Syllabus for Honors Writing 2221

Lifelines: Coming of Age Stories

Fall 2021

Sec 009: T TH 7:30-8:50 MHC 1206A
Sec 001: T TH 9:10-10:30 MHC 1206A
Prof. Michael Sohn
Email: u6038675@utah.edu
Office Hours via Zoom: T 2-3, F 2-3 and by appointment

Course Theme

For better or worse, perhaps for better and for worse, we all grow up. At some point — or some constellation of points — we are no longer the child we were without yet having become the adult we will be. We have, in other words, come of age. But what does that mean? We clearly don’t stop aging when we’ve come of age. And if we can still see the child we were, still feel what they felt, the mirror has cracked and a fault line separates us from us. This can be both traumatizing and liberating. In retrospect, it can also be quite funny.

In this class we will be reading and writing about memoirs that focus on those fault lines where the child and the adult cleave. (Cleave is one of those words that can mean at the same time one thing and its opposite; isn’t life wonderful?) These lines are many and more often than not indicate complex cultural and linguistic fractures that call for writing to turn tangle into pattern and noise into some sort of sense. We will, of course, consider each memoir on its own, but we will also investigate what they have in common as coming of age stories. We will attend closely to the ways writers use language to express what it’s like to be a child, to remember, to tell a story. We will also be reading academic articles that place the memoirs in larger cultural, political and theoretical contexts.

This course is an academic writing course. Writing, to take a phrase from Martiniquian Patrick Chamoiseau’s brilliant memoir, School Days, is “tracing, without fully realizing it, an inky lifeline of survival…” (144). He is writing here of his younger self learning to trace his first words in a French colonial school. All writing traces such ambiguous and ambivalent lines, lines that go back and forth in time as well as from text to text to express and justify what we think. That is what we will be doing in the class discussion and in our formal and informal writing: justifying what we think and why it might be interesting or important or fruitful to think in one way rather than another. Sometimes justifying means trying to convince our interlocutors that our way of seeing things is “right”; more often, though, it means clearly showing how we arrived at our conclusions and why such a method and such conclusions, in the context of the larger public discussion of the issues, are useful. Writing in the academy, then, is entering into an ongoing conversation, one that started before our ideas on the subject and one that will continue after our contribution.

This course fulfills Writing Requirement 2.
Course Objectives

- **Close Reading and Critical Thinking.** Students will practice close, critical reading of primary and secondary texts. They will build interpretations and arguments based on careful analysis, connection and contrast of passages within and across texts.

- **Writing with and from Sources.** Students will learn to draft and revise essays where they take a position, address a question, explore an idea or a connected set of ideas through written analysis and synthesis of primary and secondary material. They will learn to justify and contextualize their inquiry by defining contours of the larger academic conversation through research and situating their own ideas within that conversation.

- **Oral Communication and Teamwork.** Students will work closely together in class, learning to listen carefully to their peers, to help each other think critically about and develop their ideas, all in a respectful manner. In other words, students will learn to have critical and academic conversations with each other about the course texts and the questions that they raise. This conversation will inform the formal and informal class writing.

Required Texts

- The Lifelines Course Reader available on Canvas.
- Patrick Chamoiseau, *School Days* (University of Nebraska, 9780803263765).
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Dover Thrift, 9780486275437).

You need to buy THESE PHYSICAL editions of the course texts, all of which should be available at the Campus Store. If you wish instead to order them online, search by the ISBN number provided above to make sure you are buying the correct editions.

Please print up the course reader and bring it class even if there is no reading scheduled from it that day. I suggest that you print it all at once at the library or at some other print center; this will most likely be cheaper and much more convient than printing it up piecemeal and on your own equipment. For example, a spiral bound, double-sided packet with a cover will cost about $21 from the local FedEx print center.

Instructor’s Responsibilities:

- To create an environment in which you feel free to comment and ask questions
- To respond to your writing regularly through discussion and written commentary
- To be more or less clear
- To engage in dialogue rather than lecture
- To discuss your writing or any other concern during office hours or by appointment

Students’ Responsibilities:

- **Attendance.** You are responsible to the group and must be at all the class meetings on time and stay for the whole class period. I keep track of lateness — and of the times you leave early — and this will be added to your absences. A large number of unexcused absences will cause you to fail the class. This class is work intensive and it is difficult to catch up when you fall behind. I understand that sometimes you cannot make it to class, but it is your responsibility to inform me (if possible) if you will be absent and to find out from a classmate what you have missed.
• **Preparation.** You need to come to class prepared to participate. Thus you must do the assigned reading. **If you come to class unprepared — not having done the reading, without your book and/or the course reader — you will be marked absent.** Make sure you have a notebook to write in and something to write with.

