences is justified. I will also underscore the fact that students will not be graded on content, or how traumatic their experiences were, but on how well they interpret that experience in relation to their purpose and on how well they use the conventions of creative nonfiction.

If the students feel self-conscious about revealing too much of themselves, they will lose their voice, and there is a greater chance that they will use a false writing voice. To overcome students' fear of sharing their experiences in writing, the instructor can encourage trust in the classroom by first sharing some of her own writing with the class (Bloom 8). Once the instructor shares, then the class is more likely to share, too. If the students feel that
revealing their personal stories might make them feel victimized again, then perhaps the instructor can encourage the students to journal through these emotional episodes, until an objective view is found. If the student finishes journaling and cannot help but feel angry when she reads her work, then she needs to decide at this point whether to choose another topic after conferencing with the instructor.

Another likely obstacle for first-year students is their difficulty with writing in the first person, because they may have been discouraged to do so in high school. Some may also feel that their life has not been interesting and that they do not want to share any stories. Lastly, some students may not want to claim their evidence because they feel safer using the passive voice and may not want to examine their inner selves because doing so makes them feel vulnerable. I believe the best way for students overcome all three obstacles is to have them read published essays, so they feel more comfortable with the genre, encourage them to continue to freewrite in their journals, and have them complete the "Exercises to Generate First Drafts" from Chapter Two.

Creative nonfiction is not fiction and for this reason I believe it is unethical to construe a story for the sake of a better grade (which would not happen since content is not graded), or as a way to sell more books, if the writer is seeking publication. Creative nonfiction allows students to make decisions about their material since they need to decide what they need to leave in or take out. When they make critical choices and reflect and interpret a situation, they are using critical thinking, a skill which will be even more important in their upper level classes. Creative nonfiction advises writers to use OPV (opposite point of view) (as illustrated previously in Part I of this chapter) to give characters and situations a balanced view for the reader to evaluate and come to a conclusion on her
own. Students should realize that much of academic writing is one-sided because scholars need to present their point of view while attacking the weaker case. Creative nonfiction strives to bring balance and truth by weaving two viewpoints together to leave the reader thinking about the issue on multiple levels.

**Pitfalls of the personal/textual model**

The personal/textual model does encourage the student to engage with the text and also encourages critical thinking, yet if this model is not implemented well, students will lose a valuable writing and learning lesson. As Gordon Harvey discusses in "Presence in the Essay," many students do not know how to weave their own experiences with an outside text into a fluid piece. Harvey says that the results are many times are contrived and "Frankenstein-like" because, "the students devote their energy to finding whatever personal connections they can," and therefore do not reflect on why they chose these particular experiences to drive their essay forward (645). Kimberly Freeman supports Harvey's assessment when she states that one of personal/textual model's largest issues is making students force connections that do not make sense (5). Harvey gives several examples of how students compare an experience to a situation in the essay without demonstrating how these experiences really connect or are relevant to each other. He adds that when these "connections" are discussed, the student will most likely end their paper with all of the issues tied up, and without delving first into the subject's primary theme. He later states that this model could work if the instructor asks the students how they would disagree with the text or they could explore what experiences in the text resonate with their own.

Another problem critics see with the personal/model is that it "leads the witness" with writing that boxes the student in with questions that will make the writing sound forced and
the connections strained. Many of the reader-response composition models, as well as modes of learning models, give the students specific questions about the text to have the student pull from his relevant experiences. My curriculum, especially the personal/textual model essay, may sound similar to a reader-response format, yet my students' ideas for their essays should arise from their journal entries and from their readings, and not from specific questions that ask students to align themselves with a particular character or ask "What is the significance of X's actions as she dealt with Y". Reader response is not a Freirian or feminist technique, since the power structure falls back on the instructor, and away from the student. As a result, the students lose their voice and the responses become like literary analyses.

Harvey favors the words "presence" and "motive" to describe how much of the speaker is within the essay and how interested the writer is with his topic (650). According to Harvey, presence is broader than voice. I agree with him on this matter and would add that my curriculum's texts should engage the student, which should make the connections easier for him to see. I believe that if students know that they need to use their voice in their writing, they will try to take some risk with the truth in their words, so that their writing exhibits confidence and credibility. At the same time, they will assume these risks under the auspices of creative nonfiction, making their essays have a framework and a structure. They should also be discouraged from wrapping up their conclusion too neatly and know that essays can be open-ended to leave the reader pondering the subject matter long after she has finished the essay.

The one aspect I want students to learn during the course of the semester is that writing creative nonfiction requires honest intention. If students try their best to recount a
story that happened and use language that captures the details and emotions of that event, then their voice will ring true for the reader.
CHAPTER THREE

"As writing teachers, our job is to pass on the great human accomplishment of written language." — Peter Elbow

Creative nonfiction walks the line between academic writing and fiction writing, and it takes a skilled writer to present a balanced narrative supported by evidence. Despite its creative leanings, this genre shares several similarities with academic writing. In both creative nonfiction and academic writing, writers must present a claim and support this claim with evidence and quotations. Writers in both genres must also choose the most relevant facts, details, and descriptions in order for their work to become coherent. Reflection, interpretation and insight are values shared by both genres of writing to help the author and reader gain knowledge over the subject, although in creative nonfiction, the author is encouraged to show the scene through images and figurative language, rather than through straight description. Additionally, both creative nonfiction and academic writing demand critical thinking, although one of the objectives of good essay writing, which differs from academic writing, is to be skeptical of authority and to examine the superficial (Bloom 278). The essay's characteristics of questioning the system are also a tenet of feminist and critical theory.

