Mission Statement:
Our mission is to serve as a leading center of Christian thought and action providing an excellent education from a biblical perspective and global context in pivotal professions to equip Christian leaders to change the world.

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION & THE ARTS**

**JRN 685 Seminar**
**Nonfiction and Novel Writing**
**Summer Semester 2011**
**Eight Online Classes (May 11 – June 29)**
**Final Revisions and Work Due August 15, 2011**

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All students are required to read and have a thorough understanding of the syllabus. Any questions or concerns need to be addressed to the instructor.
**Course Description**

JRN 685 (MAD) – Seminar in Nonfiction and Novel Writing (3 Hours). A study and examination of both story and novel development. Emphasis will be on learning the elements, fundamentals and structures of effective nonfiction and fiction writing. The course will allow students the opportunity to begin writing a novel or to complete three stories, which will be submitted to a publisher for consideration. Literary readings will include diverse works from authors representing various cultures, such as: Achebe, Borges, Capote, Chekhov, Ha Jin, Hemingway and Singer. Please note that this is an eight-week course, but you will have until the end of the summer, August 15, to turn in all final drafts.

**Rationale/Course Overview**

*Preface*

The most important part of this course is you. Your participation, involvement and enthusiasm are vital for a meaningful experience both for you and for others in the class.

As your professor, I want to further your understanding of the total process of writing. But, more important, I want to help you become a better person and journalist. Your progress and development are my primary concerns. Let me know anytime you feel as though you are confused or do not understand the material. I will be happy to meet with you during an appointment at your convenience. You may also call me at home if you wish.

Please know that I am always eager to help you. I see my role as both a teacher and a facilitator: I am a teacher in sharing with you what I have discovered (the hard way) through the years and I am a facilitator in helping you learn how to learn.

My goal for the course is for us to explore, study and talk about the process of writing in a way that allows you to understand the incredible responsibility and power you possess as a journalist and writer. The public is expecting you to be their eyes and ears in a complex society; you must always remember to treat this trust with care, integrity and sensitivity.

*Introduction*

The primary focus of this course is to help you develop and write nonfiction and fiction stories – one genre complements the other. Be advised, though, that no course, book, or professor can give you a complete step-by-step formula on how to become a successful writer. The total process involves years of study, both on your own and in courses like this one.

Becoming a writer is difficult; you will be successful only if you persevere and learn from your mistakes. Never allow yourself to become discouraged by any criticism of your work. Listen carefully to such comments and accept those suggestions that seem most valid. Discipline yourself to write on a daily basis. It is extremely important that you set aside at least half an hour to an hour each day and use that time to work on a poem, play, short story, part of a novel, or even to write in a journal. Do not wait until you feel inspired to write something down. Remember that a writer can only be a writer if he or she writes. You may find the following words from Raymond Carver
(1938-1988) helpful as you work on material for this course. Although Carver is talking specifically about fiction, his observations are applicable to the entire process of writing:

"Evan Connell said once that he knew he was finished with a short story when he found himself going through it and taking out the commas and then going through the story again and putting commas back in the same places. I like that way of working on something. I respect that kind of care for what is being done. That's all we have, finally, the words, and they had better be the right ones, with the punctuation in the right places so that they can best say what they are meant to say. If the words are heavy with the writer's own unbridled emotions, or if they are imprecise and inaccurate for some other reason – if the words are in any way blurred -- the reader's eyes will slide right over them and nothing will be achieved. . . .I have friends who've told me they had to hurry a book because they needed the money, their editor or their wife was leaning on them or leaving them -- something, some apology for the writing not being very good. 'It would have been better if I'd taken the time.' I was dumfounded when I heard a novelist friend say this. I still am, if I think about it, which I don't. It's none of my business. But if the writing can't be made as good as it is within us to make it, then why do it? In the end, the satisfaction of having done our best, and the proof of that labor, is the one thing we can take into the grave."

Clearly, Carver is talking about integrity and doing our best no matter what the task. Both of these things are important as we go through life, but they are extremely crucial for a writer. We have a responsibility both to ourselves and to others to give 100 percent effort at all times. Failure to do anything less compromises everything that we say and believe. When you write, do so with honesty and integrity, knowing that someday others will look back and judge you for what you write today.