• **Participation.** Participate in small group work and full class discussions and take notes in class no matter who is speaking. We will all be thinking together in class. Thinking often leads to disagreement; I disagree with myself at least 7 1/2 times a day. Disagreeing with each other helps us thinking more clearly — be grateful that you disagree or are disagreed with! That means: be respectful, kind and generous when you don’t agree with what a peer or with what I assert and be prepared to explain why you disagree. Be prepared as well to have your interlocutor respond to your disagreement by reformulating their position, bringing in other evidence, and/or pointing out to you where your own thinking wasn’t rigorous enough. Be prepared as well to have peers take your ideas and push them towards places that hadn’t occurred to you. All this is writing and material for writing, even if it is said out loud.

• TURN OFF all cell phones. DO NOT text while in class.

• Make sure I’m clear. Ask questions when I’m not. Disagree with me when warranted and show why you do.

• Make fun of my handwriting.

• Occasionally be funny.

**Assignments:**

ALL WRITING FOR THIS CLASS IS PUBLIC WRITING, AND YOU MAY BE CALLED UPON TO SHARE IT WITH THE CLASS OR IN A SMALL GROUP.

**Question Responses.** This is the place where you’ll be keeping a record of your thinking about the class texts, especially the ideas that intrigue you and the questions you want to know more about. These questions won’t just be about the characters and events in the memoirs and novels; they might also address the writers’ techniques or some of the ideas from the critical texts. You might be interested in influences on a writer’s work, or you might want to make connections to other books you’ve read or movies you’ve seen, or to historical or current events, or to the theoretical issues raised by the academic articles or by class discussion, etc. SO, AFTER EACH WEEK OF READING, YOU WILL WRITE AT LEAST A PAGE where you

1. briefly summarize the text;
2. pose the question(s) or describe the idea(s) that interests you;
3. talk about why that question or idea is important;
4. provide possible answers or a brief discussion based on what you’ve read so far, including any connections to other class texts;
5. describe what you still want to know.

These questions and ideas will provide material for class discussion and for your writing, especially the Final Essay. They must be turned in BY 6 PM the Thursday of each week EXCEPT when you have a writing assignment due the following week or when we are workshopping.

These response will be graded on a 3 point scale, 3 being excellent, 2 being appropriate, and 1 being insufficient.
**Essays**

You will be writing 3 essays for the class, each going though at least one ungraded first draft. The first two essays are to prepare you for the final essay. I will hand out more detailed assignments during the semester. You can find the due dates on the course schedule.

- **Essay 1.** In this essay, you will be focusing on a single primary source, Marjane Satrapi’s graphic memoir *Persepolis*. It will be up to you to define what question you want to try and answer, or idea you want to trace through her memoir, or issue that you feel she addresses and want to think more about. You will also need to write about her memoir as comics. To do all this, you will be using the secondary sources we will discuss in class as well as an interview with Satrapi that I will post on Canvas. This essay will be 5-6 double spaced Times New Roman 12 pt. pages.

- **Essay 2.** In this essay, you will be evaluating secondary sources by putting them in conversation with two primary texts, Jamaica Kincaid’s “Biography of a Dress” and Patrick Chamoiseau’s *School Days*. You will show in what ways the critical texts are useful and in what ways they fall short by closely analyzing and bringing into contact passages from all four texts. This essay will also be 5-6 doubled spaced Times New Roman 12 pt. pages.

- **Annotated Bibliography & Final Essay.** In essay 1, you focused on a single primary text by finding an aspect of the text — an idea, a question — that you wanted to think more about with the help of a few secondary sources. In essay 2, you evaluated how sources can help you approach primary texts. Now you will put all that hard work to work by choosing one of the course memoirs and putting it in a meaningful dialogue with one of the works from the last page of the syllabus. In other words, you need to ask a question, define an issue or a larger idea or problem, that you can only think about by bringing these two texts together. To help you do this, you will find a few secondary sources that address the primary texts, the larger issue or question, and/or help you situate your own thinking in a larger academic conversation. You will “test” out how these secondary sources address your question by writing an annotated bibliography. You will then write an 8-10 page final essay about your two primary texts using the sources you found as well as some of the course secondary sources.

**Letter to the Reader (LTR).** This letter serves several purposes. The most obvious is to let me and your classmates know who your audience actually is. Even though we will all read your essay, none of us may be the “intended” reader. The letter provides a place for you to specifically raise writing questions: things you wish you had time to look at, questions/issues that you didn’t have the time or the space or the information to deal with, reasons you chose to follow or ignore your classmates’ or my own suggested revisions. I consider these letters an important part of the whole writing process, and they help me to understand better how you are moving from draft to draft. THEY SHOULD BE AT LEAST ¾ OF A PAGE IN LENGTH AND ARE PART OF THE PAPER GRADE. EACH DRAFT NEEDS ITS OWN LETTER.