On the other hand, the two genres are quite different. Creative nonfiction is often told in the first person using the author's experiences, while most academic writing is done in the third person. Subjectivity is valued over objectivity, especially when the author in creative nonfiction seeks to find her version of the truth in the narrative through her voice and experience. There are also more choices to make when writing creative nonfiction. For instance, students may choose to tell their story chronologically or they may want to weave
the past in with the present. Also, students may choose to make their essay a hybrid, meaning that part of their writing is narrative and other parts include poetry or song lyrics. This essay's objective allows the student to express herself and interpret her theme using different visual and textual forms.

In the first-year composition program, academic writing is usually favored over creative writing because of the belief that students need exposure to different kinds of academic writing forms, so they can write and think better when they move into their major core requirements. This first-year composition class is just a small fraction of a student's undergraduate course load, yet it is expected to do a lot of heavy lifting, especially when its goal is to introduce students to academic writing and show them how to write well for their respective fields. It is usually the only required course for all incoming freshman, thus it contains a great opportunity for colleges and universities to shape how students think about and perceive writing in all of their coursework. Since the advent of process-based composition strategies in the last twenty-five years, first-year composition programs have gravitated towards a student-centered classroom where students draft, revise, and collaborate and focus on invention strategies. The role of how much literature should be included in the first-year program has been a matter of debate, as well as how much cultural studies instruction (readings in particular) should be included. It all depends on how that particular university views the first-year composition program and how it fits into that school's general education requirements for its undergraduate curriculum. In a research university, the goal of the first-year program is most likely to prepare students to write in the disciplines (WID) in order to introduce them to research tools on campus and writing for a particular audience. Therefore, the program needs to have students focus on the rhetorical strategies of different
texts and genres. On the other hand, if the university places critical thinking and an emphasis on liberal studies as a goal, then that school may lean towards a more literature-based curriculum that allows students to write about and reflect upon these texts.

Although different universities have different goals, curriculum developers and English departments want their students to succeed in upper level coursework and to write effectively within the academic discourse community. They also want students to transfer the skills they build and learn in their first-year composition class to the rest of their courses. If the first-year composition course focuses on different styles of academic writing such as the scientific observation report and a critical analysis report, then those skills should help students in their chemistry, biology, and perhaps history classes. However, I believe that it would be difficult for average students to transfer these skills if they do not understand what they are reading or how a particular text is relevant to their lives. In fact, David Bartholomae in "Inventing the University," acknowledges that some students will have difficulty making the transition to college due to their lack of familiarity with academic discourse conventions (78). A creative nonfiction course with an emphasis on both reading and writing will help these students move forward into the academic discourse community. For instance, studying creative nonfiction will help students when they read scientific reports and must analyze what is left in or left out, since they will learn that creative nonfiction writers must make choices about what they should emphasize. Because they will have constructed their essays from early draft to revision, they will realize how a writer shapes her piece by using language, style and form to create her meaning and make a narrative come alive.

I agree with Gary Tate who doubts that students can successfully transfer the skills they learn in a first-year composition course that emphasizes different forms of academic
writing across the disciplines (319). One or two semesters may not be enough for these students to learn how to write for specific genre or how to quickly analyze a text to research specific information. Students may benefit from a course that teaches them to study writing from the ground up and also teaches them rhetorical strategies that they can transfer to other courses. Teaching students the elements of creative nonfiction will help develop critical thinking, and as these students continue to work on their essays, they will learn how that making effective rhetorical choices (how they use their constructed "I" persona and the specific form of their essay) is key for a reader to take away their meaning and care about the writer's message. Tate also emphasizes that teaching literature alongside writing spurs student interest and gets them writing about what matters to them. Like Tate, I believe that once these students get interested, and start writing and thinking, then they can build the scaffolding for other increasingly difficult writing projects. Perhaps these same students will enjoy reading essays in newspapers or magazines post-graduation, since they worked hard at creating them in a creative nonfiction class. They will understand what elements go into making an effective essay, and how that author has shaped her story so that her writing and her voice affect the reader — after all, they have constructed essays from scratch. They will also see that a hallmark of well-written creative nonfiction is the author's ability to give a balanced point of view, by leaving in the opposing viewpoint so that the reader can figure out the author's stance on a subject, without the author explicitly saying so. These students will have been exposed to how authors persuade their readers on the strength of their details, experiences, narrative, and how they capture dialogue and ultimately their voice, which gives them credibility and keeps the reader reading. The instructor of my curriculum should also emphasize that having a balanced perspective not only strengthens works of creative
nonfiction, but also academic writing where the author's credibility is at stake. Peter Elbow in "Reflections on Academic Discourse" calls this "the very act of acknowledging one's situatedness and personal stake" in the work, which lets the reader know that the stance the author takes could be one of many views (142). As previously discussed, the term in creative nonfiction is called OPV (opposing points of view).

