

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

Voyage: Spring 2014

Discipline: Writing

ENWR 1559-101: Writing and Academic Inquiry: A Semester at Sea Workshop

Lower Division

Faculty Name: Jeremiah Chamberlin

Pre-requisites: None.

“Writing is a concentrated form of thinking. I don’t know what I think about certain subjects, even today, until I sit down and try to write about them.”

—Don DeLillo

“I swam through libraries and sailed through oceans.”

—Ishmael in *Moby Dick*

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The primary goal of this course is to help you hone your writing skills so that you can produce clear, convincing, and sophisticated prose. We will develop these skills through a wide range of methods: readings, discussions, in-class writing exercises, formal essays, and reflective responses to the cultural and historical landscapes we encounter on our voyage. Because writing is an organized way of thinking, our engagement with the subject matter will be focused primarily on issues of style, craft, and execution. By learning *how* something works, we can more fully understand *why* it works. As such, we will pursue the craft of writing as apprentices, reading a wide range of authors in the pursuit of understanding their different styles and techniques, so that we might adapt those rhetorical strategies as tools ourselves.

Yet unlike a traditional classroom setting, our voyage will also allow us to fine-tune our critical thinking and research skills through the exploration of different cultures. After all, writing is not simply a process of learning and expression but also an important way to develop a conscious *voice* as an individual. We are each members—citizens, if you will—of diverse and myriad communities. Be it our regional or national background, educational or economic circumstances, ethnic or racial history, or sexual or political preference, we understand the world and define ourselves in relation to the institutions and groups to which we belong. Yet ultimately, and perhaps most importantly, we are our own persons. Over the course of this semester, then, we will explore the ways in which individuals—including ourselves—negotiate the different and sometimes difficult responsibilities of culture. By seeking to understand what “belonging” means, we will not only learn to see the world in a more complex way, but also continue the life-long process of developing our own voices as artists, writers, thinkers, and citizens.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To produce complex, analytic, well-supported arguments.

2. To read, summarize, analyze, and synthesize complex texts purposefully in order to generate and support writing.
3. To analyze the genres and rhetorical strategies that writers use in different rhetorical situations.
4. To develop flexible strategies for organizing, revising, and editing writing of varying lengths to improve development of ideas and appropriateness of expression.
5. To hone skills at critical self-assessment and reflection on the process of writing.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

AUTHOR: Eileen Pollack, Jeremiah Chamberlin, and Natalie Bakopoulos

TITLE: *Creative Composition*

PUBLISHER: Cengage

ISBN #: 1285117271

DATE/EDITION: 2013, First Edition

AUTHOR: Donovan Hohn

TITLE: *Moby Duck*

PUBLISHER: Penguin

ISBN #: 0143120506

DATE/EDITION: 2011, First Edition

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

Abbreviations:

- *Creative Composition* = CC
- *Moby Duck* = Moby

A1- January 12: Introduction to the Course

Introductions, goals, and looking forward: What is academic inquiry? How will the skills you learn in this class transfer to other disciplines? How can this class and our voyage help you read the world (and texts) like a writer?

A2- January 14: Setting out

How do we find material? How does it find us? Nurturing Curiosity

CC: Chapter 16: "How to Read Like a Writer," by Mike Bunn (pgs. 498 – 508)

Moby: Prologue, Going Overboard (pgs. 3 – 27)

Moby: First Chase (pgs. 31 – 41)

A3- January 16: Descriptive Writing Strategies

Why do details matter? Setting the scene, crafting telling details, and attention to language.

CC: Chapter 1: The Writer's Point of View (pgs. 3 – 7)

CC: Chapter 2: An Engaging Voice and Style (pgs. 9 – 24)

Moby: Third Chase: Hawaii (pgs. 149 – 190)

January 17: Hilo

REQUIRED FIELD LAB – January 17: “Wading In: Beachcombing and Hike”

Making connections, finding a point of view as a writer, and getting the details right.

Readings in class folder:

Pacific Ocean Newsletter, Marine Pollution Bulletin, and Marine Debris
Letters from Hawaii, by Mark Twain: Chapters 18 and 19 (pgs 195 – 221)

*****Meet at 8am for Field Lab briefing. Classroom TBD.*****

A4- January 19: Making It Yours

Joining the Conversation: Using Hohn and Twain to craft your *own* dispatch.