Christian principles

Journalism in its truest form is a ministry of truth-telling. Along with the gospels of Matthew, Mark and John, Luke 1:1-4 provides an example of the great responsibility that journalists and writers have in today's world: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

In addition, we are reminded by St. Paul about our personal and professional responsibility to the Lord: "... I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Ephesians 4:1-7

Integration of faith and learning

Education allows us to see more of the great and wonderful world that God has created. Whenever we study any subject, we begin to understand the vast complexities and beauties of
creation. The poet John Milton once wrote that the true purpose of learning is to help us see, with greater clarity, the world in all its fullness:

“Therefore nothing can rightly be considered as contributing to our happiness unless it somehow looks both to that everlasting life as well as to our life as citizens of this world. Contemplation is by almost universal consent the only means whereby the mind can set itself free from the support of the body and concentrate its powers for the unbelievable delight of participating in the life of the immortal gods. Yet without learning, the mind is quite sterile and unhappy, and amounts to nothing. For who can rightly observe and consider the ideas of things human and divine, about which he can know almost nothing, unless his spirit has been enriched and cultivated by learning and discipline? So the man who knows nothing of the liberal arts seems to be cut off from all access to the happy life – unless God’s supreme desire was that we should struggle to the heights of knowledge of those things for which he has planted such a burning passion in our minds at birth. He would seem to have acted vainly or malevolently in giving us a spirit capable and insatiably curious of this high wisdom. Scrutinize the face of all the world in whatever way you can. The Builder of this great work has made it for his own glory. The more deeply we search into its marvelous plan, into this vast structure with its magnificent variety – something which only Learning permits us to do – the more we honor its Creator with our admiration and follow him with our praise. In doing so we may be securely confident that we please Him.” Seventh Prolusion by John Milton (1630)

In studying journalism, for example, we create a framework for telling the truth as well as presenting facts clearly and honestly.

**DEPARTMENTAL PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND GOALS FOR THE COURSE**

1. Students will explore the integration of biblically based content and the development of their worldview as it pertains to and implicates their professional journalistic skills, practices and leadership within their communities.

*Assessments for achieving this goal:* Completing an assignment on analyzing content in both Christian and non-Christian feature publications.

2. Students will explore the emerging theory, skills and practices of journalism as it pertains to all areas of media and society, with a full comprehension of the changing forces that influence journalistic media standards and practices.

*Assessments for achieving this goal:* Completing an assignment on the merits and attributes of the theory of “New Journalism” and the “Nonfiction Novel.”

3. Students will explore the interactive nature of the Internet as it pertains to professional journalistic practices and the journalism media industry, particularly as it intersects with the impact on local and global media communications and community.

*Assessments for achieving this goal:* Completing an assignment that allows students to understand and examine the different ways and forms of telling stories via new media.
COURSE MATERIALS

Required textbook


COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance

Each student must attend and participate in all class sessions whether on campus or online. Absences, excused or otherwise, do not automatically relieve you from turning in written homework. Clear effort should be made to notify me about any absence in advance of the class. Absences for health reasons will require verification of medical attention. Unexcused absences will automatically lower your final grade in the class by one level for each occurrence (for example, from an A to an A-). Students are expected to keep up with class content and assignments despite absences. Participating in each class is your best opportunity to learn. When you are absent you miss critical discussions and explorations. In addition to lowering your class participation grade, not being present will affect how you perform on your assignments.

Writing requirements

You are expected to complete each writing assignment. Failure to turn in any assignment by the scheduled deadline will result in a 0. During the term you may have the opportunity to rewrite some assignments for a possible increase in the grade. Rewrites will not be permitted for any incomplete work or for late papers. In addition, no make-up work will be permitted beyond the deadline for any and all Discussion Boards in Blackboard. If you are given the opportunity to rewrite, the revision must show significant improvement from the original and there must be other changes in the paper than merely correcting errors which have been pointed out by me or by the Regent University Writing Center. If there is little or no improvement, the grade for the rewrite will not be increased. The grade you receive on the rewrite is the one that will be recorded; however, the rewrite grade never will be lower than the original grade for that particular assignment. Whenever you are given the opportunity to rewrite a paper, the revision is due prior to the beginning of the next class meeting one week later.

Academic integrity

The Regent University community of teachers and scholars affirms that the biblical principles of truth and honesty are absolutely essential. Indeed, the Bible contains numerous admonitions against false witness, dishonesty and cheating. Upholding the standard of academic integrity with its reliance on honesty is a responsibility of both faculty and students. Conduct that violates academic integrity includes issues such as:

Dishonesty, which is the lack of integrity exhibited through lying, cheating, defrauding or deceiving. Examples of dishonesty include: copying from the research paper of another, allowing one’s own research paper to be copied, reading without the instructor’s consent a copy of the
examination prior to the date it is given, submitting the same work product in more than one
course without the express permission of the instructor(s); disclosing or accepting information if
one takes a test at a different time than other students in the same course; using the same work or
article for a class assignment and a professional publication without obtaining the prior
permission of the instructor.

Plagiarism, which is stealing or using the ideas or writings of another as one’s own. It involves
the failure to acknowledge material copied from others or the failure to acknowledge one’s
indebtedness to another for the gist of important thoughts in a formal statement, whether written
or oral. Charges of violating academic integrity shall be handled according to established
student discipline procedures published in the Catalog and the Student Handbook.

