To: Writing Program Assessment Committee

From: Joshua Cohen

Subject: English 181 Syllabus, “Time Travel”

Date: December 18,2014

This course will revolve around exploring the nature of time in and through various literary texts. We will discuss and write about narrative manipulations of time across a number of genres, including poetry, short stories, novels, film, and drama. As we consider “time,” we will examine various related themes, such as history, memory, fate, mortality and the afterlife.

Students will be asked to write in both academic and non-academic genres to help them learn to identify the conventions that govern different kinds of writing. After reading personal narratives by Raymond Carver and David Sedaris, students will write one of their own. To help prepare students to write their final assignment—a research paper—they will first write an argument about Christopher Nolan’s film *Memento*. We will discuss the significance of the film’s innovative reverse chronology in class, as well as how interpreting films differs from analyzing written texts. I will assign two secondary sources for students to incorporate into their arguments about the importance of time in *Memento*. This short interpretive assignment will help students practice interacting with, in Bizup’s terms, exhibit and argument sources. The final assignment will require students to write a research paper about the significance of time in any of the major texts we have read.

All of the readings were selected because they raise interesting questions about the relationship between time and art. Not only do they represent a wide range of genres, but they reflect various historical periods. The readings can be roughly divided into three groups: those which memorialize the past (i.e. *Flight*), those which seek to represent some aspect of human experience in the present moment (i.e. *Mrs. Dalloway*), and those which imagine the future (i.e. *Brave New World*). Students will, thus, write formally and informally about how literature takes various stances in relation to time. With *Flight*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Brave New World*, students will have the chance to work slowly through texts, writing about various literary facets, such as plot, character development, and symbolism, as well as their own affective responses. Some texts, like *Flight*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Arcadia*, depart from linear chronology, giving students the opportunity to consider the relationship between form and content, while others, like “Funes the Memorious” and “The Garden of Forking Paths” deal with time more philosophically.

Revision is an integral component of this course. Students will participate in peer review workshops for two separate assignments. Their final portfolio, which will include revised versions of all three major assignments, accounts for the majority of their grade. Along with their portfolios, students will submit a reflection detailing the most significant revisions they made and explaining their rationale for doing so. They will also be asked to reference changes recommended by their peers which they chose to adopt. Students will write these reflection letters as arguments: they will cite examples from their portfolios as evidence to convince the reader that they have met the learning outcomes for the course.

**English 181, Section X, “Time Travel”**

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| Instructor: | Joshua Cohen |
| Meeting Time and Place: | TBA |
| Office Hours: | By appointment |
| Contact: | Joshua.laurence.cohen@emory.edu |
| Course Website: | TBA |

**Course Description**

“Time” is one of the most important concepts we use to organize our understanding of the world. Heraclitus famously observed that no one steps into the same river twice, and we typically think of our lives as journeys through time. Almost any story we might tell, whether of growth or decay, success or failure, involves some orientation within time. Yet, as much as we generally think of time as flowing in one direction, we are also fascinated by the idea of time travel, of returning to the past or visiting the future.

In this course, we will read the work of artists who explore the nature of time as inspiration for writing our own pieces dealing with temporality. We will read short stories, poetry, novels, and drama as we consider various questions related to time: What is the relationship between memory and identity? How do literary texts portray the past and imagine the future? How do disruptions in narrative time, such as flashbacks, affect our experience of a given text?

This is a writing and thinking intensive course: we will practice (re)writing a number of genres for different audiences and revising our work throughout the semester.

**Course Goals**

By the end of this class you will

* Understand how genres function through conventions, ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
* Write in several genres, adapting your writing style to different audiences
* Consider writing as an ongoing process, which includes generating ideas, drafting, revising, and polishing
* Practice critiquing others’ works in constructive ways through peer review workshops
* Develop strong research skills by analyzing primary and secondary sources and synthesizing them with your own ideas

**Required Texts**

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

Sherman Alexie, *Flight*

All other readings will be available on Reserves Direct or online

**Course Policies**

**Assigned Readings:** You are expected to come to class with all assigned readings and with daily writing assignments completed. If you do not, you may receive a lower participation grade.

**Participation**: You will receive a participation grade that includes attitude, in class writing, and willingness to contribute to discussions and writing workshops.

**Attendance:** If you miss more than three classes, points will be deducted from your final grade. Beginning with your fourth unexcused absence, your grade will drop by one letter per absence. If you know you will have to miss class for a school related activity you must let me know ahead of time to be excused. Documented medical emergencies are also excused.

