

Writing 100 (I): The Slave Narrative Tradition: From Frederick Douglass to Tupac Shakur
Spring 2008

Instructor: Eileen Brumitt
Course and Section: Writing 100(K)

Office: Zinzendorf 102
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 12:00-12:50 or by
appointment

Room: Zinzendorf 100
Class Time: Tues/Thurs 12:50-2:00

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Course Description:

Slave narratives from the nineteenth century give us a picture of how the institution of American slavery affected all of the individuals who lived under it. Slavery is still a part of our cultural memory, whether the picture we now imagine is accurate or not, and slavery lives on in many parts of the world. This course will explore the effects of slavery through the explanations given by the slaves themselves; through the contemporary depictions of slavery in literature and film; through looking at hip hop culture; and through examining cases of modern slavery. How do current views of slavery differ from those presented by the narratives? What does this say about our contemporary culture? How does slavery affect us still?

Writing 100 is a course that focuses on the improvement of your writing and critical thinking skills by studying a specific topic. You will be reading, thinking, discussing, and writing about the literary and cultural tradition that finds its origins in slave narratives and our national history of racism. Even though you will do quite a bit of reading, your writing is the main topic of the course.

Required Texts:

Frederick Douglass, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938.

American Memory site from Library of Congress.

Tupac Shakur, *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*

Unchained Memories

Tupac Resurrection

Various other articles and films.

Grading:

Participation: 15%

Short papers and in-class writing assignments: 60%

Final Research paper: 25%

Attendance Policy:

You may miss no more than four class meetings without a reduction in your grade or the possibility that you may have to drop the class. Absences are only excused with written documentation and are taken on a case by case basis.

Class Participation:

This course is about communicating ideas to others, so in-class participation is important. You will have many opportunities to speak and to be listened to. Some of these include collaborative presentations, writing groups, leading discussions, and plain old class discussion. Of course, our talks in class will only be successful if you do the assigned reading before arriving, so a lack of participation means a lack of familiarity with the material. In short, come to class prepared, discuss, exchange ideas, and get a good grade.

Drafts and Due Dates:

Since this is a collaborative and discussion based class, having assignments done on time is essential to success in this course. When a rough draft is due, you are meant to bring a full-length draft finished to the best of your ability so that we can discuss how to make it even better and more effective, not how to make it passable. Similarly, reading assignments should be done on time in order for the class to run smoothly.

Discussion Leaders:

At some point in this semester, you will be required to lead the class discussion independently. Leading discussion does not mean make a presentation of the material but to ask questions and bring up topics to get class discussion going.

Conferences and Writing Groups:

This course relies heavily on conferences and writing workshops. You will meet with me individually before handing in the final draft of your first paper and, if you like, before each subsequent paper. You will also get feedback from your classmates in your writing groups. Each group will practice together peer editing, feedback, and sharing written pieces throughout the semester. In time, you and your group will form a fully functioning writing improvement machine, if all goes well. We will also spend time in class talking about your papers and together we will workshop student papers so we can talk together about what works, what does not, what could be improved, etc. In these conferences and workshops, neither your classmates nor I will tell you how to write. Think of them, instead, as opportunities to recognize the strength and weakness of your writing through the feedback the rest of us provide.

The Writing Center:

The Moravian College Writing Center is a resource that everyone should use, regardless of writing skill level. Everyone needs a reader to see if his or her writing is effective in communicating the intended ideas. The Writing Center is located on the second floor of Zinzendorf Hall. They offer free writing tutoring, so use it!