

**ENG/EDU 612: PRAIRIE LANDS WRITING PROJECT**  
**ADVANCED INSTITUTE ONLINE SEMINAR IN PROFESSIONAL WRITING FOR TEACHERS**  
**“Hit the Trail – Writing”**  
Summer 2008  
Missouri Western State University  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism  
Department of Education

Instructor: Amy Lannin, [lannina@missouri.edu](mailto:lannina@missouri.edu) or [alannin@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:alannin@missouriwestern.edu)  
Phone: 573-999-6327

Prairie Lands Writing Project Site Director: Dr. Jane Frick, [frick@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:frick@missouriwestern.edu)  
Office: Eder 201  
Phone: 816-271-4315  
Prairie Lands Writing Project Web Site: <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/plwp/>

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

ENG/EDU 612 Prairie Lands Writing Project Seminar in Professional Writing for Teachers (Advanced Institute, 3 credits). This online capstone course is designed for participants to develop dual roles of writer and teacher of writing. “Hit the Trail – Writing” is a theme that bridges several topics: Writing Across the Curriculum, Creative Nonfiction, and Exploration of Place.

The thinking behind this topic is that teachers and students need to find and take opportunities to learn in places outside of the classroom and about places in which we live and work. This focus on place not only celebrates the stories of the people, but stretches into numerous disciplines: history, the arts, ecology, science, geology, architecture, etc. Though we cannot possibly explore all of the dimensions of “place” in one course, we will take steps that motivate us (and our students) to keep discovering what is right outside our classroom doors, down the street, in the park, or at the local museum. This bridge of topics is supported by our statewide network of trails and parks. “Hit the Trail – Writing” is the invitation to get out and about this summer, to write, to find your place within this great state. As teachers in other parts of the state have explored this same theme, we hope that our collected writings and lessons of place may make a collection worth publishing and sharing with teachers in Missouri and beyond.

In this seminar participants will:

- Examine a variety of genres to write about “place,” with special focus on the genre of creative nonfiction
- Understand features of place-based writing as they write, revise, and prepare to publish writing
- Confer with a writing group to revise writing
- Understand methods of writing instruction as they write, revise, and publish lessons based on places in which students live and learn
- Engage in continuous inquiry and reflection based on course content, readings, teaching experiences, writing, and discussion.

Though this is an online course, it is not an independent study course. New lessons will be available on Monday and Wednesday of each week. Discussion board assignments will be due by 10:00 p.m. Wednesday for the Monday lesson and 10:00 p.m. Saturday for Wednesday’s lesson of the same week. Other due dates are posted in the schedule. Participants will discuss topics and readings on the Discussion Board. Writing groups (set by the instructor) will set times for group conferring, and writings will be emailed for group member responses.

Prerequisite: Completion of an Invitational Institute, ENG/EDU 610; a commitment to writing as a way to learn and to communicate learning.

### **MATERIALS**

Selected articles available online throughout the course.

Books you may want to find at a bookstore or online:

- Bryson, Bill. (2000). *The Best American Travel Writing* (2000).
- Kitchen, Judith & Mary Paumier Jones, editors. (1999). *In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal*. New York: Norton & Company.
- Louv, Richard. (2006). *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*.
- Macrorie, Ken. *Writing to be Read*.
- Rous, Emma Wood. *Literature and the Land: Reading and Writing for Environmental Literacy*, 7-12.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

The following assignments will be completed during the course. More information will be provided for each one, including rubric and final due date:

1. Place-based Lesson (due on or after July 7)
2. Three Revised Writings that may include any of the following writings completed during the course. The writings listed will also be collected periodically and read by participants and the instructor:
  - Where I am At poem (and other poetry of place)
  - Writing of Self: Personal Geography
  - Secret of Once
  - Four Modes Essay
  - Perspective of Place
  - Sample writing of place (example of what students may write in your lesson)
3. Reflection of your writing and experience in the course.

### **Hit the Trail – Writing:**

We will write and be assigned a writing group with whom to share drafts of writing and respond to the work of others. How will we manage this without seeing one another? You will email and/or post your writing for your group members to read and post/email responses to you. In addition, we will host two online chat times for your group to discuss writing. Remember to email your assignments and writings to the instructor as well.

### **Hit the Trail – Reading and Discussing:**

We will read and discuss several common texts as well as self-selected texts. It is also important that we share new books and texts with one another. Many lessons will have assigned discussion board topics. In addition to posting your own comments, responses, and questions to these topics, please respond to at least two classmates' responses. The instructor will monitor and occasionally join the discussions. Please read and periodically review the Discussion Board Guidelines.

