English 105-6, sec 20 READING AND WRITING STORIES FROM THE MARGIN

Course Description and Requirements

MWF 9:00 Fall 2012

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and by appt. (best way to reach me!)

Course purpose

To answer questions like the following about marginalization in our society while making everyone a better thinker and more effective writer:

- Who is on the margin in our society, and how and why do they (or others) write about their experiences?
- What makes these stories compelling? important?
- What do we learn when we read or hear "stories from the margin" or when we write about our own "marginal" experiences and ideas?
- How can we evaluate "stories from the margin"? What is the relationship—or borderline-- between "stories" and "truth" (or fiction and non-fiction)?
- Does an understanding of marginalized experience carry with it a responsibility to live or act any differently? If so, in what ways?

Specific learning objectives--by the end of the course you should:

- Better understand how and why people write about issues that the majority of us know little about
- Be able to read and analyze stories and articles more skillfully and critically
- Be familiar with more ways of doing research than you were originally and know how to explore a variety of resources available through NU's library
- Better understand what is expected in college writing, how expectations differ in different fields and for different audiences, and what constitutes academic integrity (that is, how to avoid plagiarism)
- Be able to express your ideas with greater conciseness, accuracy, and persuasiveness

Key course segments

Background – goal-setting, definitions, examples, issues

Key deliverable: a personal essay (response to an initial reading)

Striving for depth_- what happens when we explore a "story from the margin" from many perspectives?

Key deliverable: an argument based on readings and research involving incarceration

Writing your researched "story from the margin"

Key deliverables: research paper on a topic of your choice

Evaluating credibility and evidence- Looking at the "truth value" of stories and the nature of

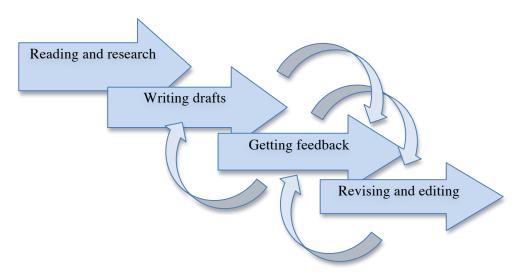
argumentation. We will discuss these topics in class while you are working on your research paper.

Looking back_-- Did you meet your goals? How did this course challenge your assumptions and change or deepen your thinking about "stories from the margin"?

Key deliverable: short final reflection

Course method

This course assumes that writing is a process and that writers improve their ability to communicate clearly and powerfully by using an iterative writing process:



Thus, our course will be largely discussion-based and will involve formal and informal writing and presentations. Some class sessions will be workshops: that is, class time will be devoted to planning papers, sharing research ideas, reading papers-in-progress, and sharing finished pieces. Conferences and online discussions are a key part of this course. I will meet with each of you individually at least three times during the quarter to talk about your papers and answer your questions. Additional conferences will be used for advising, especially to discuss your schedule for next quarter.

Attendance

All of this means that <u>you need to be in class</u> to contribute to discussions, lead selected discussions, experiment with new techniques for improving your writing, and read other students' drafts. <u>Attendance is required</u>; repeated absences (or tardiness) are likely to result in failure for the quarter. Participation in our course blog (or online discussion) is also required.

If you need to miss class sessions because of an authorized NU conflict (such as an athletic event or debate), you need to notify me in advance and to make up the work in conferences. If you miss class sessions because of illness, such as the flu, I will try to help you keep up with the work. No one at NU wants you to endanger yourself or others by coming to class when you're sick. However, you cannot get credit for a course if you're not able to participate and complete the assignments, even if you have a legitimate reason for your absences, such as illness.

Assignments

Daily assignments will be posted several weeks at a time. These sections of the syllabus include required blog entries and other homework assignments, plus a description of the major deliverables. Briefly, there will be four papers in the course:

Paper 1 (5-7 pgs): A personal essay responding to one of our assigned readings explaining how you feel about or understand "marginalization" or "telling stories from the margin."