Readings in class folder:

Letters from Hawaii, by Mark Twain: Chapters 20 – 22 (pgs 222 – 256)

A5- January 22: Self Reflection, Developing a Process, and Habits of Mind

CC: Chapter 3: A Driving Question (pgs. 25 – 28)

Chapter 4: A Natural, Organic Form (pgs. 31 – 32)

Chapter 5: Habits of Mind (pgs. 33 – 36)

*****DEADLINE FOR FIELD EXPERIENCE RESPONSE 1*****

A6- January 25: Reflective Narratives

How does form determine content? Letting driving questions “shape” inquiry. Understanding the difference between “conclusion” and “resolution.”

Chapter 7: Reflective Narratives (pgs. 49 – 50)

CC: Chapter 7: Exposition and Scene (pgs. 51 – 53)

CC: Chapter 7: Rate of Revelation and Dramatic Pacing (pgs. 54 – 55)

CC: Chapter 7: Reflection and Analysis (pgs. 55 – 57)

CC: Chapter 7: “Shooting an Elephant,” by George Orwell (pgs. 58 – 62)

A7- January 27: How to “Build” an Essay

What goes where? Scene vs. Exposition, Situation vs. Story, and mapping structure.

CC: Chapter 7: Episodic Narration (pgs. 63 – 65)

- CC: Chapter 7: “My Body, My Weapon, My Shame,” by Elwood Reid (pgs. 66 – 76)
CC: Chapter 16: On the Importance of Turning...into a Character,” by Lopate (pgs. 511 – 515)

January 29 – February 03: Yokohama, Transit, Kobe

A8- February 04: Developing a Point of View

Where do I stand? Authorial point of view, stance, and negotiating our relationship to our subject matter.

Moby: The Fourth Chase (pgs. 193 – 230)

February 6 – 11: Shanghai, Transit, Hong Kong

A9- February 12: Arguing from Experience

Where do I fit in? Integrating theme and analysis. In-scene writing techniques.

CC: Chapter 7: Questions and Insights (pgs. 77 – 78)

CC: Chapter 7: “A Clack of Tiny Sparks,” by Bernard Cooper (pgs. 79 – 86)

February 14 – 19: Ho Chi Minh City

A10- February 20: Uncovering the “Essence” of Portraits

Am I too close? Balancing intimacy and objectivity.

CC: Chapter 8: People (pgs. 119 -120)

CC: Chapter 8: Profiles in Action (pgs. 120 – 122)

CC: Outside Your Circle (pgs. 149 – 150)

CC: Chapter 8: “XXXXL,” by Michael Paterniti (pgs. 151 – 163)

CC: Chapter 8: Additional Considerations: The Art of the Interview (pgs. 164 – 165)

*****DEADLINE FOR FIELD EXPERIENCE RESPONSE 2*****

February 22 – 23: Singapore

A11- February 24: Balancing Intimacy and Distance

Does this mean anything to anyone besides me? Moving from the personal to the abstract.

CC: Chapter 9: Using Narrative to Capture the Essence of a Place (pgs. 195 – 196)

CC: Chapter 9: “We Do Not Swim in Our Cemeteries,” by Jesmyn Ward (pgs. 196 – 205)

Chapter 16: “Shitty First Drafts,” by Anne Lamott (pgs. 509 – 510)

February 27 – March 4: Rangoon

A12- March 5: Arguments That Matter

Says who? Re-thinking, re-imagining, and re-contextualizing—how to engage your material and your audience in dialogue.

CC: Chapter 16: “Argumentation in a Culture of Discord,” by Frank L. Cioffi

A13- March 07: The Stages of Revision and Peer Review

How do you respond to the work of others? How do you synthesize feedback on your own work? Effective strategies for peer review success and reflective writing

CC: Chapter 17: Revision (pg. 521)

CC: Chapter 17: The Stages of Revision (pgs. 521 – 526)

CC: Chapter 17: Feedback and Peer Workshops (pgs. 526 – 530)

CC: Chapter 17: “Workshop Is Not for You,” by Jeremiah Chamberlin (pgs. 535 – 536)

*****DEADLINE FOR FIRST DRAFT OF REFLECTIVE NARRATIVE*****

March 9 – 14: Cochin

A14- March 15: Workshopping

In-class workshopping.

CC: Chapter 17: “The Maker’s Eye,” by Donald Murray (pgs. 531 – 534)

CC: Chapter 17: Getting from First to Final Draft (pgs. 536 – 537)

DEADLINE FOR WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

A15- March 18: Further Revision Strategies

Re-visioning your Work.

