

San José State University
Department of English
ENGL 190: Honors Seminar, Fall 2012

Professor:	Dr. Adrienne L. Eastwood
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Office Hours:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m., Wednesdays, 1:30-3:00 p.m.
Class Days/Time:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00 – 1:15 p.m.
Classroom:	Sweeney Hall 410
Prerequisites:	Upper division standing, GPA of 3.4 or better

Faculty Web Page

Copies of the course materials such as the syllabus, major assignment handouts, etc. may be found on my faculty web page at www.sjsu.edu/faculty/eastwood

Course Description: Authors, Alter-egos, and Avatars: The Construction of Identity in the Post-modern Memoir

Background: One of the themes in *Hamlet* is the idea that memory is subjective: different human beings remember people and events in different ways. Hamlet's declaration that he has access to that which "passes show" suggests that only he can properly grieve for his dead father because only he seems to remember how great the late Hamlet Senior was. Later in the play, Hamlet's frantic attempt to remind his mother of his dead father's attributes (Hyperion) compared to his usurping uncle's features (A Satyr), literally offers a re-remembering, a reconstruction of the dead man so that Gertrude will see things his way. What is the ghost but a walking (unreliable) memory? Early modern literature is full of accounts—either true or fictitious—that claim to be authentic, drawn from "eyewitnesses." And yet, even in these, the author's subjectivity is always itself constructed, and the events carefully selected and craftily described in order to present an over-arching concept or idea. In the post-modern age, we are no longer unsuspecting readers; we know that objectivity is problematic at best. Why then has the

memoir (literally a story derived from memory) become such a popular form for readers today?¹

Rationale/Course Description: In this class, I would like to explore in detail the relationships among authorship, memory, and identity formation in four very different forms of memoir: the personal narrative, the graphic novel, social media (such as Twitter and Facebook) and the video game. A thorough engagement with each of these forms should uncover some similarities (and some differences) in the ways in which memoir functions to construct identity. Each form invites identification from the readership or audience in a different way, and yet, each encourages an engagement with alterity that profoundly effects identity formation.

Some questions that would govern our thinking include: What role does the author play in the text? Who is the “I” when an author uses the first-person singular? How do we access the “idea” behind the author’s positioning? How important is authenticity in the creation of a memoir? What accounts for the increasing popularity of the memoir in pop culture today?

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

SJSU Department of English Student Learning Objectives

Students will demonstrate the ability to

- 1) read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
- 2) show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
- 3) write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
- 4) develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
- 5) articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Student Learning Outcomes

This course serves the department’s Student Learning Objectives 1 and 2 (LO1 and LO2) by introducing you to several texts in English and American literature. Students read closely throughout the course and will have ample opportunity to discuss and write about what they learn. In this class, we will study one genre—that of the memoir—quite closely. Success in LO1 and LO2 will be measured by the final grade in the course.

Students are asked to produce several essays for this course (a total of at least 5,000 words) including at least one research assignment; this clearly serves Learning Objectives

¹ Over 4,000 autobiographical texts were published between 1990 and 1996, and today several memoirs grace the New York Times best seller lists month after month.

3 and 4 (LO3 and LO4). Assessment of student success in LO3 and LO4 will be measured by their grades on these essays.

All of my classes are discussion based, and my critical approach to the material is new historicist. Students are asked to come to class prepared to talk about the material they read, and my lectures aim to help students to realize the relations among culture, history, and the texts we read. The ability to articulate the relationships listed in Learning Objective 5 (LO5) is measured by the students' participation grade in the course.

Required Texts/Readings

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. Ed. Susanne Wofford 0333594924
Patti Smith, *Just Kids*. Harper Collins, 2010
9780060936228

Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*. Firebrand. 1987.
9781563410291

Vivian Gornick, *Fierce Attachments*
Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1987.
9780374529963

James Frey, *A Million Little Pieces*
Anchor, 2005
9780307276902

Art Spiegelman, *Maus*
Pantheon, 1986
0394747232

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*
First Mariner, Houghton Mifflin, 2007
9780618477944

Julia Wertz, *Drinking at the Movies*
Random House (Buy directly from publisher for the best price) 2010
978030759188

Tom Bissell, *Extra Lives: Why Video Games Matter*
Vintage, 2010.
978030747315

Stephen Elliott, *The Adderall Diaries*. Graywolf Press. Any version of this text will do—I bought an ebook, so let's experiment with this and use an ebook if you like.

