



## ENG 529: Workshop for Public School Teachers COURSE SYLLABUS: Fall 2013

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### COURSE INFORMATION

I think [that the need for a narrative] is absolutely primal. Children understand stories long before they understand trigonometry.  
--Oliver Sacks (neurologist)

A man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it.

--Jean-Paul Sartre (philosopher)

Finding a place in the world, for all it implicates the immediacy of home, mate, job, and friends, is ultimately an act of imagination. . . . It seems evident, then, that skill in narrative construction and narrative understanding is crucial to constructing our lives and a "place" for ourselves in the possible world we will encounter.

--Jerome Bruner (psychiatrist)

#### Required Texts:

Ayes, William. *To Teach: The Journey, in Comics*. Teachers College Press, 2010. Print.

Rose, Mike. *Why School? Reclaiming Education for All of Us*. The New Press, 2009. Print.

Fredrickson, James E., Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, and Michael W. Smith. *So, What's the Story?: Teaching Narrative to Understand Ourselves, Others, and the World*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2012. Print.

TEKS competencies for secondary English: <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/ch110c.html>

Additional required and recommended readings available at our Zotero Group Library. See Webliography for

#### Course Description from Graduate Catalog:

A practical workshop on various topics, including teaching literature, languages, and composition in elementary and secondary schools, evaluation of written assignments or developing writing projects, how media interacts with composition and literature.

*Graded on a satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U) basis*

#### Who Should Take This Course?

**You do not need to be a public school teacher to take this course.** The only requirement for this course is an interest in English education at the secondary level, which should include all of us—even those more immediately interested in teaching at the college level. After all, college-level students are profoundly

influenced by their K-12 experiences, just as many K-12 students will one day enter our college classrooms.

### Course Overview

Reading and writing take center stage in everything we do as English teachers at any level. In this course, we will approach reading and writing through narrative—insisting throughout on the important role stories play in how we understand ourselves and one another. Indeed, as Jerome Bruner insists, narrative itself plays such a fundamental role in the way we live our lives that “skill in narrative construction and narrative understanding is crucial to constructing our lives and a ‘place’ for ourselves in the possible world we will encounter” (*The Culture of Education*, Harvard UP). For these reasons, we will: (1) read and write education narratives, (2) reflect on these experiences as writers and readers, drawing forward implications for our work as teachers, and (3) draw direct connections to the “standards” for teaching English language arts. *Special attention will be paid to TEKS.*

Your textbook (*So, What’s the Story?*) is aligned with the Common Core Standards, which the authors helped create. Texas, however, is one of the country’s five states opting out of these Common Core Standards (see <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>). Since we are in Texas, I will ask you to draw meaningful links to the TEKS competencies for secondary English (see required texts above). You’ll notice many parallels between the Common Core and TEKS, of course, just as you would most any carefully articulated standards for reading and writing. That’s the point. If you can figure out how to approach “standards” like these in meaningful ways, you will be able to navigate the new standards that will inevitably emerge as education policies and your own teaching context changes.

### Objectives

- to encourage you to become familiar with activities within the discipline of English studies.
- to help you participate in those activities.
- to give you a wide array of theories to consider before and while teaching English.
- to challenge you either to question or to affirm what you think you already know about writing, about reading, and about teaching English.
- to help you become familiar with the competencies of TEKS.
- to guide you in examining, employing, and critiquing those competencies and elements in useful way

## COURSE PLAN

**Unit 1: Why Our Stories Matter (Education Narrative)**

**Unit 2: Why Education Matters (Profile)**

**Unit 3: Why Writing Matters**

**Unit 4: Education and Democracy**

## ASSIGNMENTS

**FORUMS (40%):** We will hold the bulk of our class discussions in the “Forums.” You will have ten of these throughout the term. Our goals for each Forum are to explore the assigned readings, lectures, and other, related elements in meaningful conversation with one another, just as you would in any graduate seminar meeting face-to-face. For that reason, I ask you to keep up with your assigned readings, and post in each assigned forum at least twice—once early in the conversation to get things started and again later in the discussion to keep it moving in meaningful directions.

**UNIT RESPONSE PAPERS (40%):** At the end of each of the four units, you will complete a response paper that addresses key issues raised in the assigned readings, videos, and other related “texts.” Because these Unit 1-4 Response Papers are more formal writing assignments than your contributions to the various Forums, I expect them

to be well thought-out, critical, carefully written, and reflect a deep understanding of the texts read and discussed throughout each unit. Your best preparation for each RP will be extensive participation in the Forums throughout each unit. In other words, each unit includes at least two Forums. Each Response Paper serves as the culminating activity for a given Unit before moving on to the next. Therefore, *your contributions to the Forums throughout each of the four units will provide much fodder for your response papers due at the end of each unit.*

**Reflective Memos:** With each Response Paper, you should include a brief (250-500 word) reflective memo in which you describe (1) some of your reasoning behind the choices you made in the RP, and (2) potential implications for public school teaching. Consider, as well, the strategies for composing narratives that Fredricksen, Wilhelm, and Smith outline in our textbook. Make good use of these in developing your RPs and consider what these strategies might have to offer your students.