CC: Chapter 17: Rough draft of “Cover-a-Girl,” by Caitlin Fey (pgs. 537 – 540)

CC: Chapter 17: Final draft of “Cover-a-Girl,” by Caitlin Fey (pgs. 541 -548)

B15: March 19 Submission Deadline

*****DEADLINE FOR FINAL DRAFT OF REFLECTIVE NARRATIVE*****

A16- March 20: Research and Examination

What’s the deal with that? Integrating research and resistance, branching out from personal

experience, and deepening complexity.

C: Chapter 11: Understanding Other Cultures (pgs. 332 – 333)

CC: Chapter 11: “The Wide World of Eating Dirt,” by Beth Ann Fennelly (pgs. 333 – 338)

March 21: Port Louis

A17- March 23: Experiments as Research

What if... Testing theories and myths, understanding other cultures, and letting form shape content.

CC: Chapter 11: “The Throumbes of Thassos,” by Christopher Bakken (pgs. 339 – 346)

A18- March 26: Journeys and Quests Part I

Beyond your destination—Why do we quest? What’s the purpose of a journey?

CC: Chapter 12: A Goal Beyond Your Destination, The Shape of Your Journey, and Events and Occasions (pgs. 347 – 348)

CC: Chapter 12: “Upon This Rock,” by John Jeremiah Sullivan (pgs. 350 – 370)

March 28 – April 2: Cape Town

A19- April 3: Journeys and Quests Part II

Why are *you* the right person for this essay? A goal beyond your destination, the shape of your journey, events and occasions

CC: Chapter 12: More Elaborate or Ambitious Journeys (pgs. 371 – 372)

CC: Chapter 12: “The New Mecca,” by George Saunders (pgs. 373 – 392)

DEADLINE FOR FIELD EXPERIENCE RESPONSE 3

A20- April 5: Investigation Proposal Workshop

DEADLINE FOR INVESTIGATION PROPOSALS

A21- April 08: Journeys and Quests Part III

What does this signify? History versus the present, argument in action, and assessing evidence.

CC: Chapter 12: “One Week in Liberia,” by Zadie Smith (pgs. 393 – 408)

April 10 – 14: Tema and Takoradi

A22- April 15: Going Deeper

What is meditation? How to circle your subject for meaning.

CC: Chapter 13: “The Politics of Grief,” by V.V. Ganeshanathan (pgs. 440 – 446)

DEADLINE FOR FIRST DRAFT OF INVESTIGATION

A23- April 17 Workshop

Workshopping

CC: Chapter 17: Rough Draft of “If You’re Happy and You Know It, LOL,” by Carlina Duan (pgs. 549 – 554)

CC: Chapter 17: Final Draft of “If You’re Happy and You Know It, LOL,” by Carlina Duan (pgs. 555 – 566)

DEADLINE FOR WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

A24- April 20 Alternative Structures

What *is* structure? How reshaping your work can create new meanings for reader and writer.

CC: Chapter 14: “Grammar Lessons,” by Michelle Murano (pgs. 466 – 478)

B21: Submission Deadline

*****DEADLINE FOR FINAL DRAFT OF REFLECTIVE NARRATIVE*****

April 23 – 27: Casablanca

A25- April 28: LAST DAY OF CLASS

“WHY I WRITE” REFLECTION DUE

May 2: Arrive in Southampton

FIELD WORK

In addition to our primary textbook, *Creative Composition*, we will also read selections from Donovan Hohn’s *Moby Duck*. This book is a non-fiction account of the author’s attempt to unravel the true story of 28,800 bath toys that were swept overboard from a container ship in 1992 as it traveled between China and the Pacific Northwest. Like Ishmael, the narrator of Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Donovan Hohn “swam through libraries and sailed through oceans” during the process of writing this book. What began as a simple question about a freak occurrence ended up leading the author on an odyssey around the globe that would eventually involve an investigation of shipping

conglomerates, Chinese toy factories in Guangdong, the production of plastics, the Great North Pacific Garbage Patch, the science of beachcombing, and the mysteries of the ocean itself. On his journey, Hohn stopped in many of the ports that we will visit on our trip. So we will have the opportunity to study not only his writing in an attempt to improve our own, but also to do so in the very places that he writes about.