Paper 2 (4-6 pgs): An argument based on some issue related to incarceration. Class discussion for this segment of the course will focus on the criminal justice system in the US and the challenges faced by US prisoners even after they are released. Various materials on this topic will be at your disposal: selections from books, videos, newspaper articles, and guest speakers (I hope). Your task will be to enlighten the rest of us on some "story from the margin" related to research and reading on a narrower topic within this broad area.

Paper 3 (7-10 pgs): A well-researched argument designed to promote greater understanding of some marginalized group and perhaps advocating for social change. Optional oral presentations, as time permits.

Paper 4 (2-4 pgs): A final reflection in which you briefly discuss your accomplishments in our seminar, decide whether or not you achieved your goals for the quarter, and explain the ways in which your thinking grew or changed as a result of the course reading and discussion.

Drafts and final copies must be submitted as hard copies or electronic files or both, as announced.

- For hard copies, use a conventional font, double-spacing, and one-inch margins. You may omit title pages but should follow MLA guidelines for all headings, font sizes, use of italics, etc. (see the Purdue OWL for details: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/).
- For e-copies, *include your last name in the file title as well as on the first page of the document.* Submit ecopies through email or SafeAssignment, as announced.

In blog entries you should focus on content rather than worrying about style or length. However, these entries will be evaluated and are public, so they should be written with some attention to paragraphing, clarity, and correctness. If you ever wish to keep your assigned blog entry private, you can get permission from me in advance for submitting it by email.

You are also expected to do your own, original work and to document all material you use (quotations, summaries, ideas, pictures, etc.) that is indebted to other sources. We will discuss Northwestern's policies on academic integrity in class so that you can avoid the documentation errors that constitute plagiarism and would require a referral to the dean's office. To help you master these standards, you will submit papers 2 and 3 through SafeAssignment (SA), a University-sponsored program that checks submitted papers against a large database of other papers and additional sources from the Internet. Using SA helps some writers learn how to quote and paraphrase others' material correctly.

Course materials

Two required <u>course packets</u> are available at Quartet Digital Printing (825 Clark St, corner of Clark & Benson):

- Packet of readings
- Karpf, Anne, *The War After: Living with the Holocaust* (a memoir from 1996 that is out of print)

<u>Textbooks</u> are available at Norris Bookstore. Note: The Pham and Satrapi books are also available in the Core library, which is non- or limited-circulating, so you can read them there if you don't want to buy them. Also, if you want to get used copies of our books, that's fine –even if the editions are a little older.

• Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., and Williams, Joseph, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed. 1995, rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

- Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing, 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.
- O'Brien, Tim. The Things They Carried. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990. Rpt. New York: Broadway Books, 1998
- Pham, Andrew, *Catfish and Mandala: A Two-Wheeled Voyage Through the Landscape and Memory of Vietnam,* New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1999.
- Satrapi, Marjane, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*, trans. vy L'Association, Paris, France; New York: Pantheon, 2003.

Three books at Norris are "recommended" rather than "required":

- Danticat, Edwidge, ed. the butterfly's way: Voices from the Haitian Dyaspora in the United States. Soho, 2001.
- Hacker, Diana, and Nancy Sommers, A Pocket Style Manual, 6th ed. Boston: Bedford Books, 2012.
- Spiegelman, Art, Maus I: A Survivor's Tale, 1973, rpt. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986.

I've ordered Danticat and Spiegelman in case you want to read them in their entirety (they are SO GOOD). *Maus* is also available in the Art Library. I've ordered the *Pocket Style Manual* by Hacker (6th ed.) because it's a slim, useful reference work covering grammar, usage, style, punctuation, and documentation. **You must have a grammar handbook for this course!** However, if you already have a good handbook, you don't need to buy Hacker. Or, if you want to buy an earlier edition of Hacker or a used handbook, that's fine. (If you're not sure what to do, check with me about the handbooks you're considering. I also have some old handbooks I'd be willing to give to you.) We will also be drawing on sections of *Never a City So Real* by Alex Kotlowitz, the One Book One Northwestern selection for this year that you should have received in the mail.

