

Course Prospectus:

URBS 9013.640: “A SLICE OF LIFE: WRITING MEMOIR”

Kathryn Kitsi Watterson, kwaters@sas.upenn.edu

Thursdays, 5:15am-8:15am

Course description:

This community-based, in-person workshop course will explore and practice memoir writing. We will pay special attention to memory and imagination and the ways writers re-construct the past to express their truths. In writing our stories, we'll acknowledge the lines between fiction and non-fiction. Students will craft their own original pieces. In class, we will read and reflect on each other's work as well as on outside readings and the work of visiting writers. Course requirements include thoughtful and committed class participation, daily personal freewriting, regular writing exercises and assignments, and a final portfolio.

Class structure:

- In-person class sessions on Thursdays
 - Share and Discuss your writing and reading
 - Participate in workshop
 - Q&A with visiting writers
 - Small group collaboration
- Out-of-class activities:
 - Free-write for 10 minutes a day
 - Read and take notes on assigned readings
 - Write and complete short writing assignments

Students will be graded according to the following requirements:

- **PARTICIPATION:** Students are expected to make regular contributions to discussion: come to each class session prepared to discuss the readings, ask questions, pose ideas for discussion, and respond to what other members of the class write and have to say.
- **WORKS IN PROGRESS:** Students' stories and essays will be workshopped by the group on a rotating schedule. We will also complete creative exercises together in class, and adapt/revise some of these exercises for submission. Additional reactions and comments on Canvas are highly encouraged.
- **EVENT REPORTS:** When students attend or observe a live literary event during the semester, write a personal response and share it with the class. Several readings at Penn, Kelly Writers' House and the Free Library of Philadelphia will be announced in class and on our Canvas site.
- **PORTFOLIO:** The final portfolio consists of all original in-class exercises, responses to prompts, responses to readings and events, copies of your stories (with my comments) and a revised and polished revision of your favorite story or essay. Please include your favorite passage or passages from your own writing.

- FINAL LETTER to me about your experience as a writer this semester. What worked best for you? What was your most stellar writing experience? When were you able to feel the flow? What holds you back? What's next?

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Books available for purchase or available on electronic reserve at Van Pelt
- Course Packet, as well as a number of materials available as downloadable PDFs on our Canvas site
- A dedicated notebook and pen or pencil

A complete overview of readings, assignments, and course policies will be available in the full course syllabus.