The Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University
Advanced Writing Course
The Courage to Sound Like Ourselves
(WRTNG-UG1306)
Spring 2017
Mon. and Weds. 8:00-9:15 a.m.

Instructor: Scott Korb
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Classroom: 1 Washington Place, Room 501
Office Hours and location: Mon. 12-3:30, Thurs. 12-3:30; 1 Washington Place, Room 614

Course Description
Beginning with a careful reading of Joan Didion’s “On Self-Respect” (1961), and through ongoing considerations of other personal essays and book length nonfiction, this advanced writing course asks students to reckon with the essential value of their own mind—their thinking—in developing a narrative voice that can develop over a lifetime. In light of what’s been called the “radical critique of interiority and autonomy” carried out by much of literary theory, this course makes an effort to revalue the self at the heart of self-respect. We ask: What happens when we hand our thoughts over to our voice? Why do we believe what we believe? Do we have the courage—even the “courage of our mistakes,” as Didion writes—to sound like ourselves? Students will be required to write three personal essays, one that draws evidence primarily from their lives, one that engages critically with texts, and a third that situates the writer in the midst of a social, cultural, or political movement or issue.

Course Objectives
Writing should be pleasurable, hard work. And when done well, it should exhibit a Democratic Spirit. I’ve tried to select readings that, above all, make this point obvious. The aim of this course is to help you merge cogent, lively writing with precise, exploratory thinking. Over the course of the semester you will expand your repertoire of styles, forms, and techniques while finding and explaining (in writing) ideas that are new to the world. Most importantly, you will learn to construct interesting, arresting essays.

Course Requirements
Throughout the course I will help you learn to write effectively; you can also expect a great deal of help from your classmates. We will often have workshops in class. You can expect to write for every class. Major course requirements are as follows:

1. A series of instructor-evaluated writing exercises. These exercises will allow you to respond critically to the readings and begin to develop essay ideas. Required lengths for each will be specified when we discuss the exercise in class.
2. Three peer-evaluated/instructor-graded essays, each with multiple drafts.

All essays and out-of-class writing exercises should be typed, double-spaced, in twelve-point font with one-inch margins. All essays must be accompanied with with some organizational plan you used
while developing the essay; this could be a formal outline, a drawing, a chart, what have you. The research essay will require a formal outline. Please use MLA citation style (with in-text citation and a Works Cited list) for all papers. We will go over the specifics of citation in class.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

This course requires a great deal of class participation. You'll be expected to share not just your responses to your classmates’ writing and the required readings, but also to question both me and your classmates and to be ready to defend (and, occasionally, abandon) your own ideas.

Every student will have marked at least one passage from each class’s required reading that you will be prepared to read aloud and discuss with the class. The selection may be a beautiful paragraph, or a revealing turn of phrase, or an example of what you believe to be awful thinking. Whatever it is, it should be marked.

If, due to illness, emergency, or religious holiday, you cannot attend class, please be in touch with me directly as soon as possible so that you can be prepared for your next class. Please be aware that more than two absences will jeopardize your course grade.

**STANDARDS AND GRADES**

All final essays must:

- explore and develop an idea from diverse evidence and for different purposes in a coherent, interesting way;
- have a thoughtful, elegant beginning, middle, and end;
- be grammatically correct; and
- have a tone appropriate for the intended audience.

A work achieves excellence in all listed standards. B work achieves general superiority in all listed standards. C work is average in each standard. D or F work is seriously deficient in one or more of the listed standards. Final grades break down as follows:

Each of four essays: 80% (essay 1, 25%; essay 2, 30%; essay 3, 35%)

Participation and attendance: 10%

**A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM**

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [http://gallatin.nyu.edu/about/bulletin/undergrad/policies/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.
COURSE CALENDAR

WEEK ONE
Mon., Jan. 23 – Introductions
Weds., Jan. 25

Reading: “On Self-Respect,” Joan Didion, Vogue, June 1961; Scott Korb, “The Courage to Sound Like Ourselves,” from When the Rewards Can Be So Great: Essays on Writing and the Writing Life

WEEK TWO
Mon., Jan. 30
Weds., Feb. 1 – Workshop


WEEK THREE
Mon., Feb. 6
Weds., Feb. 8 – Workshop


WEEK FOUR
Mon., Feb. 13
Weds., Feb. 15 – Workshop


WEEK FIVE
Mon., Feb. 20
Weds., Feb. 22 – Workshop

Reading: Francine Prose, “Finding Clarity of Purpose at Occupy Wall Street,” at Occupy Writers

WEEK SIX
Mon., Feb. 27
Weds., Mar. 1 – Workshop
Readings: Margo Jefferson, *Negroland*

**Week Seven**  
Mon., Mar. 6  
Weds., Mar. 8 – Workshop

Readings: Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*

**Spring Recess (Mon. Mar 13 - Sun. Mar 19)**

**Week Eight**  
Mon., Mar. 20  
Weds., Mar. 22 – Workshop

Readings: Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men*

**Week Nine**  
Mon., Mar. 27  
Weds., Mar. 29 – Workshop


**Week Ten**  
Mon., Apr. 3  
Weds., Apr. 5 – Workshop


**Week Eleven**  
Mon., Apr. 10  
Weds., Apr. 12 – Workshop


**Week Twelve**  
Mon., Apr. 17  
Weds., Apr. 19 – Workshop

Week Thirteen
Mon., Apr. 24
Weds., Apr. 26 – Workshop


Week Fourteen
Mon., May 1
Weds., May 3 – Workshop


Week Fifteen
Mon., May 8 – Final essay due