Grades

To pass this section of 105-6, you must submit all assignments and papers in sequence and receive a passing mark for every assignment (even ungraded drafts). Submitting a packet of late papers at the end of the quarter would defeat our major working principle: that a good paper develops in stages and that most good writing involves planning, feedback, and revision. Passing work is basically "C" work: a "C" signifies adequate writing, satisfactory completion of an assignment, or significant improvement over earlier drafts. An "A" signifies excellent work, and a "B" is excellent in some respects but stil needs improvement. For more details on grading see the Grading Standards Bb in Course Documents. Note that in Weinberg, only the dean's office can authorize "incomplete" quarter grades (instructors are consulted but cannot give "incompletes" on their own).

Deliverables	Approx. percentage of quarter grade
Papers 1 and 4	15% each
Paper 2	20%
Paper 3	25%
Blog posts and other homework	12.5%
Class participation: Attendance, class discussion, preparation for conferences, and timeliness/quality of peer reviews	12.5%

Note that late work will be graded down unless you have made alternate arrangements with me in advance.

There is no final exam in this course, but there will be a required final conference during Reading Week; you will be able to schedule your conference at a time that is convenient for you, but you should plan to be on campus for all or most of Reading Week.

English 105-6: Reading and Writing Stories from the Margin

Assignments through October 15, 2012

Course segment #1: Background and groundwork – definitions and examples

Deliverables: Blog entries, homework and personal essay (paper 1)

Key questions:

- Who is on the "margin" of society, and how and why do they write about their experiences?
- What makes their stories compelling? Important?
- What do we learn--about ourselves, others, or how and why people write--when we read or hear "stories from the margin" or when we write about our own "marginal" experiences and ideas?

Paper 1 (5-7 pgs): Think about what you consider the "mainstream" or "mainstreams" of American society or when and where you've considered yourself part of the mainstream or the margin. What have you learned from friends who are marginalized or from marginalized people you've "met" through books, television, social media, or movies? Which of the readings from our class have given you new insights or affected you the most? After considering these questions and focusing on one or two of the assigned readings from 9/28 – 10/5, write a personal essay explaining how you feel about or understand "marginalization" or "telling stories from the margin." Your essay must make a point, must include a summary of the primary reading to which you're responding, and must include evidence and reasoning to support your assertions. This evidence can stem from your close reading of the primary text (examples or quotations), from points made in other assigned or supplementary readings, and/or from personal experience. The point (or thesis) should be something meaningful to you. Since this is a personal essay, it is perfectly fine to talk about yourself using first person (see Graff & Birkenstein, p. 72).

<u>First draft due Oct. 10 by email</u> (one day before your scheduled conference); <u>final version (hard copy) due Oct. 15</u>. Note: I can adjust due dates for you if you have a conflict, but you must discuss your issue with me in advance and suggest an alternative for approval.

Date	Topic for discussion	Reading (due when class begins)	Homework (due when class begins)	
Week 1				
9/28 F	What makes someone be (feel?) marginalized? Is there a difference between "being marginalized" and "feeling marginalized"? Why do people write about being marginalized?	Danticat, Selections from Create Dangerously and from the butterfly's way (p. 21 ff): "Dyaspora" "Restavek," "Homelands," "Haiti, a Memory Journey," "Black Crows & Zombie Girl" (All these are in our coursepack.)	Homework for PLH: one important thing I should know about you (one paragraph) plus what do you want to accomplish in this course?	
Week 2				
10/1 M	Discussion continued: "What is marginalization" and who writes "stories from the margin" and why?	 Everyone should read the following: Cleage, selections from Deals with the Devil O'Brien, "Speaking of Courage" (p. 137) and 	Blog entry #1 (2 paragraphs): After listing the pieces you chose to read, explain how these readings are helping you understand "marginalization" (be specific; it's fine to focus on one or two points in	

"Notes" (p. 155). If you've never read O'Brien's book, also read the first story, "The Things They Carried."