Tutoring

If you would like additional help in this course, please contact me. I am available by special
appointment to work with you on an individual basis to help you correct any difficulties you may
be experiencing. Please talk with me whenever you need help, and do not wait until the end of
the semester to become concerned about your lack of progress. By this time it may be too late!
You also are encouraged to contact the Regent University Writing Center for additional
assistance and advice.

Plagiarism

Please familiarize yourself with the definition of plagiarism (see the Regent University
Student Handbook) as well as the penalties for being found guilty of stealing material from
another person. As a journalist and writer, you must know how to document and quote the
work of other persons. Make sure that you attribute properly and give credit where credit
is due. Penalties for plagiarism can range from failing an assignment to failing an entire
course to being dismissed from the university. This offense is extremely serious.

Format for all writing assignments

Unless otherwise directed, assignments must be in MS Word, double-spaced with one-inch
margins, and in 12-point, Times New Roman type. All papers must be received by the deadline.
They should be sent via e-mail as an attachment in MS Word to my e-mail address. Any work
that fails to follow proper guidelines in style, format and neatness will be penalized in grading.
Please put the name of assignment in the subject line of the e-mail. Also, do not send your
completed assignments to the Digital Drop Box. Send them to my Regent e-mail address only
and please use your Regent e-mail account/address.

Meeting deadlines

Writing is a deadline-driven discipline. Late assignments are not automatically accepted. If a
late assignment is accepted (depending on the circumstances involved), it will be accepted only
within 24 hours of the deadline and will be reduced automatically by 10 percent. Except in the
most extreme and excused circumstances (i.e., hospitalization, family emergency) assignments will not be accepted later than 24 hours after deadline.

Assignment changes and announcements

Any changes will be announced well in advance in writing either by e-mail or in Blackboard. It is your responsibility to make sure you keep current with any changes or modifications.

Blackboard access and requirements

Please keep in mind that it is your responsibility to access Blackboard on a regular basis and to check all sections: Announcements, Discussion Board, Course Materials, Assignments, Gradebook, etc. Detailed information on each assignment will be posted every week. The requirements for all exercises will be included in Blackboard, especially how to participate in the regular Discussion Board. Should you have any questions, please contact me by phone or e-mail and I will respond, in most cases, within 24 hours.

Reservation of right to make modifications

The School of Communication and the Arts has attempted to provide information which, at the time of preparation of the syllabus, most accurately describes policies, procedures, regulations and requirements of the school and this course. However, the current syllabus does not define the complete nature or parameters of the course. Please note that the professor reserves the right to add to, cancel, alter or change any statement, requirement, assignment, deadline or element of this course without prior notice.

Circulation and use of student material within the course

Be advised, students will routinely critique each other’s work in course exercises. All work submitted in this course may be circulated and used in course critiques and exercises. Submission of materials in this course implies the student’s full permission to copy, circulate and use student material in course discussion and exercises.

Course readings

You need to complete all of the assigned readings on the following pages by the beginning of the next class period listed on the schedule. Please do not fall behind because it will be difficult to catch up.

E-mail guidelines and etiquette

Please conduct all correspondence using Regent e-mail addresses. Please do not use the Digital Drop Box or the Compose Mail features in Blackboard for assignments. Please send all completed papers via e-mail as an attachment in MS Word. Whenever you send an e-mail to my account, you will receive a confirmation or response usually within 24 hours, except on weekends. Also, make sure you follow proper e-mail etiquette when you write a message or a
response. See the following site, which is maintained by the Purdue Online Writing Lab, to learn more: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/pw/p_emailett.html

Discussions with professor

Please let me know whenever you would like to meet with me. I am available during office hours, by special appointment and by phone at the office or at home. I want to help you do your best so please talk with me about your ideas and concerns.

Journalists and writers as mirrors

Being a journalist and a writer will allow you to see and experience the many facets of our world. As such, you are recording today’s events that will become tomorrow’s history. You have a duty to reflect the diversity of cultures, races and religions that are found throughout the earth.

Henri Nouwen once wrote that the world is a giant mosaic of people, each of whom shines a little differently. Allow the light of their beauty and individuality to shine through in all of your stories and writing.

“Community is like a large mosaic. Each little piece seems so insignificant. One piece is bright red, another cold blue or dull green, another warm purple, another sharp yellow, another shining gold. Some look precious, others ordinary. Some look valuable, others worthless. Some look gaudy, others delicate. As individual stones, we can do little with them except compare them and judge their beauty and value. When, however, all these little stones are brought together in one big mosaic portraying the face of Christ, who would ever question the importance of any one of them? If one of them, even the least spectacular one, is missing, the face is incomplete.

“Together in the one mosaic, each little stone is indispensable and makes a unique contribution to the glory of God. That’s community, a fellowship of little people who together make God visible in the world.” – Henri Nouwen from Can You Drink the Cup?