Using creative nonfiction in a first-year class helps students translate difficult subject matter into a text that makes sense to them ("Monsters" 7). Through writing practice, invention techniques and through reading practice, students in my proposed curriculum should have the skills to make meaning out of a difficult text and write about that text using their own voice when these students arrive in their upper level classes. If the student understands how important using her own voice is for the piece, then she may have an easier time "translating" difficult material into her own words. Peter Elbow calls this form of translating "rendering" and says that it is more important for students to know how to do this, than if they just write down their conclusions and hand them into the teacher ("Reflections" 136). Elbow defines rendering as a student using descriptive language when writing down her experience. To me, this sounds as if the student can use the conventions of creative nonfiction, so that she can describe her experiences as completely as possible, and reflect upon these experiences according to her own point of view. Rendering also gives the students more opportunities to establish their voice and experiment, and turn this classroom into the Freirian "problem posing" classroom, as opposed to the "banking-centered" one. Elbow states that if the student has a strong foundation in rendering their subject, then they will have an easier time understanding the academic discourse and producing their work for their upper level classes. He states, "Often the best test of whether a student understands
something is if she can translate it out of the discourse of the textbook and the discipline into everyday, anecdotal terms" (137).

I also want to emphasize here that this course is designed for the average student in mind, and that if this student does the work in this class, then he or she will be prepared to tackle upper level English courses which may include WAC courses or WID courses that focus more on analyzing the conventions of other academic genres such as writing for biology, history and philosophy classes. I also see this course helpful for students who want to take a composition class that is more focused on reading and writing personal essays — perhaps this class could be targeted for liberal arts majors or it could be the second class in a first-year composition series, with the first one covering expository writing.

Because of the way I have tried to use cultural studies around the theme of race and family relationships, this course does not have readings across the curriculum that would accommodate different perspectives in the various disciplines. Since we want students to succeed in their upper level classes and be able to negotiate these texts, the instructor for this course would need to touch on how important it is for the students to know that different discourse communities rely on different conventions for communication, and just as they need to choose a form, rhetorical strategy and voice for their essays, writing in the academic disciplines requires choosing a voice, a style and a form to convey their information to that audience. The instructor can bridge this information by stating that as the students have studied the conventions of creative nonfiction and now must follow them to communicate within this genre, so must other writers who write for other disciplines, such as in technical writing or for the military.
The range of nonfiction readings in this curriculum could vary from instructor to instructor, depending upon the focus for the class. An instructor could select readings whose authors give students an international perspective on clashes between race and culture. For instance, this reading list could include Night by Elie Wiesel (1972) about a Holocaust survivor, King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa by Adam Hochschild (1998), and My Traitor's Heart: My Traitor's Heart: A South African Exile Returns to Face His Country, His Tribe, and His Conscience (2000) by Rian Malan, which addresses issues before the collapse of Apartheid. If the instructor wanted to focus more on experienced-based creative nonfiction narratives, then the curriculum could include Alice Walker's essay "Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self," "A Room of One's Own" by Virginia Woolf, "Shooting the Elephant" by George Orwell, Bootstraps: From an American Academic of Color (1993) by Victor Villanueva, or Borderlands/La Frontera (1987) by Gloria Anzaldúa. Instructors may also have students read classic texts from an African-American perspective such as Incidents in the Life of Slave Girl (1860) by Harriet Jacobs and Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave (1845). Whatever course readings are selected, the instructor should strive to achieve a balance between male and female voices, along with a diversity of backgrounds and experiences (i.e. rural vs. urban perspectives).

Kurt Spellmeyer elaborates on Elbow's argument in that essay writing helps students reach a common ground with the language they will use in their other courses as he critiques the view that essay writing is too specialized for the academy and that it does not prepare students when they enter their specialized programs (263). These scholars also feel that any creative writing belongs to fiction, drama, and poetry writing classes, and not to first-year
composition. He says that scholars who criticize the essay's use in the classroom have an issue with how the author of the essay situates herself into the work by supporting claims with personal experiences, which is where the essay's power comes from. He also agrees that the essay can be a good fit for the first-year classroom by citing Bakhtin who proposes that students will be more effective in their academic writing when they are able to construct thoughts in their own language (266). Spellmeyer emphasizes that the teaching of essay writing needs to be paired with literary texts, so that the students can use their own voice to interpret and reflect upon the text. Lynn Z. Bloom adds that as she writes, "Writing literature to learn literature obliges and enables the students to become invested in their own writing, and in the writing of their peers, in ways they would have never imagined before they tried it" ("Textual Terror"58). I agree that when students read a curriculum's texts in a creative nonfiction class before they write, they become better readers and writers and they will be able to see how a particular author's writing choices succeed. Studying other writers in the same genre should not lead to imitation, rather it should help beginning writers experience a range of voices and styles that may inspire them to try on a different voice for their various writing projects.

Along with helping students adjust to academic discourse and introducing them to critical thinking and writing process skills, this curriculum will also help students build upon their revision skills. Studying creative nonfiction will make students realize how important revision is to not only writing in their English classes, but in all aspects of any kind of writing they do for their college coursework and beyond. They will learn in this class that real world writers often tinker with their drafts hundreds of times before they submit a work for publication and that there are always new ways to look at an essay, even if it has seen its
fiftieth revision. These real world writers also depend upon writing groups and peers who share and critique their work to check to see if the author is using an appropriate voice for the piece, and to know if the work is right for its intended audience. Ultimately, my hope is that these students will take away from this class the realization that writing is an ongoing process and that a writer can always write more after completing a first draft.