• Orwell, "Shooting an Elephant"

Then choose at least four of the following from the coursepack to read:

- Danticat, "A Cage of Words" and "The Red Dress"
- Jeffs, excerpts from Lost Boy
- Jennings, "With Cancer, Let's Face It . . . "
- Lorde, ch. 3 from Zami
- Tammet, excerpt from *Born* on a Blue Day
- Walker, "Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self"
- Weldon, excerpt from *I*Closed My Eyes

One more current option: "A Boy to be Sacrificed" (from NYT; in Bb Documents)

detail to explain what new insight(s) you get from one or more of these readings). Also comment in some detail on one of the pieces that you admire for the way it's written.

(To create your blog, simply select "Class blogs" in the left-hand menu of our Bb Home page; then select "Create Blog" and you'll get a page where you can start typing.)

10/3 W Consider: (1) Why isn't the mainstream media enough for understanding marginalization? (2) What do Stone-Mediatore and Sauer think about the limitations of mainstream media and genres and the importance of stories?

- Stone-Mediatore, from *Reading Across Borders*, pp. 1-13, 17-23 (p. 274 in coursepack read to get main ideas)
- Sauer, "Sense and Sensibility in Technical Documentation"
- Advice about writing summaries: handout in Bb Documents plus Graff&Birkenstein (G&B), Introduction (pp. 1-14); ch2 (pp. 30-40) & ch3 (pp. 42-50)

Before class, meet (or e-meet) with partner to discuss Sauer and Stone-Mediatore readings. Your goal: to understand the key points. See list of partner pairs at the end of these daily assignments (p.3).

Homework: Write a 1-2 paragraph summary of either the Sauer or S-M reading. Bb handout has details.

10/5 F

- Roundtable discussion of your essay topics
- 2) Sign up for individual conferences

Blog entry: 1-2 paragraphs about your topic for paper 1 (what are you writing about? Why? How?)

Week 3

10/8 M Discussion: C&M

Catfish & Mandala (read at least first half).

Questions to consider:

 We've been saying that people write to understand, explain, argue/create change, etc. What is Andrew trying to do in this book? Paper 1: Draft due – post to Bb (see Assignments) at least 24 hrs before your conference; also email file to your peer review partner by Tuesday noon (same partner as for 10/3; for peer reviews, see guidelines in Bb Documents).

		• What makes a "story from the margin" engaging? Do you find this book engaging?	
10/10 W	NO CLASS SESSION: individual conferences Tues – Thurs (see sign up sheet from Oct 5); Kresge 2-210. Bring conference prep sheet (see Bb Documents) and peer review if you've received it.	 Continue reading C&M Read Ch 17 in <i>Craft of Research (Craft)</i>; analyze a few of your sentences using the revision techniques in that chapter. 	
10/12 F	Student-led debate: Did Andrew find what he was seeking? Is his analysis right about the "perfection of intention"?	Finish reading <i>C&M</i>	Blog entry: What is your favorite (or least favorite) part of C&M and why?
Week 4			
10/15 M	Reading period	Read Williams on "Correctness" (in coursepack)	PERSONAL ESSAY DUEhard copy due in class

Partner pairs for 10/3 and 10/8:

Fedor and Ashley Michael and Lauren Daniel Cho and Kathy Sara and Laila Daniel Liu and Taylor Faique and Chelsea Bo and Elizabeth and Lukas* *do a 3-way exchange

For assignments beyond 10/15, see second assignment sheet

English 105-6:

Reading and Writing Stories from the Margin

Assignments: Oct 17 through Nov 5, 2012

Course segment #2: Striving for depth - Reading about an issue from many perspectives and doing research

Deliverables: Blog entries, homework and paper 2

What happens to a "story from the margins" when we start to read about it in depth? Or when we read or pursue research to learn more about the issue that the story portrays? To answer this question, we will begin by considering the nature of research and how, just as different writers use different styles when writing for different purposes, they also take different approaches to research to suit their purposes. This focus will give us a chance to have reference librarian Bill McHugh introduce you to some of the fascinating print and online material available in Northwestern's vast library collections. We will also be able to consider some practical matters related to research like academic integrity and documentation.

