

## **EL202 and ESL Writing Intensive**

Seminar Leader: Ariane Simard  
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Office Hours: by appointment

### **Course Description**

When Joan Didion commented that, “we tell ourselves stories in order to live,” she may as well have been referring to Louise Erdrich’s National Book Award winning novel, The Round House. Set on a fictionalized Ojibwe Reservation in North Dakota, Erdrich’s novel is told by Antone ‘Joe’ Coutts, a tribal lawyer, recounting the violent sexual assault and attempted murder of his mother Geraldine. Joe, who is thirteen at the time of the incident, tells the reader through a series of flashbacks how he enlists three friends to help him sort out the grisly event and find the perpetrator. Looking into the crime against his mother re-opens older, unsolved crimes against reservation women. As Joe gets closer to the facts, he is haunted by *wiindigoo*, an Ojibwe ancestral spirit that aids humans in time of need. Lies and old stories fall away, revealing not only the perpetrator, but also a new understanding of the adult life that lay before him.

As we work through the novel as a class, we will explore related topics including human rights, postcolonial identity, feminism, gender identity, masculine studies, racial justice and forced migration through outside texts, written assignments and class discussion. In addition to *The Round House*, we will look at some other texts to help us explore and possibly contextualize the fictional world Erdrich creates, as well as read some of the treaties the US Government signed with the American Indians, and listen to (via podcasts) some recent real life accounts of disappeared American Indian women. To better understand the violence in the novel, we will begin the class with Primo Levi’s essay called “Useless Violence” (class handout). Please note that as the subject matter of violence can be triggering, every effort will be made to keep the classroom setting safe.

EL202 ESL WRITING INTENSIVE SEMINAR is a writing workshop designed to help students write better academic papers. While the class is aimed toward students who are coming to the college with English as a Second Language, and designed to develop the writing skills of non-native English speakers to prepare for academic work in American Standard English (ASE), the class is open to anyone who would like to improve their academic writing. Over the course of the semester, students will develop an effective and original academic writing voice as well as review grammar and learn how to cite academic sources. Building on the **Language & Thinking** workshops, we will put into practice essential writing techniques such as drafting, research, critical reading skills, peer review, re-writing and workshop. Graded course work includes class participation, peer reviews, reading questions, three short essays (2-4 pages), one in-class essay leading to a final written paper (4-6 pages) and one group podcast project. Upon successful completion of the class, you should be able to think critically, as well as construct compelling narratives and effective written academic arguments.

This class takes an approach that good writing is as much a practice as anything else. Much of the course work is designed to help you develop a strong personal habit of writing.

## Requirements

Please show up on time, ready to write. Readings should be completed before class. This class will be run as an active workshop, which means that students should be ready to participate in peer reviews and discussions about the work during class time.

You will have a lot of opportunity to discuss your work with me and should feel free to talk about how you are approaching the assignment or discuss any other concerns or writing challenges you might be working through.

Graded work includes:

Participation

Reading Questions

Peer Reviews

3 short response papers

1 final paper

Group Podcast Project

### Online Class Location and Contacting Instructor

You can find the syllabus, handouts, reading material and assignments on the google classroom site.

You can reach me at [a.simard@bard.berlin.edu](mailto:a.simard@bard.berlin.edu). It's helpful if you use a subject line that is pertinent.

If the entire class is willing, we can also create a WhatsApp list to keep in contact.

In the event of lockdown, we will move the class to a completely online format, using ZOOM and Padlet.

Scheduled class times will be available online under the relevant course heading:

<https://berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/>

## Required Texts

The Roundhouse by Louise Erdrich

Diary of a Grammar Zombie by Jennie Wadsworth (available as a class handout)

"Useless Violence" Primo Levi (class handout)

US Treaties with the Indians (class handout)

Excerpt from Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee by Dee Brown

Excerpt from The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee by David Treuer

## Recommended Texts

A Short Guide to College Writing 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, by Sylvan Barnet, Pat Bellanca and Marcia Stubbs

On Writing Well by William Zinsser

(a complete .pdf is available online at Bryn Mawr College)

## **Academic Integrity**

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies.