REQUIRED FIELD LAB (*At least 20 percent of the contact hours for each course, to be led by the instructor.*)

Hilo, Hawaii: “Wading In: Beachcombing and Hike From South Point”

- Details:
 - Drive to South Point: 2 hours
 - Stopping along way to observe micro-climates
 - Hike to Beach and Picnic Lunch: 1 hour
 - Marine Debris Lecture by Dr. Gilmartin: 30 minutes
 - Beachcombing/hiking: 1.5 hours
 - Drive to Volcanoes National Park: 1 hour
 - Tour Volcanoes National Park: 1.5 hour
 - Return to Ship: 1 hour

“The Southernmost edge of Hawaii is also the southernmost edge of the United States of America,” writes Donovan Hohn in *Moby Duck*, “and feels like the southernmost edge of the world.” He goes on to say, “The windward side of the Big Island is not what most of us imagine when, finding ourselves stuck in traffic or a bad job, we dream our Hawaiian dreams. Downtown Hilo, once the capital of a booming sugar trade, reminded me of cities in the American Rust Belt, only with palm trees and rain, lots of rain—a sunbaked, rain-soaked, tropical Sandusky.”

After reading “The Third Chase” in Hohn’s *Moby Duck*, we will set off on a “chase” of our own. Driving south from Hilo, we will wind our way through some of the old sugar cane plantations that he describes in his book, taking careful note of the economic changes that have happened in this once thriving region. Along the way, we will also observe the many micro-climates that make up this island, including the volcanic area that comprises Hawai’i Volcanoes National Park (which we will explore as part of our return trip). However, our real goal lies further beyond—the southernmost tip of the southernmost island in the southernmost part of the United States—where we will beachcomb as Hohn does in his book, following in both his physical and literary footsteps.

You might wonder: Why collect trash? What value flotsam? Here, the manufactured world collides with the natural one in the form of plastic toys and flip-flops washing up on shore. For in addition to its unique and beautiful geography, this place has also become one of the richest U.S. beachcombing sites due to prevailing ocean currents and trade winds. Our task, then, will be to analyze the juxtaposition of the natural world and the synthetic one, as well as to compare Hohn’s depiction of the Hawaiian landscape with what we find ourselves. Guiding our journey will be Bill Gilmartin, a naturalist and Director of the Hawaii Wildlife Fund. Gilmartin also features in Hohn’s chapter on Hilo, so like many things on this voyage we will encounter him first on the page and then in reality.

In addition to Hohn’s work, we will also read selections from Mark Twain’s *Letters from Hawaii* prior to our visit. These chapters are a series of dispatches that Twain wrote for *The Sacramento Union* during his 1866 trip to the state, and they will add an historical layer to our understanding of the place.

Your assignment: To write a “Letter from Hawaii” yourself, in dialogue with both Hohn and Twain. Like them, you will be synthesizing (a) personal experience with (b) outside sources to come to a greater awareness of this place—both for yourself and the reader.

FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to the required Field Lab on Hilo, you will be asked to participate in two other Field Experiences. Unlike the two formal essays that you will produce for this class, you will compose your Field Experience responses as informal letters. So while these responses will contain attributes of the writing styles we’re studying, the formal components (e.g., Narrative, Portrait, Investigation) will be *secondary* rather than primary. In short: these responses will allow you to practice the techniques we are learning by nesting them in a form you are already familiar with.

Another goal of structuring the Field Experiences in this manner is to hone your curiosity, to train you to ask “Why?” and “What if?” At the heart of the writing process is a willingness to ask good questions. Questions guide our research and allow us to uncover new truths about ourselves and the larger world. They are the key to academic inquiry and are fundamental to developing strong critical-thinking skills.

This shift in the way you will come to view writing—*arriving* at a position rather than beginning with one—is perhaps the most significant and exciting you will undergo as thinkers, one that we will nurture during our voyage. By reinforcing the philosophy that writing consists of grappling with original ideas and trying to say something new rather than simply repeating what someone else already has proven, you can more fully join the intellectual conversation going on around you and serve as participants and collaborators in your education rather than mere vessels to be filled.

Now the nitty-gritty:

- (1) You will be required to write a brief response for each Field Experience.
- (2) Each response will be minimum two pages, single-spaced.
- (3) Each response will be in the form of a letter, a “Dispatch From... .”
- (4) Each response will be evaluated based on its execution of the craft elements that we have been studying in relation to the form, as well as an awareness to foundational writing strategies such as Audience, Language, Structure, Development, and Significance.

PARTICIPATION

The success of a seminar-style course like this depends on you. Without each person contributing to the discussion, our mutual understanding of the texts will be shallow and superficial. So you will not only be expected to come to class having completed the reading for the day, but also to have brought specific questions, comments, and reflections to share.