While considering this aspect of writing stories from the margin, we will look as a group at "stories" related to the criminal justice system in the US and the challenges faced by US prisoners even after they are released. A wealth of materials related to prisons, prisoners, and re-entry will be at your disposal: books, videos, newspaper articles, and guest speakers from Grace House. Your second paper will draw on some of this material to enlighten the rest of us about a prison-related story or issue that you find particularly important or meaningful. Your task will be to explain that issue to us, along with why it interests you, and convince us of its significance or of the need for change. This segment of our course is not long enough for you to write a full-fledged "research paper," but you will be expected to supplement our course materials with at least one or two sources related to your topic that you discover on your own.

Date	Topic for discussion	Reading (due when class begins)	Homework (due when class begins)
Week 4,	continued		
10/17 W	When do writers need to do research and why? What is research anyway?	 From <i>The War After</i>, read pp. 3-94 and then if you don't have time to finish Part I, read pp. 165-192. What questions did Karpf want to answer? Did she choose appropriate research methods? <i>Craft of Research</i>, Part I 	Blog entry: 1-2 paragraphs responding to <i>The War After</i> – comment on style or content (something that interests you and why)
10/19 F	Did Kotlowitz do research for <i>Never a City So Real</i> . If so, how? Why? What questions has the reading we've done so far raised in your mind that could be answered by doing research?	Craft of Research, Part II The War After, finish parts I and II Kotlowitz, Never a City So Real	Homework (bring to class as hard copy): Write 3-4 questions related to the following topics or others related to our reading – things that these stories from the margin have made you curious about and that could become your focus for paper 3 (the research paper): • Any aspect of life in Haiti or for

Guest speaker on oral histories: Prof. Jeanne Herrick

- Haitian Americans
- Holocaust survivors
- Veterans or US involvement in a particular war, such as Vietnam
- US prisons & prisoners
- The FLDS or cults vs religions
- Autism or Asperger's Syndrome
- Homosexuality in Middle Eastern or African countries
- Another topic that interests you
 & that you might use for paper 3

Week 5

10/22 M

Focus: Who's writing about the U.S. prison population and why? How does the style of their pieces affect your response to their writing?

Selections from and about Alexander (CP pp. 2- 53), Golden (CP pp 157-166), and the NYT article "Inmate Count in US ..." (CP pp 329-331). G&B, Ch 11 Blog entry: Make a list of things you didn't know about U.S. prisons, prisoners, former prisoners, and/or re-entry issues before doing our reading and briefly explain what starting to learn.

10/24 W Guest speakers – Grace House

Reading: pieces by GH writers in coursepack, p. 350 ff; Johnson, pp 183-197 OR the Archibald interview, p. 54 ff (JA is on the board of Grace House)

Video (see Bb Docs – watch at least one): What We Leave Behind or Voices in Time

Blog entry: After browsing some of the other articles in the CP about prisons, or watching the longer videos (Kotlowitz's The Interrupters or Ensler's What I Want My Words to Do to You), write 1-2 paragraphs about a prison or re-entry issue you might want us to know more about and why. Your topic does not have to focus on something we discussed in class or a CP reading or Bb video. For example, you could write about a prison issue in your city or state. Include questions that are on your mind.

10/26 F Guest speaker: Reference librarian Bill McHugh
Note: class will meet in the University Library; location TBA

Review G&B Introduction (on "entering the conversation") In *Craft*, read Chs 3-5 (very important!)

Blog entries:

- Write 1-2 paragraphs responding to the GH speakers or their writing
- 2) After reading Ch 3 in *Craft*, write a few sentences about your possible focus for paper 2 and include any questions you have about that assignment.

Week 6

10/29 M

Academic integrity & documentation

Craft, Chs 12&13 plus pp 273 – 276; NU's policies on academic integrity (go to NuWrite, using link in left-

Draft due – paper 2; submit through Bb SafeAssignment and bring a hard copy to class. Include at least two parenthetical hand Bb menu, and search for "academic integrity")
G&B, Chs 4-7

citations and the beginning of your reference list. Email your draft to your peer reviewer (see list below for peer review partners).

10/31 W NO CLASS SESSION – released time for paper 2 conferences

G&B, review Ch 3 & read Chs 8-10 Review Ch 14 in *Craft* Return peer review to your partner.