A writer’s purpose

In my opinion, one of the greatest writers of the past century is Isaac B. Singer, who won the 1978 Nobel Prize in Literature. I had the honor of studying with Mr. Singer when I was a graduate student at the University of Miami in Florida. Read what Mr. Singer said in his Nobel Lecture Banquet Speech (Dec. 8, 1978) about the purpose of a writer:

“The storyteller and poet of our time, as in any other time, must be an entertainer of the spirit in the full sense of the word, not just a preacher of social or political ideals. There is no paradise for bored readers and no excuse for tedious literature that does not intrigue the reader, uplift him, give him the joy and the escape that true art always grants. Nevertheless, it is also true that the serious writer of our time must be deeply concerned about the problems of his generation. He cannot but see that the power of religion, especially belief in revelation, is weaker today than it was in any other epoch in human history. More and more children grow up without faith in God, without belief in reward and punishment, in the immortality of the soul and even in the validity
of ethics. The genuine writer cannot ignore the fact that the family is losing its spiritual foundation. All the dismal prophecies of Oswald Spengler have become realities since the Second World War. No technological achievements can mitigate the disappointment of modern man, his loneliness, his feeling of inferiority, and his fear of war, revolution and terror. Not only has our generation lost faith in Providence but also in man himself, in his institutions and often in those who are nearest to him.

“In their despair a number of those who no longer have confidence in the leadership of our society look up to the writer, the master of words. They hope against hope that the man of talent and sensitivity can perhaps rescue civilization. Maybe there is a spark of the prophet in the artist after all.

“As the son of a people who received the worst blows that human madness can inflict, I must brood about the forthcoming dangers. I have many times resigned myself to never finding a true way out. But a new hope always emerges telling me that it is not yet too late for all of us to take stock and make a decision. I was brought up to believe in free will. Although I came to doubt all revelation, I can never accept the idea that the Universe is a physical or chemical accident, a result of blind evolution. Even though I learned to recognize the lies, the clichés and the idolatries of the human mind, I still cling to some truths which I think all of us might accept some day. There must be a way for man to attain all possible pleasures, all the powers and knowledge that nature can grant him, and still serve God - a God who speaks in deeds, not in words, and whose vocabulary is the Cosmos.

“I am not ashamed to admit that I belong to those who fantasize that literature is capable of bringing new horizons and new perspectives - philosophical, religious, aesthetical and even social. In the history of old Jewish literature there was never any basic difference between the poet and the prophet. Our ancient poetry often became law and a way of life.”

Instructor’s qualifications

My primary objective in this course is to help you. I want to share with you what I have learned through the years about writing. I have a B.S. in Journalism (News-Editorial) from Kent State University, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Writing and Literature from University of Miami. In addition, you may wish to look at some of the following things that I have done through the years.

May 2007 to Present:

March 2006 to Present:

Fall 2009:
Rising from the Ruins: Roman Antiquities in Neoclassic Literature, book by Cambridge Scholars Press.
Summer 2009:

August 2009:
“J-council helps profession worldwide,” column, Quill, Volume 97, Number 6.

June/July 2009:
“U.S. journalists shouldn't be silent,” column, Quill, Volume 97, Number 5.

May 2009:
“The world’s most isolated country,” column, Quill, Volume 97, Number 4.

April 2009:
“Recognizing World Press Freedom,” column, Quill, Volume 97, Number 3.

April 2009:

April 2009:

March 2009:
“Italian job: Getting work as a reporter is no easy assignment,” column, Quill, Volume 97, Number 2.

January 2009:
“Time to stop talking, start doing,” column, Quill, Volume 97, Number 1.

December 2008:
“The story tourists never see in Tunisia,” column, Quill, Volume 96, Number 10.

November 2008:
“Fight for free press,” column, Quill, Volume 96, Number 9.

September 2008:

August 2008:
“Global: Here or there, media training is everywhere,” column, Quill, Volume 96, Number 7.

July 2008:
“Inspiration from abroad,” column, Quill, Volume 96, Number 6.


June 2008:
“Foreign journalists take international awards,” column, Quill, Volume 96, Number 5.

April 2008:
“Hard road ahead for media in Paraguay,” column, Quill, Volume 96, Number 3.

March 2008:

March 2008:
“What we can do to change a county,” column, Quill, Volume 96, Number 2.

March 2008:
“Expanding the panorama: Using education and communication to connect learning and living,” juried article in Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Worldwide Forum on Education and Culture, Rome, Italy.

January/February 2008:
“Keep an eye on the world with these reliable sites,” column, Quill, Volume 96, Number 1.

January 2008:

January 2008:

December 2007:

November 2007:
“Nepal improving but still bears watching,” column, Quill, Volume 95, Number 8.

September 2007:
“Staying the course in cyberspace,” column, Quill, Volume 95, Number 7.
August 2007:
“Columbian journalists unite: form federation,” column, Quill, Volume 95, Number 6.

