

**ENG/EDU 612: PRAIRIE LANDS WRITING PROJECT  
ADVANCED INSTITUTE ONLINE SEMINAR IN PROFESSIONAL  
WRITING FOR TEACHERS  
“Hit the Trail – Writing”  
Summer 2009  
Missouri Western State University  
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Department of English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism  
Department of Education**

Instructor and Prairie Lands Writing Project Site Director: Jane Frick,  
frick@missouriwestern.edu  
Cell Phone: 816 294-4410  
Office: Eder 201  
Office 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.

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

“Hit the Trail – Writing” is a theme that bridges several topics: Writing Across the Curriculum, Creative Nonfiction, and Exploration of Place. Most of these course materials were developed by Dr. Amy Lannin, Missouri Writing Project Associate Director and education professor at the University of Missouri – Columbia, who taught this course during the summer 2008 (lannina@missouri.edu). She has granted us permission to use these course materials, with our modifications, during summer 2009

Dr. Lannin writes:

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 we 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 we write, revise, and prepare to publish writing
- Confer with a writing group to revise writing
- Understand methods of writing instruction as we 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.

## **MATERIALS**

Selected articles available online throughout the course.

Books you may want to check out from a library or find at a bookstore or online:

- Bryson, Bill. (2000). *The Best American Travel Writing*.
- Heard, Georgia. (1995) *Writing Toward Home*.
- 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**

**A cautionary note:** This is an online course, not an independent study course.

1. Eight lessons or assignments will be available every Monday which will require you to complete Discussion Board postings by 10 PM Wednesday **and** additional postings/responses by 10 PM Sunday each week. These lessons will include completing the following writings:

- Where I am At Poem
- Writing of Self: Personal Geography
- Secret of Once
- Four Modes Essay
- Perspective of Place
- Place-based Lesson, including your writing the actual assignment(s) which you give to your students.

2. You will participate in a writing group for peer critiquing of your pieces.

3. You will post three polished pieces and your Place-based Lesson to our Discussion Board no later than Sunday, July 26. The polished pieces are yours to select from among the writings you've completed and peer critiqued from "1." above. They may include the writing assignment you give to your students in your Place-based Lesson OR from someone else's Lesson.

**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 post your writing for your group members to read and post responses to you.

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

We will read and discuss several common texts which will be provided as .pdf documents online— as well as self-selected texts—via our Discussion Board.

### **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. An “A” grade will be awarded to participants whose assignments are thoughtful, well-organized and which reflect the content of the course. A “B” grade will be awarded to participants whose assignments are complete but may not be well-organized and/or fully developed. 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 15, 2009.

## **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, it is important that you call the instructor prior to or at the deadline time at 816 294-4410. If she is not available, leave a message for her, and she will respond within 24 hours. 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.
- Call (816 294-4410) or 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.
- 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.

### **SCHEDULE:**

Assignments will be posted each Monday, 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:

#### **1. June 1, Monday – Introductions and Welcome**

4:30 – One-time face-to-face meeting

#### **Assignment Lesson Module 1 Charting our Course: Where I'm At (rather than Where I'm From)**

Readings:

Course syllabus

“Foreword” and “Introduction” to *The Best American Travel Writing* by Bill Bryson

Guidelines for Responding to Writing (in Course Content)

Guidelines for Discussion Board Posts (in Course Content)

Due Wednesday, June 3, by 10 PM:

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

Poem of Introduction: Where I'm At

Due Sunday, June 8, by 10 PM:

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

#### **2. June 8, Monday – Assignment Lesson Module 2 Perspectives of Place**

Readings:

From Bill Buford's “Lions and Tigers and Bears” in Bryson's *The Best American Travel Writing*

Excerpts from Ken Macrorie's *Writing to be Read*

Due Wednesday, June 10, by 10 PM:

Discussion Board Posting: Perspectives of Place

Discussion Board Posting: Draft of Personal Geography Essay: ABCs of Place

Due Sunday, June 14, by 10 PM

Discussion Board Posting: 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?

Discussion Board Posting: Reply to the drafts of your writing group members' Personal Geography Essays

#### **3. June 15, Monday -- Four Modes of Place and Place-based Writing Across the**

## Curriculum

### Readings:

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

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

Due Wednesday, June 17, by 10 PM

Discussion Board Posting: Modes of Discourse

Discussion Board Posting: Secret of Once (in a current place) draft

Due Sunday, June 21, by 10 PM

Discussion Board Posting: Place-based writing across the curriculum

Discussion Board Posting: Reply to the drafts of your writing group members' Secret of Once in a current place.

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.

### 4. June 22, Monday – The Lure of the Outdoors and Books and a Backyard

#### Readings:

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

Self-selected literature of place excerpts from provided list

Due Wednesday, June 24, by 10 PM

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

Discussion Board Posting: Four Modes Essay draft

Due Sunday, June 28, by 10 PM

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

Discussion Board Posting: Reply to the drafts of your writing group members' Four Modes Essay.

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

### 5. June 29, Monday – Creative Nonfiction Genre

#### Reading:

Gutkind (Online)

Creative Nonfiction Rubric

Due Wednesday, July 1, by 10 PM

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

Discussion Board Posting: Perspectives of Place draft

Due Sunday, July 6, by 10 PM

Nothing. Enjoy the 4<sup>th</sup> holiday with your family members.

### 6. July 6 Monday – Place-based lessons

Reading: Sample Place-based lesson and writing assignment from Dr. Amy Lannin

Due Wednesday, July 8, by 10 PM

Discussion Board Posting: Reply to the drafts of your writing group members' perspectives of place pieces.

Due Sunday, July 12, by 10 PM

Discussion Board Posting: Place-based lesson draft

### 7. July 13, Monday – Place-based lessons, Reflections, and Revisions

Reading: Read other teachers' place-based lessons

Due Wednesday, July 13, by 10 PM

Discussion Board Posting: Response to at least two teachers' place-based lessons

Due Sunday, July 19

Discussion Board Posting: Try out one of the writing events provided in another person's lesson. Post it as a reply to the lesson and also post a reflection on how it went and what you would recommend for the lesson (what works, what might be

altered).

### **8. July 20, Monday – Final Reflections and Revisions**

Due Wednesday, July 22, by 10 PM

Discussion Board Posting: Description of which three pieces will be polished and submitted for the course.

Discussion Board Posting: Reflection about place-based writing as a result of completing the course.

Due Sunday, July 26, by 10 PM

Discussion Board Posting: Three polished pieces + final draft of place-based lesson.

Grades posted by Wednesday, July 29.