* 4 absences = B
* 5 absences = C
* 6 absences = D
* 7 absences = F

**Writing Workshops:** We will devote several class sessions to reading each other’s work. These workshops are critical to fulfilling our course goals, so missing them may result in a lower participation grade. You are expected to come to class having read and made comments on your fellow students’ work, so that we can devote class time to discussing each other’s drafts in small groups. These workshop sessions will be essential to helping you revise your work for you final portfolio.

**Late Work:** All assignments are due by the time and date specified. Late work will be penalized by one letter grade for each class period the assignment is late. Should you feel that your circumstances warrant alternate considerations, you are advised to contact me as soon as those circumstances arise: documentation will be required in these events.

**Short Writing Assignments**: It is vital that you keep up with these as they are assigned. They help prepare you for class and let you practice writing skills without the pressure of a grade. You will receive full credit for completing them on time or a zero if you fail to do so. These assignments will not be accepted late. If you know you will be absent, you must turn your assignment in early.

**Electronics:** Please do not use cell phones during class. If you bring a laptop or tablet to class, please only use it for class purposes. Failure to do so may result in a lower participation grade.

**Email:** Email is the best way to contact me if you have questions or concerns. Generally, I will respond to all student email within 24 hours (although on weekends and holidays, it may take a little longer). Likewise, there may be instances when I will need to contact you by email. It is your responsibility to check your Emory-based email account at least once every 24 hours.

**Academic Integrity:** We will follow the Emory University Honor Code (<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policy/honor_code.html>). I take plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty seriously. Should you engage in academic dishonesty in this course, you may receive an F on the assignment.

**Public Nature of the Course:** Please consider all writing for this class to be “public.” Part of becoming an effective writer is learning to appreciate the ideas and feedback of others. In this course, our purpose is to come together as a writing community. Avoid writing about topics that you wish to keep private.

**Course Assessment**

**Participation/Daily Assignments**

We will free write or do other impromptu writing assignments during most classes. Completing these will count toward your participation grade. Other short writing assignments will be given for homework as preparation for our next class session. These will be completion grades: you will receive a zero if you do not turn them in on time, but will otherwise receive full credit. Similarly, I will not give a letter grade to first drafts of your three major writing assignments, but if you do not complete them on time you will lose participation points.

**Personal Narrative**

After reading personal narratives in class, you will write one of your own. You will write about a memory that you find meaningful, beautiful, harrowing, tragic, hilarious, or otherwise worthy of preserving. You can write about any experience, whether a childhood memory or something that happened yesterday. As in the pieces by Carver and Sedaris, you will need to use vivid details, plausible dialogue, and rich descriptions. You can choose the extent to which you want to fictionalize this piece: it might be closer to the memoir end of the spectrum, like “Me Talk Pretty One Day,” or it might be closer to the adaptation end of the spectrum, like *Flight*. In either case, remember that others will read what you write. One goal of this paper is for you to write something very different from typical academic writing, which will allow you to take risks and make moves unavailable to you within the constraints of an academic paper. This piece should be about 1,000 words.

**Film Analysis: *Memento***

You will analyze the significance of time in Christopher Nolan’s film *Memento*. You might focus on any number of issues related to the theme of time in the film: Why does *Memento* unfold in reverse chronological order? What is Leonard’s understanding of the relationship between memory, meaning, and selfhood? How do the audience’s perceptions toward the characters shift as the film progresses? This is not a film review, but rather an interpretive piece, so you do not need to summarize the plot of the film. I will provide you with two scholarly articles about the film, which you must incorporate into your argument. Whether you agree or disagree with these scholars’ arguments, you must succinctly explain what they are arguing. If you disagree with their arguments, then you must explain why they are flawed. If you agree with their arguments, then you must explain how they support your own argument. You should accurately summarize the scholars’ arguments, but do not simply repeat them without offering a contribution of your own. Your analysis should consider traditional literary elements of the film, such as setting, dialogue, plot, symbolism, and character development, as well as its audio-visual nature: how do the cinematography, editing, and score contribute to the film’s view of time? This piece should be about 1,500 words.

**Research Paper**

Building on the interpretive skills you developed in writing your film analysis, you will make an argument about the role of time in one of the texts we have read in class. Although your argument should be grounded in the primary text on which you choose to focus, you will need to incorporate some secondary sources. There is no minimum number of required sources; you should use as many sources necessary to make your argument. If you choose to write on one of the longer works of prose—*Flight*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Brave New World*—you should focus on that text. You may write about more than one poem, but you will have to clearly explain why you chose to put them in dialogue. Your argument should include both close readings of important passages and broader analysis about the role of time in the whole work. This assignment should be about 2,000 words.