**Grading**

- **Participation & Attendance:** 15%
- **Question responses:** 10%
- **Essay 1:** 20%
• Essay 2: 20%
• Annotated Bibliography & Essay 3: 35%

Honors grading rubric

A Outstanding achievement. Student performance demonstrates full command of the course material and evinces exceptional levels of originality and sophistication that far surpass course expectations.

A- Excellent achievement. Student performance demonstrates thorough knowledge of the course material and exceeds course expectations by completing all requirements in a superior manner.

B+ Very good work. Student performance demonstrates above-average comprehension of the course material and exceeds course expectations on all tasks as defined in the course syllabus.

B Good work. Student performance meets designated course expectations and demonstrates understanding of the course materials at an acceptable level.

B- Adequate work. Student performance demonstrates inconsistent understanding of course materials.

C+ Marginal work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete understanding of course materials.

C Poor work. Student performance demonstrates limited understanding of course materials.

C- Unsatisfactory work. Student performance demonstrates inadequate understanding of course materials.

D Unacceptable work. Coursework performed at this level will not count toward the honors bachelor’s degree. For the course to count toward the degree, the student must repeat the course with a passing grade.

E Failing.

Important University of Utah Policies that apply to this course

Honors Covid Policy. Current CDC guidelines recommend the usage of masks in indoor public spaces (regardless of vaccination status) because breakthrough infections are possible and do occur. The Honors College strongly recommends that every student get vaccinated. This is the single most powerful way that you can protect yourself, your friends/families and to keep the virus from mutating. In addition, the Honors College also requests that all faculty and students use masks while indoor in classrooms until further change in COVID infection rates.
University Wide Covid Policy.

University leadership has urged all faculty, students and staff to **model the vaccination and masking behaviors** we see in our campus community.

These include:
- Vaccination
- Masking indoors
- If unvaccinated, getting weekly asymptomatic coronavirus testing.

**Vaccination**
- **Get a COVID-19 vaccination** if you have not already done so. Vaccination is proving highly effective in preventing severe COVID-19 symptoms, hospitalization and death from coronavirus. Vaccination is the single best way to stop this COVID resurgence in its tracks.
- Many in the campus community already have gotten vaccinated:
  - More than 80% of U. employees
  - Over 70% of U. students

**Masking**
- While masks are no longer required outside of Health Science facilities, UTA buses and campus shuttles, **CDC guidelines now call for everyone to wear face masks indoors.**
  - Treat masks like seasonal clothing (i.e. during community surges in COVID transmission, masks are strongly encouraged for indoors and in close groups outside).

**Testing**
- **If you are not vaccinated, get weekly asymptomatic coronavirus tests.** This is a helpful way to protect yourself and those around you because asymptomatic individuals can unknowingly spread the coronavirus to others.
  - Asymptomatic testing centers are open and convenient:
    - Online scheduling
    - Saliva test (no nasal swabs)
    - Free to all students returning to campus (required for students in University housing)
    - Results often within 24 hours
    - Visit [alert.utah.edu/covid/testing](alert.utah.edu/covid/testing)
- **Remember:** **Students must self-report if they test positive for COVID-19** via this website: [https://coronavirus.utah.edu/](https://coronavirus.utah.edu/)

**Student Mental Health Resources.**
- Rates of burnout, anxiety, depression, isolation, and loneliness have noticeably increased during the pandemic. If you need help, reach out for campus mental health resources, including counseling, trainings and other support.
Consider participating in a Mental Health First Aid or other wellness-themed training provided by our Center for Student Wellness and sharing these opportunities with your peers, teaching assistants and department colleagues.

**ADA Accommodations.** Given the nature of this course, attendance is required, and adjustments cannot be granted to allow non-attendance. However, if you need to seek an ADA accommodation to request an exception to this attendance policy due to a disability, please contact the Center for Disability and Access (CDA). CDA will work with us to determine what, if any, ADA accommodations are reasonable and appropriate.

**Plagiarism.** The Council of Writing Program Administrators defines plagiarism thus: “In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source” (www.wpacouncil.org). This is a pretty good definition, and you should keep it in mind whenever you write. If the idea and/or the writing is not your own, you need to document it; if you are not sure and cannot ask me, document to be safe. In accordance with University of Utah policy, any instances of cheating or plagiarism will result in failure of the course, along with other possible sanctions. For more information and a number of important definitions, including that of plagiarism, see the University of Utah’s Student Code of Conduct.

