

# ENG232: Writing as Exploration (Section 003)

Fall 2010 – 119A Berkey Hall – Tuesday/Thursday 12:40-2:30 pm

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Office: 107 Morrill Hall – Office Hours: Tuesday 3-5 pm (and by appointment)

## Course Description

Michigan State University officially describes ENG232 as the “[w]riting and study of non-fiction prose that reflects on experience, individual and social.”

In order to facilitate these goals, students will be asked to develop their ability to write creatively about themselves, to refine their skills as readers, and to reflect on the history of writing about oneself in Western culture. The ways in which people write about themselves has not been static throughout history; thus, in this course, we will explore how these methods have changed, why they have changed, and how form and technique may shape individual identity (both in the particular moment of writing and over time).

## Course Objectives

- 1) Develop as writers in the context of non-fiction’s rich lineage
- 2) Mature as readers through the close study of both text and context
- 3) Gain a better understanding of the historical development of personal (non-fiction) writing and of its place within American culture today
- 4) Experiment as writers and readers through the texts studied and created

## Required Texts

Each student in the course must purchase the following texts (in these particular editions):

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Confessions* (Oxford, 2008—ISBN: 978-0199540037)

Douglass, Frederick, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Oxford, 2009—ISBN: 978-0199539079)

Stein, Gertrude, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (Vintage, 1990—ISBN: 978-0679724636)

Steinbeck, John, *Travels with Charley* (Penguin, 2002—ISBN: 978-0142000700)

Barthes, Roland, *Roland Barthes* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977—ISBN: 978-0374521547)

Thompson, Craig, *Blankets* (Top Shelf, 2003—ISBN: 978-1891830433)

It is required that students purchase each text in the listed edition in order to better facilitate close reading (with necessary in-text notes) and open discussion during course sessions. All other texts for the course will be uploaded on ANGEL; students are required to print these readings and bring paper copies to class for discussion.

## **Grading**

Final grades will be calculated by the following distribution:

Writing Project One	20 %
Writing Project Two	20 %
Writing Project Three	20 %
Participation	10 %
Reading Reflections	10 %
Reading Examinations	10 %
Final Exam	10 %

## **Grading of Written Work**

Throughout the semester, assignments will be graded on Michigan State University's standard numerical 4-point scale. The requirements, expectations, and grading criteria for a particular assignment will be described in its own assignment sheet. At the end of the semester, these assignments will be weighted using the distribution noted above. Assignments may be summarized briefly as follows:

**Writing Project One:** text in which students turn experiences in their lives into narratives (4 pages)

**Writing Project Two:** text in which students create "autobiographies" of other people (4 pages)

**Writing Project Three:** text in which students analyze their lives as if written documents (4 pages)

**Reading Reflections:** brief written exercises that challenge, explore, and ask questions about a particular session's reading assignments (1 page each)

**Final Exam:** take-home exam in which students reflect on the development of personal writing—as reflected in our course readings and in their own work (3 pages)

## **Assignment Submission**

All assignments should be submitted in .doc format on ANGEL. If you do not have Microsoft Word, you can download Open Office ([www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org)), a free program that will provide the same functionality of Word. Please name your files with your last name followed by the name of the assignment (for instance, JonesWritingProjectOne.doc). Each assignment will be returned to you in a timely manner with comments and a grade. Assignments will be due by 5 pm on the due date.

## **Late Work**

Late work will not be accepted in ENG232. Exceptions may be allowed in cases of emergency (death in family, extreme illness, etc.); it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of potentially late assignments as soon as the possibility emerges in order to avoid penalty.

**Revision**

Revisions are not required, but students may arrange for the revision of the three major projects through an appointment with the instructor. However, a student must demonstrate a compelling reason that the original submission was not fully successful. If a revision represents a significant improvement over the original submission, a student's grade may improve. The revision process for a particular assignment must begin within one week of the return of graded copies of the original submissions.

**Reading Examinations**

Unannounced reading examinations will be given on a regular basis. These will consist of brief questions to verify and reinforce understanding of the readings.

**Grading of Participation**

Students are required to participate throughout the semester in course meetings of ENG232. Participation may take the form of thoughtful contributions to discussion and perceptive questions regarding the course material. Your participation will be assessed midway through the course and at the end of the semester on the 4-point scale; if you would like to know your participation grade at any other time, please do not hesitate to ask.