Participation includes, but is not limited to the following: (1) attendance, preparedness, and professionalism; (2) consistent contribution to discussions; (3) completion of work in a thorough and timely manner; (4) workshop feedback and reading responses.

ATTENDANCE

You can't participate if you aren't in class. Because most of the work and learning for this course takes place *in* the classroom, attendance is crucial. Here are the details:

1. You may miss two classes without penalty. Thereafter, each additional absence may lower your final grade up to two points. Note: you may **not** skip workshop days.
2. Missing more than five classes will likely result in failure of the course, regardless of work completed.
3. Tardiness is a form of absenteeism. Three "lates" constitute one absence.
4. For each class session that you are absent, regardless of the reason, you will be asked to submit a one-page, single-spaced response to the day's readings that you missed. This is due by the next session. Note: I will not track you down. It is your responsibility to follow up on this work.

THE WORK

I believe in professionalism. Here are the details:

1. You **MUST** turn in your essays at the beginning of class; do not show up to class late because you've been searching for the perfect end to your essay.
2. Late papers will be penalized two points per twenty-four-hour period they are late.
3. Papers more than a week late will receive a failing grade.
4. First drafts for workshop must be "complete" drafts. Incomplete rough drafts will result in a two-point penalty of your final draft.
5. Unless extraordinary circumstances prevail, I will not accept papers or peer critiques as email attachments.
6. Don't be a victim of technology. Save your material on jump drives or email them to yourself. Because computer labs can be crowded, don't wait until the last minute to print. These aren't excuses for late work.
7. With the exception of taking notes during workshop, laptops are not allowed in class.

The Grading: How Will You Be Evaluated?

Grades are *measures*, not *rewards*. And the expectations in this class and at this University are high. As such, so are the grading standards. A "C" is average and means that you have satisfied the minimum requirements of an assignment. A "B" means that you have exceeded them and should be proud. An "A" means that you have exceeded them wildly. In my view, getting an "A" on a paper should be like earning a spot on the starting line up of the University's football team or landing the starring role in a play—it takes both talent and effort. Plain and simple: you must do consistently exceptional work to earn an "A" in this class.

Although I will hold you to high expectations, in return I will offer you as much assistance as my schedule will allow—a generous amount. I see this class as a collaborative project. If we both do our jobs well, you will produce strong written work and learn the crafts and skills necessary to becoming a better writer and thinker. Perhaps just as importantly, you will learn a great deal about different and more complex ways of seeing the world (as well as yourself) in this process.

GRADING SCALE

94.0 - 100	A	74.0 – 76.9	C
90.0 – 93.9	A-	70.0 – 73.9	C-
87.0 – 89.9	B+	67.0 – 69.9	D+
84.0 – 86.9	B	64.0 – 66.9	D
80.0 – 83.9	B-	60.0 – 63.9	D-
77.0 – 79.9	C+	59.9 & Below	E

GRADING BREAKDOWN

20%	Reflective Narrative essay (7-8 pages, doublespaced)
20%	Investigation essay (8-10 pages, doublespaced)
20%	Short Writing Assignments
20%	Field Work
20%	Participation

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

- January 22: Field Experience Response 1
- February 20: Field Experience Response 2
- March 7: First Draft of Reflective Narrative
- March 15: Workshop Feedback
- March 19: Final Draft of Reflective Narrative
- April 3: Field Experience Response 3
- April 5: Investigation Proposal
- April 15: First Draft of Investigation
- April 17: Workshop Feedback
- April 20: Final Draft of Investigation
- April 28: Why I Write reflection

RESERVE LIBRARY LIST

AUTHOR: Mark Twain
 TITLE: *Letters from Hawaii*
 PUBLISHER: University of Hawaii Press
 ISBN #: 0824802888
 DATE/EDITION: 1975

AUTHOR: Tom Bissell
 TITLE: *The Father of All Things*
 PUBLISHER: Vintage
 ISBN #: 1400075432
 DATE/EDITION: 2008

ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: “Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the World Sixty Years Later”

JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Virginia Quarterly Review*
VOLUME: 81 – Number 4
DATE: Fall 2005
PAGES: 26-47

ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: “After the Fall”
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Virginia Quarterly Review*
VOLUME: 81 – Number 4
DATE: Fall 2005
PAGES: 49-83

HONOR CODE

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University’s honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager’s Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: “On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.” The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed “[signed].”