

CRAFTING POINT OF VIEW/HCOL 186

Honors College Sophomore Seminar

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January 16th - May 4th, 2018

Tuesdays/Thursdays, 11:40 a.m.-12:55 p.m.

University Heights North 016

Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 10-11 a.m.,
4:15-5:15 p.m., and by scheduled appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Think about it. Point of view shapes everything—in life and, more so, in writing. This opening sentence demonstrates its power: that direct-address, invisible “you” as in Nike’s legendary slogan, “Just do it.”

In this course, through immersion and imitation, you will examine how writers make rhetorical choices and utilize point of view to craft short stories, novels, essays, memoirs, poems, and media messages. As both reader and writer, you will study: how point of view impacts voice; how it relates to audience and purpose; and how authors shift points of view, zoom in or out, oftentimes from the “I” in order to reckon with traumatic life experiences—their characters’ and their own.

Through literary and rhetorical analyses, as well as drafting and revising original works, you will experience *wait, what?* moments in the probing and coming to appreciate the transformative power and mastery—see the magic, the *point*—in manipulating point of view. You will research craft to answer the driving question, *how did that writer do that?*

As a student of craft, you will take a ‘scientific’ approach to syntax, dissecting sentences, and scrutinizing diction. You will debate pros and cons, contemplating omniscient versus limited, direct address versus inclusion, singular versus multiple “I”s. You will question: *Does this work? How? Why? Or why not?* Through experimentation in first-, second-, and third-person treatments, you’ll expand perceptions of the discipline—and art—of writing.

Most essential to this course, to writing—and life itself: Trust the process.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

In this reading- and writing-intensive sophomore seminar, you will:

- Explore and immerse yourself in multiple genres of writing—as reader and writer
- Ponder the integral connection between purpose and point of view
- Discover the essence of your own passion for the craft of writing
- Expand, improve, and refine your writing skills and mechanics
- Experiment with all three points of view to impact audience and achieve purpose
- Realize the power and necessity of revision—and surprise!
- Hone editorial skills in exchanging valuable feedback with peer writers
- Master invention and revision at all stages of the writing process
- Synthesize approaches to writing so that each nourishes the other
- Attain confidence in your ongoing potential as writers—and communicators

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Through close and critical reading, you will learn:

to appreciate writing as craft and its ability to illuminate universal human experiences.

Through process and journal writing, you will learn:

to reveal to your own readers complex meaning through crafting point of view.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS:

The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis, ISBN: 978-0-312-65539-6, Picador; 7th edition (October 26, 2010).

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, ISBN: 978-0156028356, Mariner Books; 1 edition (2003).

Jay McInerney, *Bright Lights, Big City*, ISBN: 978-0-394-72641-0, Vintage Contemporaries, 1984.

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, ISBN: 978-0-7679-0289-2, Broadway Books, 1990.

Abigail Thomas, *Safekeeping*, ISBN: 978-0-385-72055-7, Anchor Books, 2001.

Mark Richard, *House of Prayer No. 2*, ISBN: 978-1-400-07777-9, Anchor Books, Reprint edition (February 14, 2012).

Maya Angelou, *And Still I Rise*, ISBN: 978-0-394-50252-6, Random House, 1978.

Donald Hall, *The Painted Bed*, ISBN: 978-0-618-34075-0, Mariner Books, 2002.

A portable notebook ("Discourse" Journal), *one you love* for in-class sharing and experimenting. Access to Blackboard for all course materials and your online Writer's Notebook. Folders for handouts and drafts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Three Writing Projects, Weekly Writing Peer Workshops, an online Writer's Notebook, One Critical Literary Analysis Essay, One Student-led Writing-Craft Discussion, and a final Writing Project.

For your culminating project of the course, you will choose from one of the three genres—Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, or Poetry/Media—to compose a portfolio of stories, essays, memoir chapters, poems, or media materials using multiple points of view, employing art and craft to reckon with subject matter, hone purpose, and bolster the significance and implication of your writings.