July 2007:
“Thai leadership keeps hold over journalists,” column, Quill, Volume 95, Number 5.

May 2007:
“Global: Whims often lead to Syrian journalists’ woes,” column, Quill, Volume 95, Number 4.

April 2007:
“Gambia one of the toughest countries for journalists,” column, Quill, Volume 95, Number 3.

March 2007:
“Sri Lanka: ‘A Land Like No Other,’” column, Quill, Volume 95, Number 2.

February 2007:
“Turkish Code Opposed by Media Groups,” column, Quill, Volume 95, Number 1.

December 2006:
“Singapore Laws Make Life Tough for Journalists,” column, Quill, Volume 94, Number 9.

October 2006:
“‘Horn of Africa’ world’s leading jailer of journalists,” column, Quill, Volume 94, Number 8.

September 2006:
“Journalists find little protection in Brazil,” column, Quill, Volume 94, Number 7.

August 2006:

Summer 2006:
“The Future of the Liberal Arts in a Technological Age,” essay in Transformations, online journal published by the Associated Colleges of the South.

June/July 2006:
"Events belie Russian efforts to better image," column, Quill, Volume 94, Number 5.

May 2006:
“Presidential election has media hopping in Mexico,” column, Quill, Volume 94, Number 4.

March 2006:

March 2006:
“Peru becoming a hostile ground for journalists” and “Burma among most oppressive for journalists,” columns, Quill, Volume 94, Number 2.

February 2006:
“The Seven Laws of Teaching,” essay in eNews online journal, The Center for Teaching and Learning, Regent University.

January 2006:
“Fallen Journalists Remembered for Service,” column, Quill, Volume 94, Number 1.

December 2005:

October 2005:
“Media must work to ensure fair coverage,” column, Quill, Volume 93, Number 9.

August 2005:
“Philippines Loses Another Broadcast Journalist,” column, Quill, Volume 93, Number 8.

April 2005:
“The Last Straw,” editorial, CBN News online.

February 2004:
“Other Voices: ‘Amish in the City’? What’s Next?” editorial in Daily Press.

April 2004:
“Too Many Questions to tell the Truth,” editorial, CBN News online.

June 2004:
“Celebrating ‘One Nation, Under God,’” editorial, CBN News online.

July 2004:
“Tragedy in Sudan,” editorial, CBN News online.

December 2003:
“Debate over Muslim head scarf could affect U.S. customs,” op-ed, Virginian-Pilot.

**Evaluation and Grading**

*Grade percentages*

Student grades will be evaluated on the following weighted criteria (approximate values):
35% for attendance, active participation and Discussion Board
35% for stories and assignments
30% for semester writing project 65% for various papers, projects and exercises
Assignment grading

Unless otherwise specified as “pass-fail,” all assignments will be graded according to the following percentages:

A  = 96-100
A- = 93-95
B+ = 90-92
B  = 85-89
B- = 81-84
C+ = 78-80
C  = 75-77
F  = 74-below

Grading standards

A means Excellent – A superb story in every respect. It would be published professionally without any modifications or changes.
B means Good – A story that could be published with minor changes and revisions.
C means Fair – A story that would need major changes and adjustments before it could be published.
D means Poor – A story that would not be considered for publication under any circumstances because of obvious weaknesses in content, writing, grammar, syntax and organization.

Incomplete grades

Students desiring an incomplete must submit their request to the course instructor and academic dean prior to the end of the term. An incomplete grade will be given in a regular course only for legitimate deficiencies due to illness, emergencies or extraordinary reasons acceptable to the professor, including equipment breakdown or shortages, and not because of neglect on the student’s part. Incompletes require the final approval of the school dean or his/her authorized representative. A regular grade will be given by the instructor if all requirements for the course are submitted by the end of the following academic term. The instructor will submit the new grade to the Register’s Office no later than two weeks after the beginning of the subsequent term. If all work is not submitted by the end of the term following the granting of the incomplete, a grade of FX (NP for pass/fail courses) will be posted automatically unless a Request for Extension of Incomplete has been approved and submitted to the Registrar’s Office. The FX shall be counted as an F in the computation of the GPA. Any student desiring reinstatement to the course after an FX or NP has been posted must register for the course in a subsequent term and, in addition, pay the full current tuition for the course.

Course Schedule (Tentative)

Week 1 (First class begins online at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11)
Reading: Please read Chapters 1-7 in *Three Genres*. As you read, pay particular attention to what Minot says about the similarities/differences between fiction and nonfiction. Please take notes as you read. You will need to reference particular passages in the text as you participate in the Discussion Board for Week 1.

Writing: There is no formal writing assignment due for next Wednesday. Please participate in the Discussion Board for Week 1. Also, start thinking about an interesting incident, time or event in your life. For Week 2, you will be writing about a memorable experience (as in a memoir) and you also will turn this story into a fictional account as well. You will receive more details next week. Please let me know if you have any questions. I am always eager to help you in any way I can!

