

Dr. J. Restaino  
ENWR 600  
Summer 2008  
MW/6:00-9:10pm  
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Seminar in Writing Studies:  
Community-Based and Activist Writing

This seminar will explore the ways in which writing—and literacy, more broadly—exists beyond the boundaries of what we’ve come to know as “writing for school.” As we learn about the many manifestations and purposes of writing outside of school, we will ultimately reflect on more traditional ideas about school writing in order to think about the relationships between these varied contexts. We will explore writing practices that extend beyond academic discourse alone and into alternate genres that can bring communities together and create change. This writing can take on many different forms: oral history projects, community-based creative writing collections, political manifestos, grant proposals, awareness-raising pamphlets and newsletters, and more. This course will offer a foundational understanding of literacy research and theory, push the boundaries of what we already know about writing (hopefully), and invite an expanded notion of what it *could* mean to write inside—and outside—of school. We will work as researchers and program builders in order to put some of these ideas into practical shape.

Requirements

Group Note Share/Maintain Reading Notes (30%)  
Project Workshops (30%)  
Final Project (40%)

Books

Hull and Schultz, *School’s Out!*

All additional readings will be available through Blackboard (via the “course documents” link) at <http://montclair.blackboard.edu>

Explanation of Requirements

1) Group Note Share/Maintain Reading Notes (20%)

I want you to feel like you can realistically handle the reading load each week. Accordingly, most weeks you will be assigned one article (or an equivalent portion of the workload) for which you must prepare notes to share with peers. While I always expect that you are reading all the assigned works in their entirety, this system offers a way for you to really focus on certain texts and rely on peers for their insights on others. I expect you to read the assigned note share text(s) as thoroughly as possible—give it your full attention and take brief, well-focused

notes (about 2 pgs, no more than 3) that outline the most central moments, quotations, and questions for you. You'll bring two additional copies (or in some cases only one extra copy; I'll specify each week) of your notes to class (that's three total: one for you, two additional for peers). We'll work through the assigned readings in groups, sharing our findings and convening with classmates who've prepared notes on the same piece, and the remaining two. Hopefully, this will provide a well-rounded view of the assigned readings, give you a more manageable workload, and allow you to really engage in what you read. I will expect to see that you've completed your notes and distributed them to your group members for discussion. As long as you are consistent in this practice for the session, you will receive full credit for this course requirement.

2) Project Workshops (30%)

You will develop your "final" project for this course for the length of the session. As per the syllabus schedule, we will have "project workshops" where you will bring in a draft of the assigned project section for that day. We will work collaboratively to give each other feedback on these drafts and direction on the continued development of projects. You are not required to bring a complete and/or polished draft to these workshops. However, in order to earn full credit for this requirement, you'll need to do the following each time a project workshop is scheduled on the syllabus: 1) At minimum, the draft should be about 50% complete—so at least half the work; 2) Be thoughtful about the work—I expect you to use these workshops to really develop your ideas; accordingly, the work you bring to these projects should be seriously done. In other words, the hour before class starts won't produce a thoughtful draft....you know this, but I must also offer the reminder. I will collect all work at the end of the workshop session to keep up with your progress and make sure you get appropriate credit. I will return all drafts the following session.

3) Final Project (40%)

You will choose from four options for your final project for this course. Each option will challenge you to think about writing beyond traditional boundaries and approach our course topic from pedagogical, personal, or research angles. As per the project workshops, these projects will be developed for the length of our session. I will distribute assessment criteria as we move forward and continue to talk about these projects. You will receive a grade on the final version of your project that will reflect agreed-upon assessment criteria. This grade is independent from your project workshop grade.

My Expectations

1) I always expect that you are prepared for my class. Particularly because the note share practice allows for shared, collaborative work, I expect that you have prepared your notes on any assigned reading and are ready to engage in our discussion.