METHODS OF EVALUATION:

Class presence and participation:

In-class Exercises, Student-led Craft Discussions, and Peer Workshops: **30%**

Three Writing Projects (Fiction/Creative Nonfiction, and choice of Poetry/Media), including "Thinking Pages" and "Mid-process drafts": 30%

One Critical, Literary Analysis Research Essay on Craft: 10%

Discourse Journal/Writer's Notebook (in-class and online): 20%

End-of-term Writing Project/Workshop: 10%

EXPECTATIONS (HOW TO SUCCEED):

Keeping up with readings. *Reading well precedes writing well* (Donald Hall). This course – in which reading, thinking, discussion, response and writing are closely interconnected – requires critical exploration, discernment, and effective modeling through exposure to a variety of assigned readings.

Submitting work on time. Due dates are rigorous and unyielding. For each day that elapses from the time a journal entry, essay, draft of final paper is due, 10 points will be deducted from the final grade. Assignments will no longer be accepted one week beyond the due date. Absences from class or lost files are not valid excuses for missing deadlines. Be sure to make back-up copies of all your writing and *don't throw anything away during the semester*. All work submitted must be printed and stapled. *NO work accepted via email*. If you are absent, put your essay in the box outside my office door or bring it to the next class. NOTE: The deadlines are absolute: half a letter grade will be deducted for every day a paper is late, e.g., A to A-minus, B+ to B, etc.

Class presence, punctuality, and preparedness. This is not only appreciated, but also expected. The vitality of the classroom environment and peer workshops, *and* your personal progression as a writer depend on your effort and proactive involvement. *Three or more unexcused absences from class each incur a penalty of one letter grade*. Active listening as well as sharing, and most importantly, the respect of others' ideas (agreeing to disagree) is at all times required. *Please bring to every class* your texts, draft-in-progress (with one additional peer copy), and your Discourse Journal.

Laptops and cell phones. You may bring both to class as long as they are turned OFF. Computers are great; but in this course, hard copies are better. Revision requires *seeing* the changes from draft to draft. There will be no in-class electronic editing, or text messaging.

Periodic (minimum one, ideally two or three) individual writing conferences. It is imperative that I meet with each of you one-on-one at least once during the semester, not only to share ideas, but also to evaluate personal growth in your thinking and writing. Conferences are not an option for this course.

Visits to the Writing Center. Here you will find valuable, one-on-one instruction and assistance at any stage of your writing process. This is a tremendous resource, and it's free! To make an appointment, visit www.uvm.edu/writingcenter or stop in (Bailey-Howe Library, 1st floor).

THE DISCOURSE JOURNAL AND WRITER'S NOTEBOOK: You are expected to write at minimum *three* entries per week, shifting and alternating perspective by utilizing each of the three points of view: first-person ("I/We..."), second-person ("You..."), and third-person ("He/She/They..."). In addition to this online Writer's Notebook, you are expected to keep and carry with you and to every class a "Discourse Journal" to document reading responses, contemplate point of view, and complete practice exercises both in and out of the classroom. You will bring this portable journal to each class for sharing and experimenting.

STUDENT-LED CRAFT DISCUSSIONS: What fascinates you most about the way authors choose and utilize varying points of view? What works have you read that move you based on the author's experimentation with perspective? For this Craft Discussion, you can choose from any piece (or pieces) from one or a variety of genres to dissect and analyze in order to enlighten peers and your professor on one or many facets of crafting point of view. Most of this will come from close reading and your own impressions as a reader. *Look at this!* Try to make the discussion entertaining, interactive, and informative. Be sure to engage peers in the readings and discussion. You may assign suggested readings ahead of time, if necessary. Approximate length of discussion: 30 minutes.