### **Hit the Trail - Teaching:**

You will prepare a lesson that you could teach your students using the following guidelines:

1. Identify a place close to your school (the place you teach or plan to teach). This place should connect with your curricular area and be a place that students can explore and would benefit learning more about. Their exploration may not be just visiting, but may be studying about the place, interviewing others about the place, etc.
2. Explain how or why you identified the place. Include how this place connects with what you are or will teach. For instance, explain how this place connects with the teaching of science, math, history, art, language, reading, literature, writing, government, health, etc.
3. Use examples of your own writing to illustrate how you wrote about this place and how your students may write about this or a similar place. You may include drafts of this writing to demonstrate how you explored

writing as you studied this place (you may include the writings completed in this course).

4. Explain how your lesson evolved out of your writing and experimenting, out of the reading you have done, or out of your own thinking and reflecting. In other words, what is the basis for your particular approach to teaching writing in this way? What is your theoretical framework?
5. Provide a text for the participants (and possibly your students) to read that connects with your lesson. Select these texts from examples of place-based writing or similar text that is a model or extends the thinking of what you want your students to do.
6. In your lesson description, be sure to include participants in some activity. Rather than merely describing theory, provide a framework for students to experience this as a writing event.
7. Post your lesson and read and reply to the comments made by participants. Share with us how you might change your lesson as you reflect on responses from others.
8. Provide a bibliography and list of resources showing your research into this topic.

## **GRADING POLICY**

All assignments contribute to the final grade and are to be completed in a professional manner – thoughtful, well-organized, reflecting the content of the course. All writings will be evaluated based on the Creative Nonfiction/Place-based Writing Guidelines. Writing group and Discussion board participation will also be assessed based on posted guidelines.

No individual grades will be assigned for any activity, writing, or discussion; however, participants will receive critical responses from the instructor and fellow participants. The purpose of these institutes is to bring teachers together to improve the teaching of literacy; those who participate are to demonstrate a commitment to a reflective inquiry of their own teaching. Frequent grades—an outside assessment of quality or effort—will damage the reflective inquiry community that we hope to establish.

If the instructor feels that a participant is not achieving the goals of the course as described above due to lack of participation, late or missing work, inconsistent effort, or disruptive actions, the instructor will contact the student to discuss concerns. A failing grade will be assigned to students who fail to meet or refuse to meet the goals of the course.

The final day to withdraw without penalty is July 17, 2008.

## **POLICIES**

**Academic Honesty Policy and Due Process:**

Academic honesty is required in all academic endeavors. Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another's work, falsifying documents or academic records, or any other fraudulent activity. Violations of academic honesty may result in a failing grade on the assignment, failure in the course, or expulsion from the University. When a student's grade has been affected, violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Provost or designated representative on the Academic Honesty Violation Report forms. Please see the Western Student Handbook and Calendar for specific activities identified as violations of this policy and the student due process procedure. This handbook is also available online at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/handbook/index.pdf>

**Attendance/Participation:**

You are expected to participate fully throughout the course. If you cannot fulfill a requirement by the date due, please call the instructor. See Grading Policy above.

**Student Disability:**

Any student who has a disability that prevents the fullest expressions of abilities should contact the instructor as soon as possible so that we can work to provide assistance as needed.

**In the event that WebCT is down OR you experience other technical difficulties...**

It is the student's responsibility to:

- Check to make sure it is not your computer or internet connection. Try to login to another Web site and try to login to GoldLink.
- E-mail instructor with details of your problem IF problem is preventing you from completing an assignment that is due very soon.
- E-mail webct@missouriwestern.edu with details of your problem regardless of what it is interfering with.
- Try to access class again in a few hours and continue until problem is resolved.

It is the instructor's and/or Western's responsibility to:

- Inform students of planned outages.
- Alter the schedule in the event of an unplanned outage.
- Provide CD of course materials for students who cannot download due to slow Internet connections.
- Offer assignments in a suitable timeframe or medium.

## **SCHEDULE:**

Assignments will be posted each Monday and Wednesday, but will generally follow the schedule below. Each day is outlined with the theme, the discussion board topic, the assignments and due dates, and the readings that support the discussion and writing. Here is what we will plan for each week, but please expect some changes, which I will email and post as needed:

### **June 2, Monday – Introductions and Welcome**

4:30 - Meet on-campus with Dr. Jane Frick.

Lesson Module 1 -- Charting our Course: “Where I’m At” (rather than Where I’m From)

Readings -- Foreword and Introduction to *The Best American Travel Writing* by Bill Bryson

Discussion Board -- Why do “Travel Stories Matter” and what makes them work?

