WR 323: Writing as Critical Inquiry

Writing the Frontier

Instructor: Sarah Marshall (samarsha@pdx.edu)
Class Hours: Monday, Wednesday, & Friday, 12:45–1:50 p.m., SRTC 108
Office Hours: Friday, 11 a.m.–12 p.m., Neuberger Hall 378

Sitting Bull and Buffalo Bill, 1885
Required Texts:

*Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer  
*No Country for Old Men* by Cormac McCarthy  
*True Grit* by Charles Portis

These books are available for purchase in the PSU bookstore. All other materials will be on the course Tumblr:

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writingthefrontier.tumblr.com
password: west
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Reading and Discussion Schedule

Monday, 4/1—Introduction to the class

Wednesday, 4/3—Homework: Write a 1-2 pp. journal response to one of the Avedon photos (available on Tumblr)

Friday, 4/5—Bring your Avedon photo response to class to discuss in small groups.  
Homework: read Western history packet for discussion Mon., available on Tumblr, and write 1-2 pp. journal response

Monday, 4/8—Homework: read classic western packet for discussion Weds, available on Tumblr, and write 1-2 pp. journal response

Wednesday, 4/10—Homework: 1-2 pp. journal brainstorming the first formal writing assignment

Friday, 4/12—Homework: Write first formal written assignment (topics will be available on Tumblr), 3-5 pp., due to me 11:59 PM Sunday, 4/14

Monday, 4/15—Homework: read Native American history packet and write 1-2 pp. journal response

Wednesday, 4/17—Homework: read Contemporary Native American literature packet and write 1-2 pp. journal response

Friday, 4/19—**NO CLASS** (Writing day). Second formal writing assignment, 3-5 pp., due to me and your workshop groups by 11:59 Sunday, 4/21.

Monday, 4/22—Homework: Read and fill out response sheets for your other classmates’ papers
Wednesday, 4/24—**In-class workshop.**

Friday, 4/26—Homework: Read *Into the Wild* (first half) and write 1-2 pp. journal response.


Wednesday, 5/1—Homework: write 1-2 pp. journal entry brainstorming next assignment.

Friday, 5/3—**NO CLASS** (writing day). Third formal writing assignment due to me at 11:59, Sunday 5/5.

Monday, 5/6—Homework: read *True Grit* (first half) and write 1-2 pp. journal.

Wednesday, 5/8—Homework: finish *True Grit* and write 1-2 pp. journal entry.

Friday, 5/10—Homework: read contemporary Western journalism packet and write 1-2 pp. response.

Pictures from Richard Avedon’s *In the American West* series.
Monday, 5/13—Homework: read Iraq War journalism packet and write 1-2 pp. journal

Wednesday, 5/15—Homework: watch The Hurt Locker and write 1-2 pp. journal

Friday, 5/17—Homework: read contemporary Western fiction packet and write 1-2 pp. journal

Monday, 5/20—Homework: read No Country for Old Men (first half) and write 1-2 pp. journal

Wednesday, 5/22—Homework: read No Country for Old Men (second half) and write 1-2 pp. journal

Friday, 5/24—Homework: fourth formal writing assignment due to me and to your group members by Tuesday, 5/28, 11:59 PM

Monday, 5/27—NO CLASS (Memorial Day)


Friday, 5/31—In-class workshop. Homework: choose one of your previous papers for redrafting and email me your plans for revision.

Monday, 6/3—No class (paper conferences)

Wednesday, 6/5—No class (paper conferences)

Friday, 6/7—No class. Your last paper is due to me, via email, at 11:59 PM, Sunday, 6/9

Writing and Workshopping Schedule

Journals: Throughout this class, we will utilize freewrites and regular informal journal entries as a means of engaging fully with the course material. I will collect your journals on the dates listed below, and your work in them will make up a portion of your participation grade. You’ll need to purchase a standard spiral or composition book to keep your entries in (both are inexpensive and readily available at the PSU bookstore).

Formal Written Assignments: In addition to your journal entries, you will turn in four formal writing assignments to me, and workshop several with your classmates. Each of these assignments must be 3-5 full pages long, formatted in MLA style, in double-spaced, 12-point font.
Class Rules

As we only have a little over an hour per class period, it’s important that we make the most of our time—to write, to discuss, to collaborate, to think. To that end, a few hard rules apply:

NO use of cell phones or other electronics in class. Cell phones are to be silenced and stowed—no talking, no texting. There is one exception to this rule, however: if you experience significant discomfort writing by hand, you may use a laptop, by arrangement with me. Speak with me during the first week of classes if this is a requirement for you.

NO lateness. Since classes are so short, this is especially crucial. Occasional tardiness is unavoidable, but three tardies of more than five minutes equals an absence.

My policy on absences is as follows: you are allowed two unexcused absences during the entire course. Anything more than that will have an impact on your participation grade. That said, life happens, and if you need to miss class due to sickness, personal issues, or unavoidable travel, please let me know as soon as possible (or, better yet, in advance). If you contact me about an absence, we can arrange for makeup work.

I will accept NO late assignments. Unless otherwise noted, our deadline for all weekly assignments is 11:59 pm on SUNDAY. Anything received after that time will be given a zero. However, you are welcome to make up missing assignments later in the term. If you need to do this, contact me as soon as possible, and we can draw up a plan together.

And finally, a few words on plagiarism: plagiarism of any kind—taking another writer’s words as your own, either in whole or in part, without quoting or proper citation—is an extremely serious offense. Any paper found to contain plagiarism will be given a zero.

Additional Resources

If you’re having trouble with any aspect of an assignment—whether you’re getting started, finding research materials, or working on adhering to a structure, or if you are simply worried about grammar or citation—feel free to pay a visit to The Writing Center in Cramer Hall 188. It’s free, full of friendly and helpful tutors, and available for both walk-in sessions and scheduled appointments. In addition, I highly encourage you to stop by my office hours, if you have a question or concern, or just want to discuss your work.

If you have a disability that will impact your ability to fulfill class requirements, please notify me during the first week of term, and we can work with the Disability Resource Center to find solutions.