Discussion Board question:

Please go to the following link and read "The Gospel According to Mark" by Jorge Luis Borges: [www.mrtheilacker.com/gospel_mark_borges.doc](http://www.mrtheilacker.com/gospel_mark_borges.doc)

You also may listen to a critic as he reads the story. Just go to this link: [http://www.newyorker.com/online/2007/10/15/071015on_audio_theroux](http://www.newyorker.com/online/2007/10/15/071015on_audio_theroux)

I would encourage you to download a copy of the story and then listen carefully as it is read online. This story by Borges is extremely complex and profound so you will need to pay close attention to all of the details. In addition, it would help to review the real Gospel of Mark, noting the similarities and differences to Borges' fictional story. Pay attention to the overall theme, and do not be distracted by some of the more shocking elements in this short story.

Once you think you understand a few of the similarities and differences between the two stories, begin to make an initial post in the Discussion Board. Here are the questions you need to discuss as a class:

1. Explain how Borges uses a real story to create a fictional story. In other words, how is he able to borrow the framework of the Book of Mark to give meaning to his story?
2. Why does he develop a story using the Book of Mark? Why not create his own story?
3. What is the main theme of this short story by Borges? What is his message and why did he write it?

As you discuss these questions, please make a longer, initial post during the first part of the course week (Wednesday through Saturday). Then go back during the second half of the course week (Sunday through Wednesday) to respond to comments made by your colleagues.

Borges' story will spark a lively discussion. It is a marvelous, but perplexing, story. Please complete all of your posts by 5 p.m. next Wednesday in order to receive full credit. This discussion is worth five percent of your overall grade for the semester.
Week 2 (begins May 18)

Reading: Please read Chapters 10 and 11 in *Three Genres*. Look for clues to how a story is constructed piece by piece.

Writing: Please write a short memoir about a memorable experience. You can choose any event or incident that you wish, as long as you have not written about this occurrence before. Here is a link to learn more about writing a personal memoir: [http://inkspell.homestead.com/memoir.html](http://inkspell.homestead.com/memoir.html). Keep your story less than 1,000 words. This part of the assignment will be worth five percent of your grade for the semester, and will be due next Wednesday along with the fictional story described below.

The second part of your writing assignment for Week 2 is to write a fictional story (the length is up to you). Create your own character(s), setting, theme, action, etc. Your short story should not duplicate what happened in your memoir; rather, it should grow out of the personal events or emotions you described. In other words, think about the theme of your memoir. Perhaps you want to write a short story that has a similar theme, but with different characters, a different place, a different time and different action. Use your memoir to get you started on writing a short story; that is, use real life to help you create something fictional. The whole purpose behind the assignments this week is to allow you to discover what it is like to move from nonfiction (a memoir) to fiction (a short story). Both genres have unique differences, but they share many similarities as well. This short story is worth five percent of your grade and is due next Wednesday.

Discussion Board question:

Please go to the following site and read the wonderful Banquet Speech by Selma Lagerlöf, the 1909 Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature: [http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1909/lagerlof-speech.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1909/lagerlof-speech.html)

Take your time and read slowly. Enjoy the stories as she beautifully mingles reality with reflection and fiction. Her technique, style and tone create a memorable and worthwhile experience for the reader.

Once you have thought about the speech (even re-reading it several times), post your personal and professional reactions to her address. Respond to the following questions:
1. Did you like the speech? Why or why not? Be specific by quoting passages.
2. What is she is doing through her words? How is she able to do so much is so little space?
3. Where is the line between fiction and reality in her speech? Cite some examples.
4. Do you agree or disagree with what others in the class have said in this discussion?

As you discuss these questions, please make a longer, initial post during the first part of the course week (Wednesday through Saturday). Then go back during the second half of the course week (Sunday through Wednesday) to respond to comments made by your colleagues. Please complete all of your posts by next Wednesday in order to receive full credit. This discussion is worth five percent of your overall grade for the semester.
**Week 3 (begins May 25)**

Reading: Please read "They Are Billy" (see link at Week 3 Discussion Board).

Writing: Now that you have written a memoir and a short story (that grew out of the nonfiction piece in some way), I would like you to send both stories to me (as an attachment in MS Word) as well as to your assigned. Once you (as the editor) receive both stories from the author, please respond to all six of the following questions by writing a paper:

1. What is your professional analysis of the memoir? Is it Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair or Weak? Please explain your opinion and criteria. How could the story be improved?

2. What stood out most in the memoir? In other words, was it memorable for you as a reader? Why?

3. Where could the memoir be sent to be considered for publication? List at least three sources from Writers Market (www.writersmarket.com). Username: comcareer@regent.edu Password: john316 Please make sure the publishers you select are looking for memoir stories.

4. What is your professional analysis of the short story (fiction)? Is it Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair or Weak? Please explain your opinion and criteria. How could the story be improved?