**Classroom Behavior**

Much of the success of the intellectual inquiry undertaken in this course will be based on mutually respectful exchanges throughout class sessions. Students are required to discuss the themes of the course with each other as intellectual equals, as well as to respect the personal stories of others that will undoubtedly be central to a course focusing on personal writing. As such, students should refrain from disrespectful and judgmental speech.

When discussing and writing about personal experiences, students should not describe illegal activity or actions violating Michigan State University's policies governing student behavior.

All students must arrive promptly, pay attention, and contribute to the intellectual goals of the course. All activities detrimental to this aim—arriving late, talking out of turn, sleeping, eating, using cell phones, using the Internet for purposes that are not class-related, etc.—may cause students to be asked to leave the particular session and may negatively affect their final course grades. Infractions of this policy will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

**Attendance**

Students are required to attend all course sessions. Because discussion will be a vital aspect of ENG232, students need to come to class in order to receive full benefits of the course. However, illnesses, scheduling conflicts, etc. can occur. For these cases, each student is allotted three no-questions-asked absences. Beyond

these three absences, .5 will be deducted from a student's final grade for each additional missed session. No discrimination will be made between excused and unexcused absences; instead, students should conserve and use their three allowed absences wisely.

If you are observing a religious holiday on the day of a course session, be sure to inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Absences in this case will not be counted against a student's three allowed absences.

### **Office Hours/Email Communication**

Office hours will be held 3-5 pm on Tuesday afternoons in 107 Morrill Hall. Please feel free to stop by any time with questions, concerns, or course-related topics for discussion. If you would like to meet at another time, please contact the instructor via email ([grancha@msu.edu](mailto:grancha@msu.edu)) in order to set up an appointment.

The instructor checks his email inbox every day at 10 pm. If you expect an answer on a particular day, you must email him before this time; failure to do so may result in a response not being received from the instructor until the following day.

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in ENG232. In a writing course, students may be especially susceptible to plagiarizing the work of others; this action, however, is unacceptable and will be handled according to the disciplinary guidelines of Michigan State University (cases of plagiarism may lead to failure of the assignment or course, and proven cases of plagiarism could result in expulsion from the university). If you have any question about which acts constitute plagiarism, please ask the instructor for help or clarification.

### **Students With Disabilities**

All students with disabilities documented through the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities will be provided all accommodations necessary for success in ENG232.

## Course Schedule

Students are expected to complete the noted readings before arriving in class for each session. Assignments should be submitted on ANGEL on the due date before 5 pm.

September 2: Introduction

September 7: Rousseau, *Confessions* (Introduction: vii-xxix)

September 9: Rousseau, *Confessions* (1-85); Bruner, "Life as Narrative"; **Reading Reflection One due**

September 14: Rousseau, *Confessions* (86-171)

September 16: Rousseau, *Confessions* (172-266); Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (excerpt); **Reading Reflection Two due**

September 21: Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Introduction: vii-xxvii)

September 23: Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1-57); **Reading Reflection Three due**

September 28: Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (57-106); **Writing Project One due**

September 30: Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (3-68); Thomson, *An Autobiography by Virgil Thomson* (excerpt)

October 5: Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (69-142)

October 7: Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (143-192); **Reading Reflection Four due**

October 12: Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (193-252)

October 14: Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley* (3-13)

October 19: Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley* (17-92); **Writing Project Two due**

October 21: Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley* (95-169)

October 26: Steinbeck, *Travels with Charley* (173-214); *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing* (excerpt); **Reading Reflection Five due**

October 28: No class—students will schedule meeting with instructor for mid-semester evaluations

November 2: Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (1-42); Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (excerpt)

November 4: Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (43-75)

November 9: Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (76-113); **Reading Reflection Six due**

November 11: Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (114-146)

November 16: Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (147-189)

November 18: McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (excerpt)

November 23: Thompson, *Blankets* (8-129); **Writing Project Three due**

November 25: No class—Thanksgiving break

November 30: Thompson, *Blankets* (130-261)

December 2: Thompson, *Blankets* (262-375); **Reading Reflection Seven due**

December 7: Thompson, *Blankets* (376-447)

December 9: Thompson, *Blankets* (448-582)

December 13 (Monday): **Final exams due by 5 pm**