**Content accommodation policy.** “Students are expected to take courses that will challenge them intellectually and personally. Students must understand and be able to articulate the ideas and theories that are important to the discourse within and among academic disciplines. Personal disagreement with these ideas and theories or their implications is not sufficient grounds for requesting an accommodation. Accommodations requested on such grounds will not be granted. The University recognizes that students’ sincerely-held core beliefs may make it difficult for students to fulfill some requirements of some courses or majors. The University assumes no obligation to ensure that all students are able to complete any major.” No content accommodations will be made for this course.

**Disability accommodations.** “The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 801-581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.”

If you have emergency medical information you wish to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me as soon as possible by seeing me after class or making an appointment to visit during office hours.

**Addressing sexual misconduct.** “Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator.”
in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677.”

Safety. “The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safe.utah.edu.”
**Class Schedule:**

While I will make every effort to keep to this schedule below, I might have to make changes to the order of readings or to assignment due dates. I will promptly notify you of any changes.

Reading and writing are due ON the dates they appear below.

\( P = \textit{Persepolis} \)
\( SD = \textit{School Days} \)
\( AW = \textit{Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland} \)
All other reading is from the Lifeline Readings Packet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>In Class</th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Writing Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T 8/24</td>
<td>Intros; Simic and close reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 8/26</td>
<td>Comics as a medium</td>
<td>McCloud</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 8/31</td>
<td>Rhetorical Analysis</td>
<td>Horrocks on McCloud</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 9/2</td>
<td>Satrapi</td>
<td>( P ) intro + 3-53</td>
<td>Question response</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/7</td>
<td>Satrapi</td>
<td>( P ) 54-153</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 9/9</td>
<td>Satrapi</td>
<td>( P ) 155-206</td>
<td>Question response</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/14</td>
<td>Satrapi</td>
<td>( P ) 207-341</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 9/16</td>
<td>Academic Writing</td>
<td>Chute on \textit{Persepolis}</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/21</td>
<td>Full Class Workshop</td>
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<td>Draft Essay 1</td>
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<td>Th 9/23</td>
<td>Small Group Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 9/28</td>
<td>Memory and medium</td>
<td>Kincaid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 9/30</td>
<td>Chamoiseau</td>
<td>( SD ) epigraphs &amp; 3-51</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 10/5</td>
<td>Black English &amp; Creole</td>
<td>Baldwin on Black English</td>
<td>Final Essay 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 10/7</td>
<td>Chamoiseau</td>
<td>( SD ) 55-103 top</td>
<td>Question response</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>T 10/12</strong></td>
<td><strong>FALL BREAK</strong></td>
<td><strong>TAKE A BREAK</strong></td>
<td><strong>FROM CLASS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Th 10/14</strong></td>
<td><strong>FALL BREAK</strong></td>
<td><strong>TAKE A BREAK</strong></td>
<td><strong>FROM CLASS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>T 10/19</td>
<td>Chamoiseau</td>
<td>( SD ) 103-144</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 10/21</td>
<td>Writing about two primary texts</td>
<td>Réjouis on Kincaid &amp; Chamoiseau</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 10/26</td>
<td>Full Class Workshop</td>
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<td>Draft Essay 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 10/28</td>
<td>Small Group Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 11/2</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>AW Ch. 1-4</td>
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<td>Th 11/4</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>AW Ch. 5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 11/9</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>AW Ch. 9-12</td>
<td>Final Essay 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 11/11</td>
<td>Nonsense!</td>
<td>Carroll &amp; Lear</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 11/16</td>
<td>Nonsense?</td>
<td>Sewell on Nonsense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 11/18</td>
<td>Working with sources; annotating</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 11/23</td>
<td>Start Final Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 11/25</td>
<td>THANKSGIVING</td>
<td>GIVE THANKS THERE’S</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 11/30</td>
<td>Full Class Workshop</td>
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<td>Draft Final Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 12/2</td>
<td>Small Group Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 12/7</td>
<td>Revising and conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 12/9</td>
<td>Revising and conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fr 12/10</td>
<td>Final Paper due</td>
<td>NO LATER THAN</td>
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Final Essay Primary Texts

This list is preliminary; we may add to it throughout the semester. I am also open to suggestions.

Persepolis

Satrapi, *Chicken and Plums*
Satrapi, *Embroideries*
David B., *Epileptic*

School Days

Chamoiseau, *Texaco*
Kincaid, *Annie John*
Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*

Alice’s Adventure’s in Wonderland

Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*
Roald Dahl, *James and the Giant Peach*
Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*