THE CRITICAL LITERARY RESEARCH ESSAY: For this essay, you will choose one of the writers or works we've read this semester for further research in order to explore one aspect of the writer's life and/or other critical essays on the work. With this newfound information, you will compose a critical essay of your own. This writing project should begin with a detailed researchable question. You are required to search for/find at least six sources pertaining to your research question and keep track of them in a research log; three of these must be "print" (books/chapters from the library or articles from the library database) and must appear as both in-text citations and sources listed in your Works Cited page.

LIBRARY RESEARCH GUIDE: You will have access to a research guide created specifically for this course—drawing together the most useful library research tools and resources (e.g., Library Catalog, subject encyclopedias & companions, magazine and newspaper article databases, citation guides, etc.) for your further exploration of point of view and other writing- and craft-related questions. This guide was created by Pat Mardeusz, the librarian who works with students in the Honors College and several humanities disciplines. She encourages students to schedule a research consultation during the semester where she will work one-on-one to help you search for and find resources in pursuit of answers to your driving research questions.

ESSAY SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: All submitted work must be typed/word-processed, 12-point font, double-spaced, thoroughly spell-checked and proofread. Please include your name, professor's name, course, and date, flush, upper left (MLA-style heading); insert page numbers and a header (your last name). Give each final piece a compelling title. Include all "process" pieces and drafts. *Submissions will not be accepted electronically* and are to be handed in at the end of class on the due date. Page requirements vary with each writing project. Be sure to defer to quality over quantity, depth over length.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: College students are expected to be honest in all academic endeavors. Any acts of dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating only hurts you, the student. Plagiarism – "borrowing" work from another source, another student, author, or the internet without proper acknowledgment and/or citation – is not only morally wrong, but impinges directly upon your own learning and personal growth. Such actions will result in an immediate failing grade, and could lead to expulsion from the learning institution.

HONORS COLLEGE SOPHOMORE SEMINAR GUIDELINES:

This course will be *academically challenging* as content requires students to read closely and analyze critically, microscopically, to zoom in at sentence level on diction and syntax. Throughout the semester, students will read, study, imitate, and construct prose (fiction and

nonfiction) and poetry (traditional and advertising-oriented), shaping content and meaning by playing creatively in first-, second-, and third-person points of view.

This course will be **research-focused** in its requirement of students to delve deep into the craft employed by writers to dissect written text in order to explore below the surface of reader-response impressions, to determine purpose and decipher message. The course will require *research-oriented* literary and rhetorical analyses, a research essay as well as student-led craft discussions.

This course will be **highly interactive**, with weekly writing workshops and a variety of peer feedback exercises, as well as circle-up discussions about readings and the craft of writing.

This course will be **writing intensive** by nature of content and course design.

This course will be **creative** in challenging students to experiment with point of view and form in their writing endeavors.

The act and art of writing reaches across all disciplines. This course will be **multidisciplinary and diverse** in course reading content and writers studied, as well as the ideas students ponder and incorporate into their own writing projects.

This course will be **innovative and expansive** in the approaches to writing it encourages and nurtures as well as its examination of how technology continues to impact language and, specifically, point of view.

ABBREVIATED COURSE OVERVIEW:

Weeks 1-4: Forming Community

Crafting Point of View Questionnaire
Utilizing Daily Warm-ups from *Naming the World*
Reading well precedes writing well (Donald Hall)
The Collected Stories of Lydia Davis
Bright Lights, Big City
The Color Purple
Practicing the magic of imitation
Playing in multiple points of view
Experimenting with Fiction

Weeks 5-8: From Fiction to Creative Nonfiction

The Things They Carried
Safekeeping
House of Prayer No. 2

Weeks 9-10: From Creative Nonfiction to Poetry

And Still I Rise
The Painted Bed and more from Donald Hall

Weeks 11-12: Poetry and the Media Message/Campaign
Creative Copywriting

Weeks 13-15: Final Writing Project

NOTE: A DETAILED SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE POSTED IN BLACKBOARD.