To further illuminate this point, we will spend time in class discussing the roles of students, professors and staff for maintaining academic integrity.

It should be noted that, in instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity, they will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

## **Nonviolent classroom and student physical and mental safety**

We will spend time in class discussing nonviolent teaching practices as well as methods and tools students can use to create a safe, harmonious learning environment for themselves.

This classroom (online and in person) is a safe space.

## **Attendance**

Attendance for ALL classes is expected. More than one absence in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Students who have missed more than 30% of the class, may risk failure.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused.

The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

**SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2020:** Some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

## **Assessment and Assignments (Graded Work)**

### **In-Class Writing**

We open every class with a brief, in-class writing assignment to get our minds attuned with writing.

### **Reading Questions**

Notes on all assigned reading posed in the form of observation and questions to share with the class.

### **Narrative Essay**

The Narrative Essay is a two-to-three page essay describing a true story about your-self. We will use this essay as a way to examine the relationship between author and academic authority. Expect to write more than one draft of this essay.

### **Compare and Contrast Response Paper**

This paper will focus on two texts we work on as a class. Students will be given tips to help prepare and we will work initially on this assignment in small groups

### **Descriptive Response Paper**

The descriptive essay is a short report that helps to define a term or set of events for the reader. We will work on this essay together as a class.

### **Argumentative Response Paper**

Arguing a point is a key responsibility of an essay. This response paper will help students develop an idea worth arguing about.

### **Application Analysis Essay**

The Application Analysis Essay is a three-to-four page essay analyzing a few texts using the ideas of another text. We will use this essay as a way to examine critical analysis and also as a way to showcase some of the techniques used in the two previous essays. Expect to write more than one draft of this essay.

### **Final Radio Group Project**

We will break up into small groups and produce a radio project to present online to the class.

### **Peer Review Letters**

Letters written to your peers assessing your peer's rough draft. The letter discusses what works and what doesn't work in your peer's writing. A Peer Review Letter is due with every essay assignment.

### **Grammar Quizzes (non-graded element)**

Short, take home quizzes reviewing grammar topics covered in class. Source material for the quizzes include OWL Purdue, [A Short Guide To College Writing](#) and [On Writing Well](#) as well as [The Grammar Zombie](#) handbook.

### **Assignment Deadlines**

All written assignments are due electronically and should be uploaded to the virtual class portal, Google Classroom Folder by Tuesday at midnight.

### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C.

Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Please contact and talk to me at any point when you are struggling with an assignment. The whole purpose of this class is to discover tools that make writing easier and more pleasant. If you come talk to me about your writing struggles, chances are you will finish your paper in time.

### **Grade Breakdown**

Essay Assignments	50%
Peer Review & Reading Notes	20%
Participation (including self-assessment and in class writing)	30%

### **Schedule**

**In the event that a student is unable to make it to class due to COVID-19 or a visa issue, accommodations will be made for online instruction through ZOOM.**

#### **I. Identity and Narrative—Writing about yourself**

Using our personal stories as a way to access narrative structure, we will examine the way stories are told in both oral and written form. What makes a narrative compelling? Why are stories important? In addition we will talk about stories told from a first person point of view, like The Round House and what that rhetorical device does to help move a narrative forward.

In addition to writing a narrative we will talk about note taking, reading critically, peer review, drafting, workshop techniques, transitions, word order, using clauses (and punctuation) correctly, and authorial point of view

#### **Week One— Monday, August 31<sup>st</sup> 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

Course Introduction

Finding Subject Matter

Primo Levi “Useless Violence”

#### **HW**

Narrative Essay assigned

Read Primo Levi “Useless Violence”; write reading questions

**Week Two—Monday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

Naming Subject Matter

Discussion on “Useless Violence” Primo Levi  
(Bring your reading questions!)