5. Which of the two stories did you enjoy most? Give at least three reasons why. Be specific.

6. Where could the short story be sent to be considered for publication? List at least three sources from Writers Market. Please make sure the publishers you select are looking for short stories.

You will have until next Wednesday to evaluate the two stories. Please send your four- to five-page analysis (double-spaced) to me and to the author. In answering the questions above, refer to the characteristics and elements presented on pages 34-38 in your text. This particular assignment is worth five percent of your term total. Please be as thorough as possible by offering helpful criticism to the writer. The more you explain, the more you will help the writer improve both stories.

Discussion Board question:

As you have learned by writing your two stories this past week, moving from nonfiction to fiction can be challenging. There are many similarities and differences between a memoir and a short story.

For this week’s discussion, please address the following points:

1. Give the class a brief synopsis of both your memoir and your short story.
2. Explain how your short story evolved from the memoir. Please be specific by offering details. Avoid generalities, such as: “The idea just came to me.” or “I was being creative.” Use your critical thinking skills to track your thought process as best you can.

3. Read the nonfiction story “They Are Billy” at http://www.guideposts.com/story/homeless-brother-independent and explain how the author uses fictional techniques (see pages 34-38 in your text) to tell a nonfiction story. (If the link does not work, please cut and paste the address into your browser.)

4. Tell how you would develop “They Are Billy” into a short story. For example, what would be the theme, plot, action, exposition, characterization, etc.?

Your initial post should address all four items. Later in the course week (Sunday through Wednesday), however, please focus primarily on number four. In particular, offer your feedback and thoughts on how your colleagues would create a fictional story of “They Are Billy.” Do you like their treatment and ideas?

Please post all of your responses by next Wednesday. This discussion will be worth five percent of your semester grade.

Week 4 (begins June 1)

Reading: Please read Chapters 37-39 in your text, in addition to the three items on the Course Materials page for Week 4.

Writing: There are three separate writing assignments for Week 4. Here they are:

1. You need to write query letters (see tips on Course Materials page) for both your memoir and your short story. Then, find three publishers (refer to the recommendations from your "editor" or search Writers Market) for each story. For this assignment, please use only publishers that accept electronic (e-mail) queries. Finally, send query letters to the publishers you have selected. Write out a one- to two-page summary telling me where you sent your stories and why. This exercise is worth two percent of your grade and will be due next Wednesday.

2. Please participate in the Discussion Board for Week 4. Full details are posted on the Discussion Board page. This discussion will be worth three percent of your grade.

3. You need to adapt your short story (fiction) into a brief one-act play (no more than four to five pages double spaced). Make sure you format and set up the play exactly as shown in the text. Also, you do not need to deal with your entire short story in the play; choose just a portion, a snippet, that will offer a glimpse into a particular theme. The play will be worth five percent of your grade.

Discussion Board question:
Please read the short story marked "Week 4: Short story for evaluation" on the Course Materials page. Note that you will be using the Grading Rubric, which also is found on the Course Materials page. Once you have read the story at least twice, and you understand the characteristics outlined in the Grading Rubric, please offer your assessment of this story. Respond to the following questions:

1. What kind of numerical value (4, 3, 2, 1) would assign to each category (creativity, action, setting, etc.)? Keep in mind that on this holistic scale, 4 equals an A, 3 equals a B, 2 equals a C, and 1 equals a D.

2. Explain your analysis in each category to the class.

3. How would you adapt this short story into a brief play? Offer at least three concrete examples of your ideas.

Your comments are worth five percent of your semester grade and need to be posted by 5 p.m. next Wednesday.

**Week 5** (begins June 8)

**Reading:** Please read Chapters 25, 27-31 in the textbook *Three Genres*. Use Chapter 26 as a resource. These chapters deal with writing poetry.

**Writing:** You have a choice this week on what to do for the assignment. You can write either a villanelle or a sonnet (English or Italian). The general theme of the poem must be one that you have dealt with before in your memoir, short story or play. You may be wondering why you are writing poetry in a course on Nonfiction and Novel Writing. The answer is simple: this small exercise will help you develop your talents by giving you more experience in another genre. Through writing a villanelle or sonnet, you will become more adept at imagery, description, rhythm, sound, symbolism, allusions and various figures of speech. I know this assignment will be somewhat challenging for many of you. But the rewards of being able to write poetry are manifested each time you write prose, whether it is fiction or nonfiction. As you work your way through a villanelle or sonnet, please let me know if you have any questions. I will be here to help you each step of the way! I also know, without a doubt, that each one of you can meet this challenge. Keep up the great work! Please send me your poem by 5 p.m., next Wednesday. This assignment will be worth five percent of your semester grade.