**Final Portfolio**

Throughout the semester we will discuss revision strategies. At the end of the course, you will revise your personal narrative, film analysis, and research paper and submit as a final portfolio. Your portfolio should include a one page cover letter explaining the major revisions you made and why you think they make your pieces more effective. You will write this reflection letter as an argument: you must cite examples from your portfolios as evidence to convince the reader that you have met the learning outcomes for the course. Your revisions should not be limited to correcting sentence level or grammatical errors, but should involve the overall structure of your piece. You might eliminate sections that were unsuccessful and replace them with something better, or change the sequence of paragraphs in your piece.

**How grades are calculated**

20% Participation/Daily Assignments

10% Personal Narrative (2nd draft)

10% Film Analysis (2nd draft)

20% Research Paper (2nd draft)

40% Final Portfolio

**Grading Scale**

**Percentage Scale: Emory Point Scale:**

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| --- | --- |
| **Points/Percentage** | **Letter Grade** |
| 95.00-100 | A |
| 90.00-94.99 | A- |
| 86.00-89.99 | B+ |
| 83.00-85.99 | B |
| 80.00-82.99 | B- |
| 76.00-79.99 | C+ |
| 73.00-75.99 | C |
| 70.00-72.99 | C- |
| 66.00-69.99 | D+ |
| 60.00-65.99 | D |
| 0-59.99 | F |

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| --- | --- |
| **Points** | **Letter Grade** |
| 4.00 | A |
| 3.70 | A- |
| 3.30 | B+ |
| 3.00 | B |
| 2.70 | B- |
| 2.30 | C+ |
| 2.00 | C |
| 1.70 | C- |
| 1.30 | D+ |
| 1.00 | D |
| 0.00 | F |

**Student Success Resources**

**Access and Disability Resources**

I strive to create an inclusive learning environment for all. I am invested in your success in this class and at Emory, so please let me know if anything is standing in the way of your doing your best work. This can include your own learning strengths, any classroom dynamics that you find uncomfortable, ESL issues, disability or chronic illness, and/or personal issues that impact your work. I will hold such conversations in strict confidence.

Students with medical/health conditions that might impact academic success should visit Access, Disability Services and Resources (ADSR formerly the Office of Disability Services, ODS) to determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations. Students who receive accommodations must present the Accommodation Letter from ADSR to your professor at the beginning of the semester, or when the letter is received.

**Emory Writing Center**

The Emory Writing Center offers 45-minute individual conferences to Emory College and Laney Graduate School students. Our discussion- and workshop-based approach enables writers of all levels to see their writing with fresh eyes and to practice a variety of strategies for writing, revising, and editing. The EWC is a great place to bring any project—from traditional papers to websites—at any stage in your composing process. EWC tutors can talk with you about your purpose, organization, audience, design choices, or use of sources. They can also work with you on sentence-level concerns (including grammar and word choice), but they won’t proofread for you. Instead, they’ll discuss strategies and resources you can use to become a better editor of your own work.

The Emory Writing Center is located in Callaway N-212. We encourage writers to schedule appointments in advance as we can take walk-ins on a limited basis only. We require hard copies of traditional paper drafts and encourage you to bring a laptop if you're working on a digital or multi-modal text. Please bring a copy of your assignment instructions, too. In addition to our regular conferences in Callaway, we host Studio Hours every Tuesday from 7-9 pm in Woodruff Library 214. Studio Hours provide a supportive, focused workspace and are open to all students. Emory Writing Center tutors circulate to encourage writers, provide resources, and address questions. For more information, or to make an appointment, visit<http://writingcenter.emory.edu>.

**Tutoring for Multilingual Students**

If you are a multilingual student and English is not your first language, you may benefit from working with trained ESL Tutors. These tutors are undergraduates who will support the development of both your English language and writing skills. Like Writing Center tutors, ESL tutors will not proofread your work. Language is best learned through interactive dialogue, so come to an ESL tutoring session ready to collaborate!

ESL tutors will meet with you in designated locations on campus for 1-hour appointments, and they will help you at any stage of the process of developing your written work or presentation. You may bring your work on a laptop or on paper.

For instructions on how to schedule an appointment, links to ASST, and the policies for using the service, go to:<http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/tutoring/index.html>

If you do not have a scheduled appointment, you may use the Academic ESL Skills Lab, located in Room 422 of Woodruff Library (next to the Language Center). Here, you may have less time with a tutor if other students are waiting, but you can find drop-in support just when you need it. To view the lab hours for the current semester, go to:<http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/lab.html> .