### **Response Paper 1: Why Our Stories Matter (Education Narrative)**

The first response paper (RP1) asks you to demonstrate your understanding of the way narrative works to shape our understanding of the world and our place within it by offering **a story from your educational experiences at any level**. You may select experiences as either a student or a teacher; however, any perspective you choose should offer a clear demonstration of the way narrative helps us understand ourselves, others, and the world. In doing so, you should make extensive use of the narrative principles outlined in the first five chapters of our textbook (Fredricksen, Wilhelm, and Smith), as well as the ways in which Ayers *To Teach* and other examples throughout this unit demonstrate these concepts in action. In other words, you will be expected to (1) make extensive use of the critical texts assigned throughout this unit, and (2) develop an education narrative that serves as a meaningful response to the Unit 1 objective as outlined above. **(3-5 pages).**

*TIP: Don't forget to include your Reflective Memo (see above). For this first one, you might include information about your writing process, using "writing process report" questions on page 101 of our textbook. Please also consider including the information listed at "Reflective Memos" above. The main purpose of this Memo is to provide your readers with some relevant background information about your RP1 and potential implications to ensure a more meaningful reading experience on our end. Try to keep this between 250-500 words if at all possible.*

### **Response Paper 2: Why Education Matters (Profile)**

The second response paper builds upon the first, likewise demonstrating your understanding of the narrative principles outlined in our textbook. This time, however, we will focus on an education narrative drawn from the experiences of someone else rather than your own, personal experiences. To do so, you'll make extensive use of the guidance provided in Chapter 6 (Narrative Nonfiction as Literary Journalism), as well as the ways in which Rose's *Why School?* and other examples throughout this unit put these principles into action. **In other words**, you will be expected to (1) make extensive use of the critical texts assigned throughout this unit, and (2) develop a profile on some aspect of education that serves as a meaningful response to the Unit 2 objective as outlined above. **(3-5 pages).**

*TIP: Don't forget to include your Reflective Memo (see above). For this first one, include responses to the questions in the "Final Draft Composing" section of Chapter 6 (pages 98-99). Please also consider including the information listed at "Reflective Memos" above, but that's really up to you. Consider what we need to know as readers, and what we might also want to know in our role as teachers. As with the Reflective Memo included alongside your RP1, the main purpose of this Memo is to provide your readers with some relevant background information about your RP1 and potential implications to ensure a more meaningful reading experience on our end. Try to keep this between 250-500 words if at all possible.*

### **Response Paper 3: Why Writing Matters (Fiction, Multimodal, or Feature Story)**

For the first response paper, you created an education narrative based on your own experiences. For the second, you composed a student or a teacher profile based from someone else's experiences with education. In this one, I want you to select a genre (fiction, multimodal, feature story) that offers meaningful response to one or more of the educational issues raised in the readings included in Unit 3. Your textbook provides useful guidelines for imaginative stories (Chapter 6) and multimodal ones (Chapter 7), as well as nonfiction, journalistic pieces. Excerpts from Richard Miller's *Writing at the End of the World* offer yet another model

for us, as do our earlier selections (Rose's *Why School?* and Ayers's *To Teach*). Use these examples to develop a strong 3-5 page narrative that addresses an important educational issue in meaningful ways.

Themes you might consider are these (of course, this list is absolutely not exhaustive): What role can/do stories play in our lives? Why might stories matter? Why does writing matter? Why might writing instruction matter? What about reading? For that matter, what about teaching? Or education at all? As Rose asks, "Why School?"

**Response Paper 4: This We Believe (Education and Democracy)**

For this, you should make use of the best ideas and approaches that emerged in your development of RP1-RP3 to create a meaningful response to the following prompt, part of the national project called Writing Democracy that launched here on our campus in March 2011 (<http://writingdemocracy.wordpress.com/update/>).

In doing so, you should make extensive use of what you have learned throughout the course. However, there are no constraints here regarding approach, genre, length, or other elements. Take whatever approach seems most appropriate. It is entirely up to you, and I trust your judgment.

The complete prompt for this assignment is available at [http://ccr.syr.edu/current/studentorg/this\\_we\\_believe.html](http://ccr.syr.edu/current/studentorg/this_we_believe.html).

**FINAL REFLECTIVE STATEMENT (20%):** For this assignment, you will reflect on the work you have done for the course in terms of the major goals of the course (see "Course Objectives" above) with the overall goal of demonstrating what and how you have learned over the 15 weeks of the semester. Project should be 5-7 pages in length. Your reflections should make extensive use of the response papers, reflective memos, and Forums throughout the term, as well as our various course readings. This will be the place you most clearly link the TEKS competencies for secondary English (see <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/ch110c.html>) with reading and writing narrative as it plays out in our everyday lives. We will discuss this extensively throughout the course. Many more details available soon.

**EVALUATION**

You have the opportunity to earn up to 100 points this semester. Here are the values of each assignment, as well as the point ranges for semester grades:

Assignment Values	Semester Grade Point Ranges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Forums 40 pts. (10 @ 4 pts. each)</li><li>Response Papers, each with reflective memo 40 pts. (4 @ 10 pts. each)</li><li>Final Reflective Statement 20 pts.</li></ul>	60--100 pts. = S 0--59 pts. = U

**ATTENDANCE**

The word *attendance* requires some re-definition for an online course. In a traditional course, people establish their presence in a number of ways: all take a seat, some ask or answer questions, others complain about the climate. In this class you will establish your presence through your written comments to the class discussion board. In other words, if you don't contribute to the electronic discussion, we won't know you're alive and well. However, you should feel compelled to offer only substantive comments germane to the issue at hand; please do not offer comments solely to establish the fact that you've logged on. We are not bound by a particular time slot, but count on checking the website and your email several times a week to stay caught up. If you need to be away from the keyboard the day an assignment is due, you MUST call me at the phone number above or email me and make

*satisfactory* arrangements for turning in the assignment. Failure to make *satisfactory prior* arrangements will result in your forfeiting the opportunity to turn in that assignment. **Misunderstanding the directions for uploading an assignment is not a satisfactory reason for not submitting an assignment on time. It is your responsibility to make sure your assignments are uploaded properly and on time.**

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY STATEMENT**

Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3]). Plagiarism on one assignment in this course will most likely lead to a failing grade for the course.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services Texas A&M University-Commerce Gee Library Room 132 Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148 [StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)**

*All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct.*