One of the many benefits of studying and writing creative nonfiction is that the skills learned in this genre are transferable to writing in the real world. Although description and dialogue are not appropriate for a business report, for example, selecting the best word for the context, being specific and concrete, avoiding passive voice, editing for clarity and strength, and doing basic research are important for professional writing, as well as creative writing that is intended for publication. This genre extends from travel writing to profile pieces, personal reflection to genealogy, cultural criticism to new levels of experimentation. Its tradition ranges from the 16th century French essayist Montaigne, to E.B. White and George Orwell, to the New Journalism of the 1960s with Gay Talese and Tom Wolfe to the more recent works of Mary Karr and Jon Krakauer, with more entering writers the field to push this genre's limits. Lee Gutkind, the official "Godfather of Creative Nonfiction" recently writes in his journal, Creative Nonfiction, that podcasting or PodLit is the second wave of publishing, while the first wave were blogs, which give writers an immediate forum for telling their stories and sharing their voice. Gutkind says PodLits are "Awakening so many new voices and allowing us to discover [them], [since] so many readings and lectures are lost because people can’t record and distribute them efficiently." I feel it is important for the students taking this class to know what is going on in the creative nonfiction publication
industry, so that the work they are doing in this class is relevant to the world outside of the classroom.

Although many of my course elements have been done before in first-year composition classes, (writing personal essays, reading nonfiction essays, conducting an I-Search) I believe that by introducing texts that address race, class, and gender in America, I will make this writing class relevant for students who are coming of age in the 2000s. My cultural studies theme will give students the opportunity to reflect upon and question larger societal issues as they draw from their personal experiences. They may find that they identify with the authors (or not), who do originate from traditionally marginalized populations. Critical and feminist theories inform my program since this type of class encourages students to share their experiences and validates them as learning tools. With that said, without an instructor who validates these students' ideas and intentions, this class will not be as successful. Essayist Mary Elizabeth Pope stresses the importance of teacher skill in a creative nonfiction class since most students are guided by structure, and this class lies a little outside of a traditional class because expressive writing is emphasized and students' stories are shared with the group. She says, "[For this class], the teacher's role is central because students, who are by nature grade oriented, shape their comments to other students around the examples set by their teacher" (107).

Peter Elbow states, "The best test of a writing course is whether it makes students more likely to use writing in their lives" ("Reflections" 136), and for this class, which is a consciousness-raising class for students, this is a worthy goal. A barometer of this class's success would be if students keep writing after they have turned in their portfolios and if this class helps them negotiate the various academic discourses in their upper level classes.
Another goal would be that this first-year curriculum should prepare students to better negotiate their private and public lives so that they can communicate with their audience and critically read and write. The essay writing practice in this class will help students articulate complicated thoughts, and analyze complicated texts, while linking ideas and reflecting upon personal experience with issues that cannot be quickly resolved. In addition as the readings develop their knowledge, students will have an opportunity to reflect, question, and eventually write about how racial issues affect the world they live in. Furthermore, I want these first-year students to learn that their lives are made up of small, unique experiences. After leaving this class, these students will hopefully realize that each of these experiences has a potential story that needs to be written down if only they observe, listen, and trust the power of their voice.

I chose these particular texts from authors of various backgrounds so that students would be able to read these texts as examples and shape their essays around the issues of identity politics and race relations. I also chose these texts because they include both rural and urban settings (Blood Done Sign My Name vs. Black, White and Jewish) and they include a variety of perspectives on race in this country. Using their readings as springboards, students may use the provided prompts (Who am I?" or "Where do I come from?") to write about their identities, such as where they came from and where their family originated. Or these readings could help students form essays about their journey into adulthood. The selected readings are targeted for a diverse student body with a diverse background that may not be able to relate to the belletristic essays of E.B. White, who although was one of the best American essayists, represented the white middle class and expressed his ideas from this perspective. In contrast, by including authors of color and female authors in the curriculum,
students have an opportunity to see that the race and class issues expressed in their works are open-ended and realize that these issues are still active and unresolved in the U.S.

Furthermore, this course is ideal for today's multiethnic student population and is designed to meet twenty-first century students in their own territory.
WORKS CITED


———. "That Way be Monsters: Myths and Bugaboos About Teaching Personal Writing." Conference on College Composition and Communication. 13 March 2000. 3-8.


SYLLABUS

ENGL 114 — Finding Voice and Identity Through Creative Nonfiction

Course Policies — Fall 2006

Instructor: Alice Osborn
Office: G103 Tompkins Hall
Office Hours: M, W, F 10-1 pm
E-mail: avosborn@earthlink.net
Phone: 919-971-9414

Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3:15 pm

Course Goals and Objectives:

By the end of the semester, you will understand what creative nonfiction is and you will see how writers use the genre's conventions of voice and storytelling to express themselves. You will also gain competence with creative nonfiction's primary components: voice, point of view (POV), conflict, figurative language, and narrative arc.

With guidance from the in-class exercises, workshops and discussion board, you will compose three personal essays which use support from the text, as well as from relevant experiences from your lives. You will compose essays which converse with your audience through persuasion and argument, and you will be able to distinguish who your audience is and what is appropriate material for that particular audience. You will find an appropriate voice that fits each piece of writing and understand that the "I" in your writing is a constructed "I".