2) I expect you to show up for every class and be on time. Please know that I am realistic: I understand that things happen and complications arise. I expect that you'll communicate with me if necessary. However, our class meets for only six weeks and takes on a significant amount of material. I trust that you'll make every effort to attend all our class meetings. Should there be any problem with your attendance, I will discuss my concerns with you and determine the extent to which your absences have impacted your performance in class.

3) I strive to create a collaborative, friendly environment in which all feel welcome to participate. I have great respect for others' opinions, experiences, and vantage points, and encourage questioning and critical inquiry. I will not tolerate negative, discriminatory comments against any individual or group. I expect you to approach my class with openness and a commitment to mutual respect. If we can trust each other with our ideas and varied perspectives, we will learn endlessly more together.

## Syllabus

### **Understanding Literacy in Context(s)**

#### Week 1

Mon 6/30 Hull and Schultz, "Introduction" (1-8) and "Locating Literacy Theory in Out-of-School Contexts" (11-31)

**Final Project assignment discussed and posted on blackboard**

Wed 7/2 Brandt, "The Sacred and the Profane" (blackboard);  
Gere, "Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms" (blackboard)  
Hull/Schultz, "Connecting Schools with Out-of-School Worlds" (32-53)  
**group note share (Brandt and Gere readings only)**  
**Bring copy of final project assignment to class**

#### Week 2

Mon 7/7 Scribner and Cole, "Unpackaging Literacy" (blackboard)  
Scribner, "Literacy in Three Metaphors" (blackboard)  
Heath, "Protean Shapes in Literacy Events" (blackboard)  
Guerra and Farr (in H/S), "Writing in the Margins" (96-128)  
Graff, "Literacy, Myths, and Legacies"

**group note share**

**Final Project focus selection due: Bring your copy of the assignment and be prepared to discuss why you've chosen a particular option**

Wed 7/9 NO CLASS

### **Bridging Community, Classroom, and Writing: Programs and Theories**

#### Week 3

Mon 7/14 DiPardo and Schnack, "I Can't See You But I Know You" (blackboard)  
Flower, "Community Literacy: Can Writing Make a Difference?" (blackboard)

Visitors from The Writers' Room program; read "The Writers' Room: The Story of a Writing Center" (blackboard; pgs 5-8 of WR Session 1 doc)

Wed 7/16 Long, Peck, Baskins (in H/S), "STRUGGLE" (131-168)  
Goldblatt, "Alinsky's Revielle" (blackboard)  
**group note share**  
**Project workshop: Draft of Part I due in class**

Week 4

Mon 7/21 Bellino, "'I'm a writer now!' The Who, Where, and When of an ELL Newspaper" (blackboard)  
Kelly, "No More Fear and Loathing: The Family Writing Project in Las Vegas" (blackboard)  
**Project workshop: Part I revision work in class (bring your draft from Wed with peer commentary, as well as any updated changes)**

Wed 7/23 Adler-Kassner, "Developing an Activist Writing Program: Possibilities and Challenges" (blackboard)  
Cushman, "Sustainable Service-Learning Programs" (blackboard)  
Restaino, "Absent Voices: Rethinking 'Writing Women Safe'" (blackboard)  
**group note share**  
**Project workshop: Part II updates—progress? questions? (drafts optional)**

**Making It Work: Solutions and Challenges for Practice**

Week 5

Mon 7/28 NcNamee and Sivright (in H/S), "Community Supports" (169-202)  
visit Whittier 5<sup>th</sup> Dimension site (blackboard)  
Cushman and Emmons (in H/S), "Contact Zones Made Real" (203-237)  
Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone" (recommended; blackboard)  
Eidman-Aadahl (in H/S), "Got a Place, Got the Word: Collaborating for Literacy Learning and Youth Development" (241-258)  
**group note share**

Wed 7/30 Street, "What's 'New' in New Literacy Studies" (blackboard)  
Kim, "Challenges to NLS: Response to 'What's 'New'" (blackboard)  
**Project workshop: Part II draft due in class**

Week 6

Mon 8/4 **Project workshop: Part III draft due in class**  
**Full draft peer review**

Wed 8/6 Last day of class: **Projects due at 6pm**