



Fall 2021 | Tuesdays 6 p.m. – 9 p.m., Conklin Hall 203
Honors College Humanities Seminar (21:525:252:61)
Honors Living-Learning Community Special Topics (21:526:295:ALL)
Professor Gaiutra Bahadur | Email: gaiutra.bahadur@rutgers.edu
Office Hours: By arrangement via Zoom or in-person.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is the power of factual storytelling? How do you patrol the boundary between fact and memory in nonfiction? Should you try? How does a story change when the people at its center tell it? What happens when they approach their stories from the outside, in as well as the inside, out — simultaneously subjective and objective in approach? What effect does this double consciousness have on readers, and can we achieve it too? We will read essays, journalism, history, and memoirs by and about migrants in the United States and their descendants; and with this work as a guide, we will also write from our own lives.

You'll do an average of 3 hours of reading per week, some weeks less, some weeks a little more. We'll do some in-class writing exercises, and we'll occasionally share them with each other. A few of the authors on our reading list will be visiting our class, either in-person or via Zoom.

COURSE GOALS

1. To develop the skills of reading analytically and writing creatively
2. To think critically about sources by questioning how writers know what they know
3. To experience storytelling situated in the context of politics and history

4. To analyze genre by exploring different kinds of nonfiction storytelling and making connections between form and content
5. To take pleasure in words, sounds, and images

REQUIRED READING (Available at the Barnes & Noble at 42 Halsey Street)

Good Talk: A Memoir in Conversations by Mira Jacob

Citizen 13660 by Mine Okubo

Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs and Revolution in the Americas by Roberto Lovato

The Undocumented Americans by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio

Brother, I'm Dying by Edwidge Danticat

Other readings listed in the schedule below are either available for free online or will be uploaded as PDFs to Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Attendance is worth **21 points** toward your final grade.

Participation: Participation in class discussions is an important part of this course, worth **24 points** toward your final grade. Do the reading, contribute to the conversation, respect each other, and you'll earn all of them.

In-class Writing Exercises: We'll be doing six in-class writing assignments. In total, these are worth **24 points** toward your final grade. The assignments will help you brainstorm and collect material for your final writing project. There's no wrong approach. Do the exercises in good faith, and you'll earn 4 points for each assignment.

Final Writing Assignment: The major writing project for the semester will be worth **31 points** toward your final grade. You'll be creating your own work of nonfiction about migrant lives. The form it takes is up to you. It can be multimedia. It can be graphic. It can be a memoir essay. It can be a reported piece. If it's a traditional text, it should be at least 1800 words long. If it's something audio, visual, graphic, or multimedia, let's discuss how much you should produce.

Sept. 28: A one-page proposal for the project is due.

Nov. 9: Your first draft is due.

Nov. 19: You'll receive your first draft back with comments via email by this date.

Dec. 7: The final project itself will be due. When you submit your final draft, you'll automatically be given 5 points for the proposal and 6 points for your first draft. The remaining 20 points will be based on the quality of the writing, research, and sourcing in the final product.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

A 90-100	C+ 77-79
B+ 87-89	C 70-76
B 80-86	D 60-69

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE: Tense and Memory

Tuesday, September 7, 2021

Assigned Reading: "Tino & Papi" (PDF available in Canvas). 2 pages.

In-Class Writing Assignment #1: Bring to our first class a photo of yourself as a child, between the ages of 5 and 12. You don't have to be the only person in the photo. Others can be in the frame as well. We'll be doing a writing assignment in class based on it.

WEEK TWO: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives

Tuesday, September 14, 2021

Assigned Readings:

1. "13 Ways of Being an Immigrant," by Porochista Khakpour, in *The Displaced* (PDF available in Canvas). 8 pages.
2. "The Road," by Chris Abani, in *The Displaced* (PDF available in Canvas). 8 pages.
3. "To Walk in Their Shoes," by Meron Hadero, in *The Displaced* (PDF available in Canvas). 8 pages.

In-Class Writing Assignment #2: Write a diary entry about a walk (which you will take before class).

WEEK THREE: Good Immigrant/Bad Immigrant

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

Assigned Reading: Introduction and Chapters 1-3 of *The Undocumented Americans* by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio. 97 pages.

WEEK FOUR: Magic Journalism

Tuesday, September 28, 2021

Assigned Reading: Chapters 4-6 of *The Undocumented Americans* by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio. 78 pages.

In-Class Writing Assignment #3: Rewrite a newspaper article about an event with unanswered questions, imagining you have the answers. (You'll choose the article and bring it to class.)

***** Proposal due for final writing project.**

WEEK FIVE: Telling Histories From the Ground Up

Tuesday, October 5

Assigned Reading: Nyssa Chow, “Still. Life. The Story of Her Skin,” <https://still-life-project.com/>

WEEK SIX: The Machete of Memory / Severing

Tuesday, October 12

Assigned Reading: Introduction, Prologue and Parts I-III of *Unforgetting* by Roberto Lovato. 112 pages.

In-Class Writing Assignment #4: Write from an interview, oral history or journalistic, that you’ve done related to your final project.

WEEK SEVEN: Sewing Together / Healing

Tuesday, October 19

Assigned Reading: Parts IV-VI and Epilogue of *Unforgetting* by Roberto Lovato. 105 pages.

Author Roberto Lovato will visit our class.

WEEK EIGHT: Citizen

Tuesday, October 26

Assigned Reading: *Citizen 13660* by Mine Okubo. 204 pages. (Keep in mind that this is a graphic memoir, in text and images, and the page count includes large-scale drawings on every page.)

In-Class Writing Assignment #5: Write a history in brief, using an item from archives, personal or public, related to your final project.

WEEK NINE: America’s Debts / Debts to America

Tuesday, November 2

Assigned Reading: Chapters 1, 2 and 7 (“United,” “Stand Up” and “The Indebted”) from *Minor Feelings* by Cathy Park Hong (PDF available in Canvas). 86 pages.

WEEK TEN: Solidarities

Tuesday, November 9

Assigned Reading:

1. “To the Lady Who Mistook Me for the Help at the National Book Awards” by Patrick Rosal, <https://lithub.com/to-the-lady-who-mistook-me-for-the-help-at-the-national-book-awards/>
2. “Mutual Regard: A Love Letter for Black-Filipino Resistance” by Patrick Rosal, <https://hyphenmagazine.com/blog/2020/07/mutual-regard-love-letter-origins-black-filipino-resistance>

In-Class Writing Assignment #6: Use the second person singular or plural. / Write a letter.

***** First-draft of final writing project due.**

WEEK ELEVEN: Families Apart

Tuesday, November 16

Assigned Reading: *Brother, I'm Dying* by Edwidge Danticat. 120 pages.

WEEK TWELVE: Birth and Death

Tuesday, November 23

Assigned Reading: Part II of *Brother, I'm Dying* by Edwidge Danticat. 142 pages.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK THIRTEEN: Generations

Tuesday, November 30

Assigned Reading: Chapters 1-25 of *Good Talk* by Mira Jacob. 178 pages. (Keep in mind that this is a graphic memoir, comic book-style with speech bubbles, and the page count is not as daunting as it appears!)

WEEK FOURTEEN: Dialogue

Tuesday, December 7

Assigned Reading: Chapters 26-42 of *Good Talk* by Mira Jacob. 164 pages. (Keep in mind that this is a graphic memoir, comic book-style with speech bubbles, and the page count is not as daunting as it appears!)

***** Final writing project due.**