



Semester: Winter 2024

Days: T TH

Time: 9:30 to 11:00 AM PT (12:30 to 2:00 AM ET)

Place: TBD

Instructor: Bradford Connatser
Office: Remote
Office Hours: 8:30 to 10:30 M W F and by appointment
Phone: 541-430-4548
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Mission

This fifteen-week course provides a path *from* the student's way of thinking *to* the conflicting, adverse thoughts of "others." These two poles must be reconciled so that the student can thoughtfully communicate and form relationships with people who do not share the student's belief—without tearing those people down. Each student will prevail against common but often objectionable human impulses to attack the other by studying exemplars of personal essays, virtually attending lectures from the teacher, practicing writing techniques and strategies with discipline, and finally bringing all learned writing skills to bear upon building an essay from scratch that conveys a personal message to the reader.

Each personal essay must be framed as a polemic, based upon a subject that is in controversy. The audience is a vague notion of the student's adversary, whom the student will try to convince to listen to and appreciate an opposing point of view. The course encourages people to think about what they have in common with those whom they consider antithetical to their beliefs. Each essay will be *brief* but very rich and far more complex than the five-paragraph essay taught in high school and college. By dedicating themselves to precision, students will compose personal essays that appeal to a wide range of readers, weaving tapestries of universal meaning. Brevity of expression will be emphasized to limit each essay to a manageable length, which will no doubt be a startling chore.

"I have only made this letter longer because I have not had the time to make it shorter."

-- Blaise Pascal

Cost of the Course

This course is free but requires that each student have a modern computer or access to one (such as the computers at the local library).

Conduct

Because the purpose of this course is to bring opposing views and dissident voices together to explore our differences and similarities, bigotry, intolerance, unfounded accusations, profanities, salty words, and cursing of any kind will not be permitted in class or in assignments except, perhaps, as a purely academic exercise to explore responses to extreme rhetoric. Students are expected to attend classes virtually, participate in discussions, and keep up with homework and writing assignments.

Grading

Students will not receive letter grades for their work. Instead, successful students—those who complete all assignments and work diligently, earnestly toward the completion of a superb essay—will be given the opportunity to have their final essays published at livesincommon.com, which will optionally include the biography and photograph of the author. Essays will be polished, beautiful, and worthy of world-wide reception.

A student must gain 50 points throughout the semester to be eligible to have his or her essay published at the end of the semester. Students can work toward 100 points in these ways:

- Seven quizzes at 0 to 5 points each = 35 maximum points
- Reading assignments = 15 maximum points
- Participation in group discussions = 15 maximum points
- In-class exercises = 15 maximum points
- Peer reviews = 15 maximum points
- Gifting expertise = 5 maximum points

Attendance Policy and Late Assignments

Because all students will be marching in lockstep toward the objective of publishing student essays, attendance is an essential element of this course. You are allowed three unexcused absences without penalty. More than three may lower your accumulation of points. Excessive unexcused absences may result in failure.

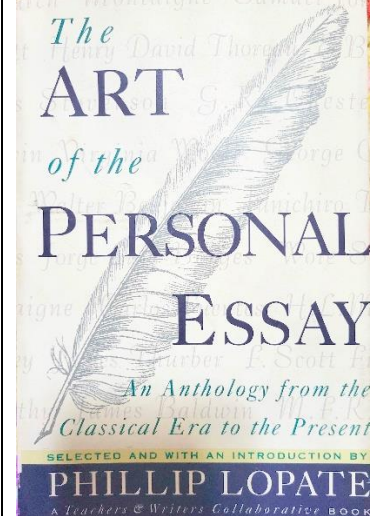
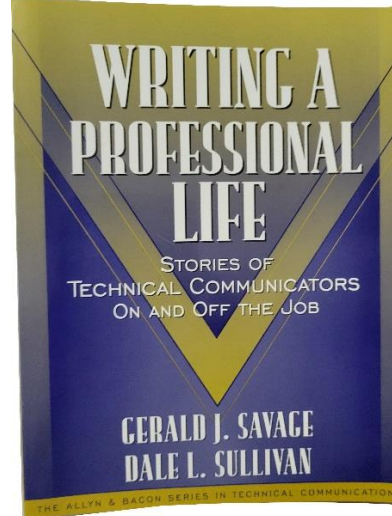
The instructor will try to help students through difficulties. However, if a student anticipates difficulty with meeting a deadline, contact the instructor for a possible extension.

Materials

Goods and textbooks are not cheap. To make this course available to people of all income classes and to enable people with financial hardships to participate, all materials will be provided by the instructor, and these materials will belong to students permanently upon receipt. Optional materials will also be made available at no cost upon request.

Required Textbooks

The following two books will be provided to each student at no cost.

	<p><i>The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present</i> by Phillip Lopate</p> <p>Publisher: Anchor; First Edition (January 15, 1995)</p> <p>Language: English Paperback: 777 pp ISBN-10: 038542339X ISBN-13: 978-0385422987</p>		<p><i>Writing a Professional Life: Stories of Technical Communicators on and off the Job</i> Edited by Gerald Savage et al.</p> <p>Publisher: Pearson; 1st edition (November 19, 2000)</p> <p>Language: English Paperback: 224 pp ISBN-10: 9780205321063 ISBN-13: 978-0205321063</p>
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Optional Reading

Reading Exemplar Essays

Throughout the semester, the instructor will provide links to essays from giants like George Will, Joan Didion, Sam Harris, James Baldwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mark Twain, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Bertrand Russell, Jorge Luis Borges, Thomas Carlyle, T.S. Eliot, Friedrich Nietzsche, René Descartes, and some favorites of the students.

Writing with Style

Optional Reading: *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*, by Steven Pinker, Penguin Books; Reprint edition (September 22, 2015).