Assignment (go to “Assignments” on WebCT) -- Read the course syllabus. Write a poem of introduction “Where I’m At” (see sample in “Assignments”). Due: June 4.

### **June 4, Wednesday –**

Readings -- Read Guidelines for Responding to Writing (in Course Content) and the Guidelines for Discussion Board Posts (in Course Content)

Discussion Board -- Read the poems posted by participants. Reply to at least two poems.

Assignment due -- Poem of introduction “Where I’m At”

Assignment -- Write (first draft) of Personal Geography Essay (due June 11).

### **June 9, Monday – Historical Perspectives of Place**

Lesson Module 2 -- The Historical Perspectives of Place

Reading -- from Bill Buford’s “Lions and Tigers and Bears” in Bryson’s *The Best American Travel Writing*

Discussion Board -- Perspectives of Place

Assignment -- Personal Geography Essay: ABCs of Place sent to Instructor and to Small Writing Group (Due June 11). Small writing group will read and reply with Tracked Changes and comments by June 16.

### **June 11, Wednesday -- The Current Perspective of Place**

Lesson Module 3 -- The Secret of Once

Reading -- excerpts from Ken Macrorie’s *Writing to be Read*.

Discussion Board -- How does Buford accomplish the experience of “once”? What format/structure do you notice in his essay? What other writing lessons can we take from these texts?

Assignment -- First draft of your own Secret of Once in a current place. (Due by June 16 to instructor and writing group). Responses from group to writer due by June 20.

### **June 16, Monday -- Four Modes of Place**

Lesson Module 4 -- Four modes of place: Artistic, Philosophic, Scientific, Narrative

Reading -- Denise Standiford's "In the Process: Using the Four Modes to Develop a Layered Composition" from *English Journal*, December 1992.

Discussion Board – Modes of Discourse

Assignment -- Four Modes essay. (Due June 23 to instructor and writing group).

### **June 18, Wednesday -- Place-based Writing Across the Curriculum**

Lesson Module 5 -- **Writing to Learn and Writing Across the Disciplines**

Reading: William Zinsser's "Preface" to *Writing to Learn*

Discussion Board – Place-based writing across the curriculum

Assignment -- Four Modes essay due to small writing group and instructor by June 23. Schedule a one-hour virtual conference with your group between June 20 and 27.

### **June 23, Monday – The Lure of the Outdoors**

Lesson Module 6 -- Reasons to Write and Learn Outdoors

Reading: from Louv's *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*

Discussion Board: Why and How to bridge local places and school

Assignment: J is for Journal (due to self on June 25)

Assignment due: Four Modes Essay. Responses to writer by June 30.

### **June 25, Wednesday -- Books and a Backyard**

Lesson Module 7 -- Literature of Place

Readings -- Self-selected literature of place excerpts from provided list

Discussion Board -- Effective place-based writings – what works?

Assignment – Perspectives of Place (using Journal assignment from Monday). Due: July 2

### **June 30, Monday – Creative Nonfiction Genre**

Lesson Module 8 -- Unpacking the genre of CNF

Reading -- Gutkind (Online)

Discussion Board -- What have we discovered as critical elements of Creative Nonfiction?

Assignment – Work on lesson

### **July 2, Wednesday – CNF continued**

Readings -- Read Rubric of CNF and compare to posted CNF papers

Discussion Board -- Review discussion board posts and replies

Assignment -- Work on lessons and email ideas to instructor and small group by midnight July 2.

### **July 7 & 9 – Place-based lessons**

Reading -- Recommended Texts from participants' lessons

Discussion board -- Read and discuss lessons

Assignment -- Try out one of the writing events provided in the lesson. Reflect on how it went and what you would recommend for the lesson (what works, what might be altered). Email reflection to instructor and author of lesson by July 14.

### **July 14, Monday – Place-based lessons, Reflections, and Revisions**

Reading -- Recommended Texts from participants' lessons

Discussion board -- Read and discuss lessons

Assignment -- Try out one of the writing events provided in the lesson. Reflect on how it went and what you would recommend for the lesson (what works, what might be altered). Email reflection to instructor and author of lesson by July 21.

Schedule a one-hour virtual conference with your group between July 14-21

### **July 16, Wednesday – Final Reflections and Revisions**

Lesson Module 8 -- Revising place-based writing - a synthesis of ideas generated from the course, the readings, the writing, and discussions.

Assignment -- Choose three favorite writings to revise

### **July 21, Monday – Revising and Publishing Plans**

Assignment – Revise three writings to submit to instructor

### **July 23, Wednesday – Closing comments**

Revised final lesson, reflection and three final drafts due by July 24. Grades posted July 31.