This is a draft syllabus (4/26/2020) subject to modification by instructor

English 114, Section 1
Summer 2020
MWF 9:00am-11:15am

Instructor: Paul Franz
Office hours: by appt

LIFE-WRITING

This influence, by which I mean the consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, or repel us the other and make us different from that; has never been analyzed in any of those Lives which I so much enjoy reading, or very superficially. Yet it is by such invisible presences that the ‘subject of this memoir’ is tugged this way and that every day of his life; it is they that keep him in position … if we cannot analyse these invisible presences, we know very little of the subject of the memoir; and again how futile life-writing becomes. I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream.

– Virginia Woolf, “A Sketch of the Past”

Biographer and scholar Zachary Leader defines “Life writing” as “a range of writing about lives or parts of lives, or which provide materials out of which lives or parts of lives are composed.” In this category he includes “not only memoir, autobiography, biography, diaries, autobiographical fiction, and biographical fiction, but also letters, writs, wills, written anecdotes, deposition, court proceedings […], marginalia, nonce writings, lyric poems, scientific and historical writings, and digital forms[.]” In this course, we will remain mindful of the breadth of Leader’s definition, while concentrating on a few classics of life-writing from ancient times to the present day. In exploring different ways of narrating lives, we will reflect both on the factors that shape a self, and on how having a self is or came to seem important. In addition to producing close textual analyses and a research paper, course participants will have the chance to produce their own experiments in life-writing.

Required Texts
Augustine, Confessions, trans. F. J. Sheed
Frederick Douglass, The Portable Frederick Douglass
Rachel Cusk, A Life’s Work

Grading Distribution:
Essay 1 (3-4 pages) 15%
Essay 2 (4-5 pages) 25%
Essay 3 (8-10 pages) 30%
Presentation 15%
Participation 15%

Due Dates:
Essay 1, draft: Thursday, July 5
Essay 1, final: Monday, July 9
Essay 2, draft: Thursday, July 12
Essay 2, final: Monday, July 16

Essay 3, prospectus and bibliography: Friday, July 20
Essay 3, partial draft: Monday, July 23
Essay 3, full draft: Thursday, July 26
**Essay 3, final:** Wednesday, August 1
Oral presentations: Friday, August 3 (in class)

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES:**

1. **Attendance.** Attend all classes. The discussion and workshop elements that are at the center of this course cannot be made up, so attendance is vital. Please be on time.

2. **Preparation and Participation.** Come to class prepared to discuss the readings and participate in writing exercises and workshops. Make notes on what you read, even if only in the margins. In-class peer revision will provide you with valuable opportunities to give and receive feedback on writing assignments. Additionally, on the final class, students will deliver brief (5-7 minutes, depending on class size) presentations on their final papers.

3. **Writing.** Each 114 student will produce 15-19 pages of polished writing (not including drafts). This will take the form of three major papers. The sequence of papers teaches the most fundamental skills early in the semester and then refines and augments those skills in more complex essay assignments later in the term. The course will also require the submission of drafts of each paper for workshopping, by peers and with the instructor. Think of drafts as the best possible piece of writing you can do at the time. The stronger the draft, the more helpful will be the feedback you receive. Pay attention to the specific goals listed for each assignment.

The paper assignments are as follows:

**Essay 1: Close Analysis (3-4 pages)**
The foundational skill of literary analysis—and most other academic writing—is the ability to derive larger meanings from the smallest parts of a text (written, visual, a data set, &c.). The goal of this assignment is to have students engage a literary work at the level of its language: locating a meaningful problem, articulating a claim that takes a stance on that problem, and analyzing relevant textual details to defend that stance. Because their length accommodates re-reading and word-level scrutiny, poetry or short fiction often work best for the close analysis essay.

**Essay 2: Creative, Reflective, or Cultural Argument Essay (4-5 pages)**
This assignment allows students to “flip the script” of the analytical techniques employed in the first assignment, now by crafting a piece of life-writing of their own. In consultation with the instructor, students may devise a project that employs either the first or the third person to provide an account of a life or a part of a life. Some consideration of the specific subgenre of life-writing chosen, as well as the key themes, should be displayed.

**Essay 3: Researched Argument (8-10 pages)**
Researched arguments can take several forms. Students can write essays in which they place their readings of a text in conversation with the accounts of a few other scholars. Or you might choose to assign a “text in context” style essay in which students relate a text to the culture that produced it or to larger philosophies about one of its themes. Whichever approach you choose, you should construct a bibliography of secondary literature to put your own thoughts in conversation with the work of scholars in the field. Putting their own work in dialogue with outside sources enables
students to uncover new meaning(s) in a work of literature that could not have been discovered through close reading alone. In this way, the researched essay prepares students for the kind of high level thinking required by any academic field (e.g. interpreting a data set within an anthropological framework).

EXPECTATIONS:

Students are to come prepared to discuss weekly readings. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students wishing to inform themselves on Yale official policy in this regard should consult: http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism/what-plagiarism.

Essay Submission:
Please use the standard page setup: 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced, numbered pages. Papers should be submitted by email to me in MS Word format. All assignments are due at midnight on the day listed. Late papers will be penalized a third of a letter grade for each day late.

Academic Honesty:
Plagiarism is the uncredited use of someone else’s ideas or words. It is completely unacceptable in any and all written work for this and all other courses. I will treat cases of academic dishonesty in accordance with the policies of Yale College and will report cases to your college dean. Yale’s statement on academic honesty can be found at <http://www.yale.edu/yalecol/2010/academics/introduction/freedom.html>. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension or expulsion from the university. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask.

Respect:
We will often explore controversial issues that can lead to heated debate. It will be important to bear in mind that fruitful discussion can happen only in an atmosphere of respect and attention, and I expect you to hold high standards of both.

Email and Office Hours:
I check and respond to email once a day. I am also available for Zoom office hours by appointment. Please schedule appointments either via email or after class.

Help:
Yale’s Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning offers a range of assistance to student writers. I encourage all participants in English 114 to consult the office website for updates about online resources that may be available over the summer: https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/Undergraduates.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS:

Week 1
M, June 29       Course Introduction
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Essay #1 assigned

W, July 1  Virginia Woolf, “A Sketch from the Past”

Th, July 2  **Essay 1 (first draft) due**

F, July 3  Virginia Woolf, “A Sketch from the Past”
            Essay #1 workshop

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**Week 2**

**M, July 6**  **Essay 1 (final draft) due**
            Essay 2 assigned
            Augustine, *Confessions*, Books I-III

W, July 8  Augustine, *Confessions*, Books IV-VIII
            Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (selections)

Th, July 9  **Essay 2 (first draft) due**

F, July 10  Essay 2 workshop
            Augustine, *Confessions*, Book IX (+X-XIII optional)

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**Week 3**

**M, July 13**  Essay 3 assigned
            Tutorial on research methods
            Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*

**T, July 14**  **Essay 2 (final draft due)**

W, July 15  Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*
            “‘I was born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature,” by James Olney

F, July 17  Research proposal and bibliography due
            Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*
            Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (selections)

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**Week 4**

**M, July 20**  **Essay 3 (partial draft due)**
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Suetonius, “Life of Nero”


Th, July 23  **Essay 3 (complete draft) due**

F, July 24   Essay 3 workshop
             Bring peer reviews to class
             Laura Marcus, “psychoanalysis and life-writing”

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**Week 5**

M, July 27   Presentations assigned
             Rachel Cusk, *A Life’s Work*

T, July 28   **Essay 3 due**

W, July 29   Rachel Cusk, *A Life’s Work*

F, July 31   Oral Presentations