

Writing 100 (J): The Slave Narrative Tradition: From Frederick Douglass to Tupac Shakur

Fall 2008

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

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

Room: Memorial 303
Class Time: Tues/Thurs 12:50-2:00

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Course Description:

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.

The topic will give the course shape and structure and, hopefully, spark interest for exciting discussion. 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? How is hip hop an important art form? What does it express?

Course Objectives:

The objective of this course is to improve the students' critical thinking and writing abilities. As a student in this course, you will be asked to examine a topic, complete research and discussion relating to the topic, and mostly to write about complex ideas. You will learn academic writing as a mode of communication different from other types of writing, and you will practice critical thinking and reading. You will also give feedback to other students on their writing and learn to revise your own work.

Required Texts:

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

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

Publisher: Modern Library (December 28, 2004) **ISBN-10:** 0345478231 **Editor:**
Kwame Anthony Appiah

Butler, Octavia, *Kindred*

Publisher: Beacon Press; 25th Anniversary edition (February 1, 2004) **ISBN-10:** 0807083690

Tupac Shakur, *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*

Publisher: MTV (November 1, 1999) **ISBN-10:** 0671028448

Bedford Handbook

Various other articles.

Websites:

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938.
American Memory site from Library of Congress.

Films:

Unchained Memories

Tupac Resurrection

Grading:

Participation: 15%

Microthemes: 10 %

In class assignments: 10 %

Group Presentation: 10

Essay #1: 15%

Essay #2: 15%

Final Research paper: 25%

Grading Percentages:

94-100% A

90-93.99% A-

87-89.99% B+

84-86.99% B

80-83.99% B-

77-79.99% C+

74-76.99% C

70-73.99% C-

67-69.99% D+

64-66.99% D

60-63.99% D-

0-59.99% F

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. Missing meetings or conferences with the instructor is also considered an absence.

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.

Cell Phone use and other class disruptions:

There will be no communication via cell phone during class time. Turn it off if it will be a distraction. Talking on the phone during class is obviously rude, but text messaging or checking websites during class is also distracting to class discussion. Any cell phone use will result in an absence for that day.

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.

Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very serious offence. The using of another's words or *or ideas* as one's own is disrespectful to your fellow students, the instructor, and the college community. Therefore, any academic dishonesty will result in the failure of the assignment or the course itself, along with disciplinary action from the administration.

How to turn assignments in:

Every assignment should be turned in neatly typed in 12pt Times New Roman font with normal margins. Assignments printed on multiple pages should be stapled together before you turn them in. Invest in a stapler! Every assignment should be turned in already stapled in all of your courses. If you are asked to turn in an assignment in electronic copy, please do this as well, either via email or on Blackboard, whichever is requested of you. But plan on bringing everything to class in hardcopy on the due date.

Handing in Assignments Late:

All assignments and papers must be turned in, in class, on the due date. There will be no exceptions. Late papers will lose one letter grade per 24 hours (A turns into a

B, etc.). I do not want to hear excuses. Start your assignments early, and there will be no surprises.

College Policy Regarding Learning Disabilities:

Students with documented disabilities who may need academic accommodations should discuss these needs with their professors during the first two weeks of class. Students with disabilities who wish to request accommodations should contact Academic Services.

Conferences and Peer Review:

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 during peer review sessions. Expect everything you write to be read by at least one of your peers or even aloud to all of your peers. 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!