Writing with Logic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVF0ojfhSrE>
<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/category/handbook/>

What Is the Personal Essay?

The personal essay is a unique type of narrative (nonfiction storytelling of one or more real-life experiences) and expression of thought. Embedded in the essay is a message designed to impress the reader—even so much as to change the reader’s mind about a particular subject or position. Personal essays are obviously written in the first person (from the author’s point of view) and often have the power to inspire, enlighten, and/or warn others.

What Is the Process of Writing a Personal Essay?

The process of composing a personal essay is aligned with the process of composing other nonfiction genres, such as theme papers, research papers, news articles, and position papers (these can be lumped into the uber category “expository writing”).

After the student has selected a subject, we will discuss brainstorming, which is the heart of any writing project. The student will let all ideas flow and explore potential themes while reading about the selected subject. Developing a theme is a rigorous rhetorical process whereby the student must determine why he or she is writing an essay. The recommended theme of this course is reconciliation, in which the

student exposes him- or herself through narrative, recollection, projection, logic, and other rhetorical devices. In fact, *reconciliation* will be a steady motif of the course, where you write an essay to expose your thinking on a subject (without resembling a confessional), with a vague sense of your notional adversary as the primary audience. We will consider the different vectors of reconciliation:

- Political (Democrat versus Republican)
- Religious (Christian versus Muslim)
- Economic (Liberal versus Conservative)
- Nationality (USA versus India)
- Skin Color (White versus Black)
- Science (Evolution versus Creation)

After the student settles on a subject and vector of reconciliation, he or she will continue to brainstorm and begin to conduct research. Notes taken during brainstorming and research will then coalesce in the student's mind, and the student will have insight into how the essay should be organized. Using a word processor, the student will organize, modify, add to, and delete from his or her notes. Annotating the outline is essential at this point. These annotations will evolve into sentences as the student starts to think about each note.

The next stage—drafting—is the process of writing sentences and developing paragraphs based upon the annotated outline. Continual revisions based on self- and peer reviews result in polished work. The final step is to lay out the essay, which may include images, tables, illustrations, and art fonts. With the student's permission, the teacher will then publish the student's personal essay at livesincomon.com. All of this takes place in a collaborative environment, where students review the works of other students, have meaningful conversations within groups, partner for homework assignments, and share expertise that enables all students to accomplish the course objectives.

During the course, the instructor will lecture, guide students, hold regular office hours, and correspond regularly. Students will be presented with exemplars of personal essays written by giants of the craft. Students can then “reverse engineer” these essays to develop best practices.

Content and Schedule of the Course (15 Weeks, 26 Class Meetings)

Day 1: Introduction to the Course

Day 2: Structure and Parts of the Essay

- Compelling or Evocative Title
- Essay Cover
- Opening and Closing
- Body
- Thesis and Antithesis
- Conflict, Immersive/Engaging Argument
- Tone
- Conclusion (Synthesis), the Circle Back, Conflict Resolution
- Edification, Moral, Lesson
- Heads
- Images and Art

Day 3: Communication Triangle: Audience, Purpose, Subject

Day 4: The Process of Writing an Essay

- Brainstorming
- Taking Notes
- Selecting a Subject
- Finding Your Angle
- Thesis, Hypothesis, and Antithesis
- Researching
- Organizing and Outlining
- Annotating
- Reviewing and Editing

Day 5: Editing Your Own Work

- Revising
- Psychic Distance
- Killing Your Darlings (Copyfitting)
- Repairing Noun Strings
- Reading Aloud
- Proofing

Day 6: Grammar and Mechanics

- Why Your Sentences Should be Error-Free
- Syntax and Diction
- Common Difficulties
- The Rule Hoard
- Breaking the Rules
- Notional Accord

Day 7: Writing Tools

- Word Processors
- Your Folder
- Fellow Students
- Dictionary
- Thesaurus

Day 8: Writing Techniques (Best Practices)

- The Sentence
 - Sentence-Level Craft
 - Making Logical Connections
 - Using Signal Words and Guardrails
 - Engagement
 - Arresting the Reader's Attention

Writing Clearly
Coherence
Vocabularies and Specialized Discourse
Active versus passive

Day 9: Writing Techniques (Best Practices) Continued

Writing the Paragraph

Organization
Installing a Hook
Developing a Paragraph
Theme-Rheme

Day 10: Writing Techniques (Best Practices) Continued

Literary Techniques

Show Don't Tell
Suspension of Disbelief
Objective Correlative
Figurative Language

Day 11: Writing Techniques (Best Practices) Continued

Flow

Style and Tone

Conversational
Reactive versus Reflective Response
Formal versus Informal
Dry Delivery
Wit
Irony and Sarcasm

Point of View (POV)

Day 12: Writing Techniques (Best Practices) Continued

Humor
Verisimilitude
Life Experiences

Day 13: Writing Techniques (Best Practices) Continued

Deadwood and Throat Clearing

Day 14: Rhetorical Modes

Narration
Description

Exposition
Argumentation
Persuasion
Logos, Ethos, and Pathos

Day 15: Using Dialogue

Day 16: Understanding Silent Speech and It's Implications

Day 17: Avoiding Rhetorical Fallacies

Day 18: Being Vulnerable and Revealing in Your Prose

Day 19: Developing Characters

Day 20: Naming of the Parts

Day 21: Psychology

Psychology of the Writer
Psychology of the Reader

Day 22: The Lesson or Moral of the Story

Day 23: Analysis, Precision, and Accuracy

Day 24: Art and Layout

Illustration
Photography
Image Processing
Font Treatments
Organization Plan
Layout
Sidebars
Scholar's Margin
The Z Scan

Day 25: Copyright

Day 26: Plagiarism

Bonus: Essay Design in HTML