During the semester you will read several contemporary and classic creative nonfiction essays dealing with race in America, and you will consider what makes a personal essay effective by examining how these authors make their readers care about their subject. The texts will explore multiple perspectives on race and gender.

Lastly, in this process-based course, you will discover how important it is to keep a journal, revise your drafts, and to offer and listen to feedback from peers and your mentors.

The required readings

This is the primary text for the class. The text discusses the craft of creative nonfiction in detail and also offers a diverse anthology.
You should also reference *The Longman Writer's Companion*, (3rd Edition) by Chris M. Anson, Robert A. Schwegler, Marcia F. Muth for sentence-level questions and MLA citation guidelines.

Baldwin's unflinching reflection on race, Christianity, and Black Muslims.

Walker describes her coming of age as a mixed-race child of an African-American mother and a white Jewish father.

This memoir is told from two points of view: McBride, a mixed-race child, and his white Jewish mother, Ruth McBride.

*Blood Done Sign My Name* (2004) by Timothy B. Tyson
Tyson discusses how his father handled racism in North Carolina in the late 1960s and early 1970s and how the history of the south with racism at its crux formed his worldview. (We will omit Chapters Three "Too Close Not To Touch" and Eight Our "Other South")

*Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) by Gloria Anzaldúa (Excerpt)
Chapter One (The Homeland)
Chapter Five (How to Tame a Wild Tongue)
Chapter Seven (*La conciencia de la mestiza*)
Anzaldúa discusses the mestiza and Chicano culture and the struggle of women and identity in her culture—she grew up on a ranch settlement in South Texas and was a seventh generation American.
Poems: Cultures (142)
We Call Them Greasers (156)
To Live in the Borderlands Means You (216)

**Handouts**

"How It Feels To Be Colored Me" (1928) by Zora Neale Hurston
Hurston probes how she feels as a black woman against white culture

"Shitty First Drafts" by Anne Lamott (1994)

"Write from the Inside Out" (2006) by Alice Osborn
Tips and techniques for writing creative nonfiction

**Suggested Readings**

"Independence Day, Manley Hot Springs, Alaska" by Lisa D. Chavez
"Notes of a Native Speaker" by Erik Liu
(Both essays are found in Writing True)

Mixed (2006) by Angela Nissel
Nissel, a producer on Scrubs, recounts how it was coming of age in the early 90s as a mixed child who has a black mother and white father

Course Requirements:

- Two essays, between 1200-1700 words (4-6 pages) These essays must be sent via e-mail.
- One multigenre essay (5 pages) with a 3-5 minute oral presentation.
- Two revisions of your first and second essays.
- Informal class writings, between 1-2 handwritten pages on the texts.
- You will work in four-person peer groups so that you will see in practice that knowledge comes from your peers as well as from your instructor. In these peer groups, you will comment on each other's drafts in-class and you will also be required to e-mail a critique summary for each person in your group (to be only seen by the critiqued writer and the instructor)
- Class participation to include class discussion, workshops, and preparation for class
- Final Portfolio to include all drafts (for Essay #1 or Essay #2), all workshop critique summaries, relevant discussion board postings, your photo, autobiography (2-3 pages), photo essay/collage, reflection paper (3 pages) that heavily quotes from your journal, and a revision of either Essay #1 or Essay #2.

Evaluation:

- Essay 1 (10%): personal/textual model. You will be evaluated on how well you integrate the text with your own experiences to make your argument and to persuade your audience.
- Essay 2 (10%): form essay. You are free to chose any essay form that we discussed in class including the chronological, segmented, epistolary, compare and contrast or multiple perspective forms
- Essay 3 (10%): multigenre essay plus 3-5 minute oral presentation. Feel free to use poetry, e-mail, photos, My Space/Facebook, blogs, music to achieve your essay presentation.
- Class participation (10%): This includes your workshop participation, discussion board postings, in-class writings on the readings, journal writings (I will ask to see your journal twice this semester during our two conferences), and class discussion. You must come prepared to class and this includes reading the assignments and writing in your journal.
- Two Revisions (15% each)
• Final Portfolio (20%): Please remember to save all of your drafts for Essay #1 or Essay #2 because they must be included in your final portfolio, attached to Essay #1 or Essay #2.
• Final Exam (10%): Will be on the readings and the components of creative nonfiction and will include an open-ended reflection question.

Papers/Drafts:

This is a process-oriented writing class that integrates both reading and writing. In order to write well, you should read material that is in your genre. In this case, we are reading creative nonfiction that is slanted towards race and what it means to be white or a person of color in the U.S. In your work this semester, you should strive to reflect on race in your work, but I will not grade on how much you deal with race, but rather on how well you use the conventions of creative nonfiction and if you have a strong voice in your writing. The theme of race can also springboard into a discussion about your family, since many of our readings are also about how the writer negotiates race and family.

You will be evaluated on how you well you support and develop your theme through your examples and through using the conventions of creative nonfiction. I will also give you a guideline handout for each of the essays.

All essays must be typed and if you turn in a late paper, I will deduct 5 points from that essay's grade.

Attendance:
In this writing class, regular attendance is necessary for success. I will allow no more than four absences from class. After four absences, you will drop a letter grade.

Copies:
On the days that you workshop with your group, you will need to make enough copies of your essay, and you will also need to make a copy for me.