For information about other ESL services available to undergraduates, go to:<http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/index.html>

or contact Jane O’Connor, Director of ESL Services (jcoconn@emory.edu ) or Denise Dolan, Assistant Director of ESL Services (denise.dolan@emory.edu ).

**Emory Counseling Services**

Free and confidential counseling services and support are available from the Emory

Counseling Center (404) 727-7450. This can be an invaluable resource when stress makes your work more challenging than it ought to be. <http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/>

**Final Exam**

There will be no final exam for this course. During the last week of class, I will hold mandatory conferences to discuss your revisions as you finalize your portfolios.

**Tentative Schedule**

MD=*Mrs. Dalloway*

BNW=*Brave New World*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Topic | Reading | Writing |
| W 8/27 | Course Introduction |  |  |
| F 8/29 | Time and Memory | Raymond Carver: “My Father’s Life” |  |
| M 9/1 | Labor Day |  |  |
| W 9/3 |  | David Sedaris: “Me Talk Pretty One Day” |  |
| F 9/5 |  | *Flight* pp. 1-23 |  |
| M 9/8 |  | *Flight* pp. 24-53 |  |
| W 9/10 |  | *Flight* pp. 54-78 |  |
| F 9/12 |  | *Flight* pp. 79-106 | **1st Personal Narrative draft due** |
| M 9/15 |  | *Flight* pp. 107-138 |  |
| W 9/17 |  | *Flight* pp. 139-181 |  |
| F 9/19 |  | Jorge Luis Borges: “Funes the Memorious” |  |
| M 9/22 | Time and Art | William Shakespeare: Sonnets 19, 55, 64, 65, and 116; Andrew Marvell: “To His Coy Mistress”; John Keats: “Ode on a Grecian Urn” |  |
| W 9/24 |  | Robert Frost: “Nothing Gold Can Stay”; Percy Shelley: “Ozymandias”  Robert Penn Warren: “Evening Hawk”  Philip Larkin: “Churchgoing” |  |
| F 9/26 | Revision Strategies I | “Shitty First Drafts” Anne Lamott; “The Maker’s Eye: Revising Your Own Manuscripts” Donald M. Murray | **2nd Personal Narrative draft due** |
| M 9/29 | Workshop | Workshop drafts |  |
| W 10/1 | Workshop | Workshop drafts |  |
| F 10/3 | Interlude: Audio-visual literacy | Christopher Nolan: *Memento* |  |
| M 10/6 | Capturing the Present | T.S. Eliot: “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”  W.H. Auden: “As I Walked Out One Evening” |  |
| W 10/8 |  | MD pp. 3-28 |  |
| F 10/10 |  | MD pp. 29-55 | **1st Film Analysis draft due** |
| M 10/13 | Fall Break |  |  |
| W 10/15 |  | MD pp. 56-80 |  |
| F 10/17 |  | MD pp. 81-115 |  |
| M 10/20 |  | MD pp. 116-147 |  |
| W 10/22 |  | MD pp. 148-190 |  |
| F 10/24 |  | James Baldwin: “Sonny’s Blues” | **2nd Film Analysis draft due** |
| M 10/27 | Imagining the Future | BNW pp. 3-29 |  |
| W 10/29 |  | BNW pp. 30-71 |  |
| F 10/31 |  | BNW pp. 72-106 |  |
| M 11/3 |  | BNW pp. 107-139 |  |
| W 11/5 |  | BNW pp. 140-171 |  |
| F 11/7 |  | BNW pp. 172-197 | **Research Paper proposal due** |
| M 11/10 |  | BNW pp. 198-229 |  |
| W 11/12 |  | BNW pp. 230-259 |  |
| F 11/14 |  | Jorge Luis Borges: “The Garden of Forking Paths” |  |
| M 11/17 |  | Czeslaw Milosz: “A Felicitous Life”; “How It Should Be In Heaven”; “Dawns”; “The Year 1900”; W.B. Yeats: “Sailing to Byzantium” Walt Whitman: “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” |  |
| W 11/19 | Revision Strategies II | “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers” Nancy Sommers  *How to Write Anything*  p. 432-449 |  |
| F 11/21 | Workshop | Workshop drafts | **1st Research Paper draft due** |
| M 11/24 | Workshop | Workshop drafts |  |
| W 11/26 | Thanksgiving Break |  |  |
| F 11/28 | Thanksgiving Break |  |  |
| M 12/1 |  | Tom Stoppard: *Arcadia*  Act I |  |
| W 12/3 |  | Tom Stoppard: *Arcadia*  Act II |  |
| F 12/5 |  |  | **2nd Research Paper draft due** |
| M 12/8 |  |  |  |
| M 12/15 | Student conferences |  | **Final portfolio due** |