11/2 F Discussion: How can we determine the "truth value" of personal narratives? Do memoirists have a responsibility to tell the truth?

Articles about *A Million Little Pieces* (CP, p. 19 ff)
Mendelsohn, "Stolen Suffering";
Stone-Mediatore excerpts (CP pp. 285-289)

Blog entry: Do memoirists have a responsibility to tell the truth?

Week 7 11/5 M

Paper 2 due through SA

Peer review partners for paper 2:

Lukas and Fedor Elizabeth and Ashley Bo and Michael Lauren and Daniel Cho Kathy and Sara Laila and Daniel Liu Taylor and Faique and Chelsea

English 105-6: Reading and Writing Stories from the Margin

Assignments: Nov 7 through Dec 12, 2012

Key course segments

- 3. Evaluating credibility and evidence, continued—What is the relationship—or borderline—between "stories" and "truth" (or fiction and non-fiction)?
- 4. Considering style and telling your "story from the margin"
- 5. Looking back -- did you meet your goals?

Major assignments

Paper 3 (7-10 pgs): A well-researched argument or analysis designed to promote greater understanding of some marginalized group and perhaps advocating for social change Paper 4 (2-4 pgs): A final reflection in which you briefly discuss your accomplishments in our seminar, whether you achieved your goals for the quarter, and the ways in which your thinking grew or changed as a result of the course reading and discussion – due by noon, Dec 10.

Date	Topic for discussion	Reading (due when class begins)	Homework (due when class begins)
Week 7 c	ontinued		
11/7 W	Discussion: what story from the margin are you investigating for paper 3? Why? (What questions are you trying to answer?) What is your approach? What have you been discovering from your research?		At this point, you will be focused on your research & writing for paper 3 while we continue to discuss other issues in class.
11/9 F	Fiction v non-fiction – where's the line? Do stories make good arguments?	O'Brien, "The Things They Carried," "On the Rainy River," "How to Tell a True War Story," "Ambush"	
Week 8			
11/12 M	Writing effective arguments Note: Paper 3 may or may not be an argument, but your final reflection (paper 4) will be an argument.	Craft, section III MLK, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (in CP)	Blog entry: Using criteria from <i>The Craft of Research</i> , along with your own ideas, evaluate King's argument.
11/14 W	What makes Persepolis effective? What do Satrapi's book and Lorde's chapters have in common in terms of	Read <i>Persepolis</i> and review Chs 3 and 10 from <i>Zami</i> by Lorde (see CP)	Research for paper 3

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11/16 F	Comparing Satrapi to Spiegelman. Note: graphic novels are a genre, not a style. Sign up for paper 3 conferences	Selections from <i>Maus I</i> and interviews with Satrapi (CP)	Blog entry: what's the most interesting thing you've learned from your research so far? Explain.
Week 9			
11/19 M	Documentation and style workshop	Review Craft, Ch 17	Bring rough drafts to class plus draft of bibliography
11/21 W	NO CLASS SESSION: released time for conferences on Tu and Wed	Craft, Ch 16; review the opening chapters of at least five of the essays we've read; consider two alternate opening for paper 3	Draft due: paper 3 - submit through SA the day before your conference and post on the Discussion Board in Bb so that your peer reviewer can easily find your draft. (See Announcements for peer reviewer pairs; see Documents for peer feedback guide.)
11/22-23	THANKSGIVING VACATION – no classes		
Week 10			
11/26 M	Optional oral reports		Peer reviews due – via email or hard copy in class

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	11/26 M	Optional oral reports		Peer reviews due – via email or hard copy in class
	11/28 W	Optional oral reports		
	11/30 W	Last class session (and party) – Discussion about individual responsibility (see blog assignment	Craft, ch 14.	Blog entry (1-3 paragraphs): Does an understanding of marginalized experience carry with it a responsibility to act any differently? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

Week 11 - Reading Week - optional individual conferences

12/5 W

Paper 3 due through SA (Note: If you need an extension for this paper, please request an extension in writing.)

Exam Week

12/10 M

- Final reflection due (Paper 4) through assignment link in Bb (see Assignments)
- Fill out CTECs