Journal:
Please purchase a writer's journal from your local bookstore or drugstore. It can be lined or unlined. This is the place where you will record observations, take notes from the readings, and also record your feelings, frustrations, and musings about this class. Remember that the quality of your Final Portfolio reflection essay will depend on how much time you spend in your journal. Not only that, if you do journal regularly, you will see yourself grow as a writer in this course.

Class discussion and decorum:
In this class, we will explore many emotional and political issues that should inspire dynamic discussion. Please be courteous to your fellow classmates, do not interrupt, and please try to limit your discussion to three turns during the same topic of discussion.
Students with disabilities:
Please call DSS if you are a student with disabilities.
Their web site is http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss

Academic Integrity:
Plagiarism is against the rules. Don't do it! Please acknowledge your sources using the MLA citation guidelines.

ENG 114 Tentative Syllabus
***Please pay attention to what you should be writing in your Journal per class day***

Th 8/24
• Introductions
• Defining Creative Nonfiction and voice and experience: Everyone write on an index card what they think creative nonfiction is
• Discuss "Race in America": Cultural Studies theme
• Discuss workshop etiquette and class discussion decorum. Handout of "Questions to Consider When Workshopping (Both Active Listening and Critiquing Round)
• How to use your Journal in this class: Handout of "Journal Questions"
• Ideas on how to generate first drafts. Journal: generate a few ideas for your essays

T 8/29
• Read The Fire Next Time (entire) Journal: How did Baldwin's writing affect your concept of race relations between whites and blacks?
  Note: Reading The Fire Next Time will help you understand the historical background of racism for our subsequent readings this semester)
• Read Chapters 1 and 2 in WT — Reflect on these chapters in your Journal
• In-Class exercise on reading and answering this question, "Why is voice so important?"
• Collaborative exercise on voice.
• Discussion on concrete vs. abstract language

Th 8/31
• Assign workshop groups
• "How It Feels To Be Colored Me" by Zora Neale Hurston (Handout)
  • For Your Journal: Reflect on these two Hurston lines: "I am not tragically colored" and "At certain times I have no race, I am me."
• Read Chapter 3 and Chapter 6 (Workshopping) WT Come to class with 5 ideas for a draft for Essay #1 Get to these ideas through your Journal
• Discussion of figurative language, setting the scene, sensory images, and what you should show and tell
• In-class image exercise
• Begin reading Color of Water by James McBride (1-158) for Tuesday
• Pass out Essay #1 Guidelines

T 9/5  Workshop Day
• Writing prompts to generate a first draft for any of the essays
• Come prepared with a few ideas of what you want to explore
• Read "Shitty First Drafts" by Anne Lamott (Handout)

Th 9/7
• Finish Color of Water
• Reflect on Color of Water in your Journal using questions I'll e-mail
Here's a few to start:
  • Reflect on the dual point of view of this memoir (i.e. James and Ruth) How well did you follow this structure as a reader?
  • Reflect on the racism directed at Ruth in Suffolk, VA – is this what you expected?
  • Reflect on Ruth's comment: "I stayed on the black side, because that was the only place I could stay" (232).
  • How similar/dissimilar is your family to James's retelling of his family structure?
• Discussion of personal/textual model with examples
• Read Chapter 5 (Voice) Reflect on this chapter in your Journal
• Discussion of dialogue and how to make it "pop" and brief in-class exercise with skit

T 9/12  Workshop Day
• Discuss more personal/textual examples
• In-class workshopping and brainstorming of Essay #1 using handout questions
• Point of View (POV) and Opposing Point of View (OPV)

Th 9/14 Essay #1 Due and Workshop Day
• Break out in four-person groups to critique Essay #1 using handout questions
• Remember to post your summary critiques on the discussion board

T 9/19
• Read Chapter 4 (A Repertoire of Forms) WT
• Reflect on this chapter in your Journal
• Class discussion of creative nonfiction essays of the many different forms creative nonfiction pieces can take
• Read Blood Done Sign My Name by Timothy Tyson  (Ch. 1-6) for Tuesday
• Reflect on Blood Done Sign My Name in your Journal using questions I'll e-mail
Here's a few to start:
  • What experience does Tyson possess which makes him a credible writer/witness to these events in 1970 Oxford (i.e. Tyson's "little postage stamp of soil" [117])
  • In Chapter 3, Tyson discusses Dr. King's "nonviolent" stance that included armed self-defense. Reflect on this contradiction.
• What does white paternalism as a racial concept mean to you?
• Most of these events happened thirty-six years ago — what were you able to relate to in Tyson's narrative?
• Family and religion play a leading role in this book; what is their role in your family?
• Pass out Essay #2 Guidelines

Th 9/21
• Read Blood Done Sign My Name (Ch. 7-Epilogue)
  • Why does Tyson emphasize that we can't believe everything that comes down to us in the history books. Apply this discussion to racism.
• Class discussion and in-class exercise on Blood Done Sign My Name
• Set up individual conferences during my office hours
• Start generating ideas for your Essay #2 (Form essay)

T 9/26
• Timothy Tyson is our guest speaker. Please bring 1-2 questions to ask (For example, you could ask him about his experiences and how his experiences formed his writing)
• After class, reflect on Tyson in your Journal
• Read Chapter 9 (The Role of Research) WT