**HW**

Read Chapters 1 & 2 of The Round House by Louise Erdrich

**Week Three—Monday, Sep 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

First Draft Narrative assignment due

Discussion on opening scenes of The Round House

**HW**

Read chapters 3-5 The Round House, write reading questions

Find a peer reviewer

**Week Four—Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

Discussion The Round House chapters 3-5

Peer Review session

**HW**

Listen to podcast [This American Life “A Mess to be Reckoned With”](#)

Read chapters 6-7, The Round House; write reading questions

Work on 2<sup>nd</sup> draft

**Week Five—Monday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

Second Draft due Tuesday Sep 29<sup>th</sup> at midnight

Padlet online writing Workshop Q&A

Class discussion chapters 6-7 (bring your reading questions!)

**HW**

Read chapters 8-9, The Round House; write reading questions

## **II. Violence begets ghosts**

Joe, the narrator of Louise Erdrich’s The Round House, often finds it difficult to put what he sees into words. The things he encounters (namely violence and ghosts) are after all, difficult for most people to define. Yet, as writers and critical thinkers, we have to look for ways to talk about difficult, taboo subjects and slippery, theoretical ideas. Pinning these things down takes craft and practice. Over the next few weeks, we will work on ways to generate some thoughtful reflective writing on what we’ve read so far. After we have some critical ideas in hand, we’ll take those ideas and try to integrate them into larger, more formal essays.

In addition to writing three response papers, we will continue to work on note taking, reading critically, peer review, drafting, workshop techniques, transitions, word order, using clauses

(and punctuation) correctly, and the techniques of writing effective description. We will also look at MLA and APA guidelines and talk about how to cite outside sources.

## **NARRATIVE ESSAY**

### **Week Six—Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

Film—*Smoke Signals*; class discussion

Individual Conferences

**HW**

Read final chapters 10-11, The Round House

### **Week Seven—Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

Final Draft of Narrative due

Radio/PODCAST assignment

**HW**

Read “Tonto and the Lone Ranger Fistfight in Heaven” by Sherman Alexie

**OPTIONAL Chapters 1,2,3 and 4 Diary of a Grammar Zombie**

**[Fall Break October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020]**

### **Week Eight—Monday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

Class Discussion on final chapters of The Round House

In class writing workshop—Descriptive Response Paper

**HW**

**OPTIONAL Grammar Quiz Chapters 5,6 and 7 Diary of a Grammar Zombie**

Read American Indian Treaties (class handout)

### **Week Nine—Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

Class Discussion on final chapters of The Round House (con’td)

In class writing workshop—Comparative Response Paper

**HW**

**OPTIONAL Grammar Quiz Chapters 5,6 and 7 Diary of a Grammar Zombie**

Chapter from Dee Brown’s Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, “The Long Walk of the Navajos” (class handout).

### **Week Ten—Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

**14.00-17.15**

Class Discussion on final chapters of The Round House (con’td)

In class writing workshop—Argumentative Response Paper

Application Analysis Paper Assigned

**OPTIONAL Grammar Quiz Chapters 8,9 and 10 Diary of a Grammar Zombie**

Chapter from The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee David Treuer (class handout).

### **III. Denouement**

Working in small groups, we'll create a radio project using some of the ideas and terms we have learned as places to begin our projects. Moving toward a critical response, we will also develop a final paper that will examine the novel through the lens of the critical and philosophical texts we have read. As part of our process of discovery, we will also discuss some of the different kinds of rhetorical arguments you can use in writing and ways these methods might help in drafting stronger essays in the future.

We will continue to work on reading critically, drafting, peer review, workshop, using grammar correctly, and will practice citing outside sources.

#### **Week Eleven—Monday, November 16th, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

Question and Thesis writing workshop  
Podcast proposal due (first draft)  
Application Analysis Essay First Draft due

**HW**

Work on podcast and final paper

#### **Week Twelve—Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

Application Analysis Essay Peer Review Workshop  
MLA formatting workshop

**HW**

Work on podcast and final paper

#### **Week Thirteen—Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

**Individual conferences**

Second draft due Tuesday, December 1st, 2020

**HW**

Work on podcast and final paper

#### **Week Fourteen—Monday, December 7th, 2020**

**14.00-17.15**

Final Group Podcast Presentations

**HW**

Work on podcast and final paper

FINAL ESSAY DUE ON THE LAST DAY OF COMPLETION WEEK by email to  
a.simard@berlin.bard.edu