

Writing for College 2007: Creative Writing Strand  
Mapping Our Stories, Mapping Our Selves  
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**Syllabus**

“There is a vitality, a life-force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action. And because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open...whether you choose to take an art class, keep a journal, record your dreams, dance your story or live each day from your own creative source. Above all else, keep the channel open!” (Martha Graham)

**Week I: Beginning the journey**

“To ask for a map is to say, ‘Tell me a story.’” (Turchi, 11)

**Writing due in draft form Tues. (#1):**

Turchi compares stories to maps, suggesting that the writer’s call is to introduce readers to a terrain and guide them on a journey--plotting paths, pointing up significant places, leading them to a destination. Consider the opening chapter of *Love Medicine* and/or *Lighthousekeeping* in this light; what kind of a journey does Erdrich/Winterson offer us? What kinds of choices is the writer making about how to guide readers on their journey? (1 page)

**Writing due in draft form Wed. and revised for Fri. (#2):**

\* Write a brief memoir, short story, poem, or dramatic scene about a journey, or the beginning of a journey. Consider these questions: Where and when does this journey begin, who’s on it, and what do they have to lose/gain/learn?

OR

\* Write about a time—real or imagined—that someone started on a journey but failed to arrive at their destination. What was the obstacle?

(adapted from Burroway, *Imaginative Writing*)

OR

\* Silver in *Lighthousekeeping* apprentices to be a literal keeper of light at the lighthouse, but perhaps more importantly, she learns to be the keeper of stories, a different kind of light. Develop a piece that explores how a character’s journey, lesson, or goal is similarly symbolic of a deeper purpose.

\*\*In all instances, evoke people and setting through specific and significant detail.

**Monday**

Read:

Erdrich, *Love Medicine*, “World’s Greatest Fisherman” (1) (BP)

Turchi, *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer* (excerpt, BP)

**Tuesday**

Read:

Winterson, 1-41

Draft #1 due

**Wednesday**

Draft #2 due

**Thursday**

Read:

Winterson, 41-73

Atwood, "True Stories" (BP)

Amichai, "The Place Where We Are Right" (BP)

**WRITING WORKSHOP**

Peer review

**Friday:**

Revised draft #2 due

**Week II: Meeting challenges**

What do you want—a cliff over a city?

A foreland, sloped to sea and overgrown with roses?

These people live here.

--Muriel Rukeyser (quoted in *Kettle Bottom*)

**Writing due in draft form Tues. (#1):**

Select two poems from *Kettle Bottom* told by two characters different in some dimension, e.g. race, gender, age. How does the author make voice and perspective active and significant in these pieces? What choices is she making as a writer? (1 page)

**Writing due in draft form Wed. and revised for Fri. (#2):**

Explore connection and disconnection between human beings in creative non-fiction, fiction, poetry, or drama. (adapted from Burroway)

OR

In *Kettle Bottom*, the characters are up against a challenge that is both political and personal. Write a piece in which you explore this kind of challenge.

OR

Write a piece in which one character causes or discovers trouble for another; one or both characters change.

**Monday**

Read:

Winterson, 77-127

Hampl, “Red Sky in the Morning”

**Tuesday**

Read:

Fisher, *Kettle Bottom*

Draft #1 due

**Wednesday**

Draft #2 due.

**Thursday**

Read:

*Kettle Bottom*

## WRITING WORKSHOP

Peer review

**Friday:**

Read:

Poems by Rich (“Map of a Country” and “Diving into the Wreck”); Lorde (“Stations”); Nye, “Across the Bay” (BP)

Revised draft #2 due

**Week III: Myth as journey; moving forward****Writing due Tues:**

Do a one-page close reading as a writer. For instance, you can select a single sentence or line in anything we’ve read thus far and focus on the way its technical details—e.g. alliteration, repetition or lack thereof—contribute to the content and/or emotional power of that sentence and to your interpretation of the place of the sentence in the larger piece. (#1)

**Writing due in draft form Wed. and revised for Fri.:**

\* Jeanette Winterson challenges the notion that all stories must have a clear or singular beginning, middle, and end. Develop a piece in which you explore multiple or unclear beginnings and/or endings.

OR

\* Call on the structures/archetypes/symbolism/plot devices of a myth or fairy-tale to create your own work in one of these genres.

OR

For this week, try to write in a genre you have not yet played with during your time in WFC. If you need a hint for a topic, creatively respond to a piece we have read that in some way inspired or challenged you.

### **Monday**

Read:

Rich, "Cartographies of Silence"

Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior*, chap. 1 (BP)

**Photo assignment in groups of 4:** Over the weekend, take pictures that you think speak to the theme or concept of 'mapping' in some way that we have or have not dealt with in this program. Remember that pictures, like language can be both concrete and abstract. For example, you could take a picture of children to represent a childhood moment, or you could take a picture of the way a willow tree forms an abstract shape that felt to you like the shape your mouth made when you first said the word chocolate. You can photograph words with images from nature or have your friends pose for you, acting something out. Bring your film to class on Monday.

### **Tuesday**

Read:

Persephone: excerpt from Ovid; poems by Dove, Griffith, Todd, Boland, and Gahagan (BP)

\*\* Bring a myth/fairytale of your own choosing

Draft #1 due

### **Wednesday**

Draft #2 due.

### **Thursday**

Read:

Moore, "How To Become a Writer" (BP)

Walker, "Beauty" (BP)

### **WRITING WORKSHOP**

Peer review