Th 9/28 Essay #2 Due and Workshop Day
• Break out in four-person groups to critique Essay #2 using handout questions
• Remember to post your summary critiques on the discussion board

T 10/3
• Start reading Black, White and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self by Rebecca Walker (1-209)
• Reflect on Walker's book in your Journal
  • Discuss Walker's descriptions of her surroundings and the people she interacts with. Do you see a theme?
  • Discuss the class issues Walker brings up in the "Larchmont" chapter. What role does class and race play in Walker's world and as she negotiates living in her father's and then her mother's respective cities.
• Read Chapter 8 in WT (to help you with your multigenre essay)

Th 10/5
• Finish Black, White and Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self
• Class discussion and in-class assignment: Compare and contrast Walker's and McBride's books
• Journal questions:
  • What is Whiteness in America? What is Blackness?
Walker discusses her friend Jesse as a human "bridge." Reflect on this quotation: "How like me he [Jesse] is torn, ripped apart by belonging to two worlds and none at the same time."

Walker is a child of divorce trying to find where she fits; what if any part of her story could you relate to?

Use what you generate in your journal for your next essay (if it fits)

T 10/10 Entire Class Workshop
- Read Chapter 7 (Craft of Revision) WT
- Revision discussion in-class.
- Please revise one paragraph from one of your essays. Make enough copies for the class and place first version alongside the revised version.

Th 10/12 FALL BREAK

T 10/17
- Borderlands/La Frontera by Gloria Anzaldúa (Ch. 1, 5, and 7) and reflect in your Journal how Anzaldúa creates a multigenre work and how Anzaldúa seamlessly uses Spanish, Tex-Mex, and the Indian language of Nahuatl.
  - Reflect on Anzaldúa's concept of mestizaje (a hybrid form of identities) and compare/contrast with Walker's "bridge concept."
  - Anzaldúa and Tyson look back at history to form their arguments about racial conflicts; as you prepare for you multi-genre essay, how can you incorporate history so that it fits seamlessly into your narrative (hint: look at Anzaldúa's poems)
- In Class Exercise: Set up a scene and see how many different nouns from other languages you can use.
- Pass out Essay #3 Guidelines

Th 10/19
- Read these poems in Borderlands/La Frontera
  - Cultures (142)
  - We Call Them Greasers (156)
  - To Live in the Borderlands Means You (216)
- Putting it all together: Class discussion on everything we've learned so far. Revision questions and revision discussion: building conflict, your narrative arc, and the character's backstory
- Remember, you can use more textual examples in this revision because we have read more since the first draft of Essay #1 was due. Also, reconsider your purpose, audience and argument.
T 10/24  Revision Essay #1 (Personal/Textual Model) Due (no workshop)
• In-class exercise: Brainstorm for your multigenre essay. How will you put it together?
• We'll share the in-class writing in class
• Presentation questions. Remember to keep Journaling!
• Sign up everyone for multigenre presentations starting Th 10/26

Th 10/26
• Read Ch. 10 (Ethics of Creative Nonfiction) WT
• Discussion on ethics. Reflect on what you've left out or included in your Journals

T 10/31  Multigenre Essay Due
• Presentations

Th 11/2
• Discussion of Final Portfolio and what is required
• Pass back Revision Essay #1 and discuss opportunities for next Revision assignment
• Private vs. public writing and how to envision your audience

T 11/7  Entire Class Workshop
• Please revise one paragraph from Essay #2. Make enough copies for the class and place first version alongside the revised version, so we can see both versions side-by-side
• Cutting up the drafts exercise

Th 11/9  Revision Essay #2 (Form Essay) Due and Workshop Day
• Break out in four-person groups to critique Essay #2 Revision using handout questions
• Remember to post your summary critiques on the discussion board

T 11/14
• For Journal: What do you want to research in the near future?
• Discussion on subjective vs. objective writing: Finding the balance

Th 11/16  Workshop Day and Autobiography Draft Due
• Workshop autobiography draft for Final Portfolio
• Remember to post your summary critiques on the discussion board

T 11/21
• Sign up for conferences
• Discussion on voice, setting, dialogue, POV and OPV from Revision #2 Essays
• Journal: What have you learned about yourself in this class?
• Journal: What have you learned about race? About our nation's collective memory and history on this subject?
Th 11/23  Happy Thanksgiving!

T 11/28
  • Answer any portfolio questions
  • Review of creative nonfiction and in-class reading of a handout: TBA
  • Review of what is required for reflection paper and how to integrate your Journal entries

Th 11/30 Final Portfolio Due and NO CLASS

T 12/5
  • In class writing: Reflecting on the class and on race in America
  • Discussion of the creative nonfiction publication world

Th 12/7  Last day of class
  • In class writing: Compare first-day responses to today
  • Evaluations

T 12/12  Final Exam
Essay 1: Personal/Textual Essay (10%)

Draft Due: Thursday, Sept. 14
Final Revision Due: Tuesday, October 24
Sources: The Fire Next Time by James Baldwin
"How It Feels To Be Colored Me" by Zora Neale Hurston
The Color of Water by James McBride

Please incorporate two out of three sources for your paper

Documentation Style: Use MLA Documentation Style (Longman Writer's Companion 201-226) for your in-text citations and your Works Cited page

Audience: You are writing for an audience of your peers and you may assume that your audience is familiar with your sources

Purpose:

- To read the texts analytically, looking for places of complexity that would work well for an essay
- Articulate a thesis statement that you can support with your own experiences and with examples from the texts themselves
- Practice writing while supporting your arguments and incorporating the conventions of creative nonfiction (voice, sensory images, concrete language) when you are describing your personal experiences
Reflect on and interpret your experiences, as well as the textual examples

**Method:**

- We'll work in class on drafting this assignment and generating ideas for your thesis statement
- Please refer the journal questions as noted in the syllabus to generate a thesis statement

**Organization:**

**Introduction:**
- Introduce the purpose of your paper (this is also called your thesis statement) and what you are claiming through your own experiences and examples in the texts. Briefly introduce the texts themselves. Please use first-person as much as possible.