Other Readings: I will be asking you to read a few theoretical texts that are widely available on line. Links to these essays will be provided on the Reading Schedule or a citation will be provided that you can use to find the text online.

Classroom Protocol

This is a seminar, and as such, each of us is responsible for the quality and usefulness of our meetings. I expect that you will find the readings both interesting and valuable, and I encourage you to express and explore your particular interests as we work through the material.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the [current academic calendar](http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/) web page located at http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/. The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Grading Breakdown:

Contribution and Participation	15%
Presentation	15%
Informal Writing	15%
Essay 1 (Midterm)	25%
Final Essay (10-15 pages)	30%

Written Work: You will be asked to produce several different types of pieces for this course including two formal essays (one at mid-term and one at the end of the semester), using both primary and secondary texts. These essays will allow you to more thoroughly develop a line of thinking inspired by the reading and discussions. Your success on these papers will be directly proportional to your knowledge and understanding of the texts. For your final essay, you will have the option of either developing a well-researched theory about memoir as a genre, or producing a memoir of your own (or the beginning of one), that includes a well-researched scholarly rationale.

I will also ask you to produce several informal written assignments in which you experiment creatively with the memoir genre.

Explicit directions for all of these assignments will be distributed in class and posted to my website.

Participation: Your participation in this class is imperative. In order to receive an A or a B in participation, you must do more than simply be present. You must have the materials read on time, and you must be prepared to discuss your thoughts and observations about the material.

Presentation: Towards the end of the semester, you will be asked to put together a presentation for the class in which you present your research on some aspect of our reading and discussion that interests you. I will give you more detailed instructions for this assignment later in the semester.

University Policies

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University's Academic Integrity policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm), located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Disability Resource Center](http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/) (DRC) at <http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/> to establish a record of their disability.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The [Writing Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/) is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/>.

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READING SCHEDULE: SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
0	Aug. 23	Welcome and Introductions
1	Aug. 28 Aug. 30	<i>Hamlet</i> <i>Hamlet</i> and Marjorie Garber (in Wofford) [Memoir Assignment]
2	Sept. 4 Sept. 6	Michel Foucault, What is an Author, Roland Barthes, The Death of the Author, Claire Kahane, "The Smile of the Cheshire Cat: Uncovering the Author in the Text." <i>Women's Studies</i> , 39:119-135. NO CLASS
3	Sept. 11 Sept. 13	Patti Smith, <i>Just Kids</i> Patti Smith, <i>Just Kids</i>
4	Sept. 18 Sept. 20	Leslie Fineberg, <i>Stone Butch Blues</i> Leslie Fineberg, <i>Stone Butch Blues</i> [Memoir Assignment-Perspective]
5	Sept. 25 Sept. 27	Vivian Gornick, <i>Fierce Attachments</i> [distribute Essay 1 directions] Maureen Corrigan, "You, as a reader, are a dope." http://www.salon.com/2003/08/19/corrigan/
6	Oct. 2 Oct. 4	James Frey, <i>A Million Little Pieces</i> Frey and the Oprah controversy
7	Oct. 9 Oct. 11	Catch-up week [Essay 1 Due] Catch-up week
8	Oct. 16 Oct. 18	Stephen Elliott, <i>The Adderall Diaries</i> . Stephen Elliott, <i>The Adderall Diaries</i> .
9	Oct. 23 Oct. 25	Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> Art Spiegelman, <i>Maus</i> [Drawing Assignment]
10	Oct. 30 Nov. 1	Alison Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> Alison Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i>
11	Nov. 6 Nov. 8	Julia Wertz, <i>Drinking at the Movies</i> Julia Wertz, <i>Drinking at the Movies</i>
12	Nov. 13 Nov. 15	Author Stephen Elliott visits Video Games/Avatars. Tom Bissell, <i>Extra Lives</i> .

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
13	Nov. 20 Nov. 22	Tom Bissell, <i>Extra Lives</i> THANKSGIVING: NO CLASS
14	Nov. 27 Nov. 29	Video Games Continued Avatar Presentations [Directions for Final Paper]
15	Nov. 27 Nov. 29	Developing Theories about Memoir PRESENTATIONS
16	Dec. 4 Dec. 6	PRESENTATIONS FINAL PAPER DUE