**Body:**
- Weave in your experiences with the texts. Try not to force a comparison where none exists – Instead, you may state, "I cannot relate to this text." Please refer to examples I will have passed out in class on effectively weaving in your experiences with the text to support your argument/claim.

**Conclusion:**
- This is the place for reflection and to take the discussion further. What questions did these texts leave you with? What do you want to find out more about? Could you relate to the texts? What about them is relevant to you?

**Evaluation:**
I will be looking to see if you cited the texts, if the examples and personal experiences you selected supported your thesis statement, if you fully developed your ideas, if you stayed organized, and if you used concrete and sensory language, as we discussed in class. Please present me with an essay that is well written both grammatically and stylistically.
Essay 2: Choose Your Own Form Essay (10%)

Draft Due: Thursday, Sept. 28
Final Revision Due: Tuesday, Nov. 19th
Sources: Blood Done Sign My Name by Timothy Tyson
The Fire Next Time by James Baldwin
Documentation Style: Use MLA Documentation Style (Longman Writer's Companion 201-226)

Audience: You are writing for an audience of your peers and you may assume that your audience is familiar with your sources

Purpose:
- To read the texts analytically, noting how the authors construct their arguments and their stories. Try to use some of the racial issues they discuss as a springboard for your own essay.
- Create a story for your essay that has a beginning, middle and end. Use metonymy to create a theme from a relevant object which represents class, race or gender
- Practice writing while incorporating the conventions of creative nonfiction (voice, sensory images, concrete language, POV, OPV) when you are describing your personal experiences
- Experiment with form and invention and learn that a story does not have to be told linearly
- Reflect on and interpret your experiences
Method:

- Please refer to Chapter 4 (Taking Shape) in Writing True (Perl and Schwarz), which gives a thorough description and examples of forms.

Organization:

Here are a few examples of what form your essay may take:

- The segmented form moves from past to present using markers such as dates and places with white space to separate the segments. It is a popular format because the writer can group events and show relationships through segments. These segments must move the story forward and must have some connection to the overall theme of the piece. "Independence Day, Manley Hot Springs, Alaska" in Writing True is an example of a segmented essay which using different time frames and weaves between the past and present, while developing its discrimination and coming of age theme.
- The epistolary format using letters or e-mails to tell the story.
- The multiple perspective format shares the point of view among several people who experience the same event.
- The framed essay can start in either the past or present, but it must weave back and forth, so that the reader can see how the past has shaped the author's life.
- A compare/contrast essay (see below with The Fire Next Time and Blood Done Sign My Name) can either weave two views together or it can use a block-by-block structure, where one issue is developed, followed by the competing issue. At the end of the essay, the author would sum up the two views.

Evaluation:

I will be looking to see if you applied the theme of your essay to the rest of the essay through examples and descriptions and if you attempted to incorporate the conventions of creative nonfiction. Please present me with an essay that is well written both grammatically and stylistically.
Essay 3: Multigenre Essay (10%)

Essay/Project Due: Tues, October 31st
Oral Presentations: Tues, October 31st and Thurs, November 2nd (if needed)
Sources: Black, White and Jewish by Rebecca Walker
         Borderlands by Gloria Anzaldúa

Documentation Style: Use MLA Documentation Style (Longman Writer's Companion 201-226) for your in-text citations

Audience: You are writing/presenting for an audience of your peers and if you use other sources in your multigenre project, you must give your readers some background information

Visual Aid: When you present your essay to the class, use a visual aid (which can also be your project).

Purpose:

• To read the texts analytically, noting how the authors construct their arguments and their stories. Use the issues of race, class and gender they discuss as a springboard for your own multigenre essay
• Create a unifying theme for your essay — incorporate a preface or introduction that grounds your viewer/reader, like text display in a museum that explains what the exhibit is all about
• Choose the best way to present your essay, making sure you support your theme throughout
Method:

- Please refer to Chapter 8 (A Lighter Touch) in Writing True (Perl and Schwarz), which gives a thorough description of the multigenre form.

Organization:

This is your chance to be as original and creative as possible. Please lend your voice to this assignment. Feel free to use newspaper clippings, website articles, blogs, photos, poems, and songs in your essay. Other found objects can be used as well: menus, matchbooks, programs, playbooks, and ticket stubs. Use a three-sided poster board for your presentation.

Evaluation:

I will be looking to see if you applied the theme of your essay to the rest of the essay through examples and descriptions and if you attempted to incorporate the conventions of creative nonfiction. Please present me with an essay that is well written both grammatically and stylistically. Please present me with an essay that shows your creative side and shows me your interpretation of race, class and gender issues in the U.S.