**Discussion Board question:**

Please read all of the plays that are available on the Course Materials page (these are labeled "Week 5 plays"). Each one of the plays is written by someone in the class but the name does not appear. Use the first few days to read and think about the plays. Then begin to post your responses to the questions below. Remember to use the criteria in your textbook to substantiate your analysis.
1. Which two plays stood out most because of one or more of the following elements: theme, tension, dialogue and dramatic irony. Please explain in concrete terms what you mean and avoid generalities.

2. Which two plays were extremely creative and why? Be specific.

3. Which two plays appealed to you most because of plot? Cite examples.

4. Do you agree or disagree with what some of your colleagues have said?

Please post your comments by 5 p.m., next Wednesday. This discussion is worth five percent of your semester grade.

**Weeks 6-7 (begins June 15)**

Reading: Please read the following chapters in *Three Genres*: 9, 12, 14 and 15. Make sure you study these special chapters before you begin on the writing assignment for this week. The explanations on viewpoint, structure, tension and setting will help you add depth and meaning to your writing.

Writing: Please write one chapter for a novel. You may write any chapter you wish (an opening chapter, a middle chapter or a concluding chapter), but make sure you include an outline or synopsis of the book so I can see where the chapter fits into the novel. In keeping with the modern trend toward shorter chapters, please limit your chapter to five to six pages (double-spaced). The subject and theme of the novel are up to you. You may choose something you have written about before or you may begin with a new idea. Please send your sample chapter to me by 5 p.m., next Wednesday. This assignment will be worth five percent of your semester grade.

Discussion Board question:

Please click on the links below to read what two popular novelists have to say about writing in general and their individual work in particular. Make sure you take notes as you read.

Anne Bernays:  

Scott Turow:  

After you have thought about what Bernays and Turow present on the subject of writing, please respond to the following questions:

1. What insightful tips do these writers offer that can help you improve your own writing?
2. In what ways are Bernays and Turow similar in their approach to writing? In what ways do they differ?
3. Do you agree or disagree with all of their comments on writing? Explain in detail.
Please make all of your posts by two weeks from today.

**Week 8 (begins June 29)**

Reading: No additional assignment

Writing: I hope you are doing well on planning your final three stories (worth 10 percent each for a total of 30 percent of your semester grade). As mentioned earlier in Blackboard, the three stories may be in any combination (fiction, nonfiction or novel chapters). It is entirely up to you! You will have until Monday, August 16, to turn in the stories as well as the final revision of your play and poem (only one rewrite is permitted per assignment). There is one final Discussion Board. By next Wednesday, the class needs to come up with one list of 10 things that writers need to remember at all times!

Discussion Board question:

This week marks our last Discussion Board for the course. We are going to end in a grand style! For the Week 8 forum, you will need to draw on everything you have read, heard, thought and learned about writing during the past two months. The question is simple:

- What are the 10 most important tips (a sort of Ten Commandments, if you will) for writers to remember at all times? Please explain your list in detail, citing specific examples and passages.

No doubt each one of you will have a different list; this is the easy part. The difficult part will be, by the end of the week, to come up with ONE list as a class. In other words, all of you will need to work together throughout the week to shift through all you know to compile one final list, which represents the combined insights (and agreement) of all of you in the class!

I know this is a challenging assignment, but you will learn a great deal in a number of ways: from developing stronger communication skills to improving your abilities to interact as a team. In addition, this list will be something you can keep with you as you continue on in life, whether you pursue writing as a vocation or an avocation.

Please post your personal list of 10 items early in the course week (Wednesday through Saturday) and then respond to the lists offered by your colleagues later in the week (Sunday through Wednesday). You will have until next Wednesday to post all of your comments and responses. This discussion will be worth five percent of your semester grade.

**UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

Please review the following links for important information on university policies:

- Academic Calendar/Registrar Information
- Bookstore
- Honor/Plagiarism Policy
- Regent Library
• **Student Services** (includes links to student handbook, disability services, University calendar, University Writing Center, etc.)

• **Technical Support – University Helpdesk**

• Grading Policies (incompletes, extensions, IPs, etc.) are set forth in this syllabus as well as in the [Regent Student Handbook](#).

• **The Writing Center** at Regent University for both online and on-campus students

• Student Course Evaluations must be completed by each person enrolled in a course. Please make sure you take advantage of this opportunity to give us valuable feedback about your experience during the term. University policy requires that “all students submit a formal student evaluation of teaching form at the end of the academic term. This mandatory requirement must be completed before students will be able to access their final course grade.”

• Disability Statement – the student is responsible for contacting the assistant director of Student Services at 757.352.4486 to request accommodations, provide necessary documentation, and make arrangement with each instructor. The following website is designed to help our disabled students learn of their rights and responsibilities with regard to disability services. The site also has resources for faculty to become better informed of their responsibilities toward the disabled students in their classes.
  
  [www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities.cfm](http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities.cfm)

• Once you have read this syllabus, please indicate that you are familiar with and understand all of the course guidelines and policies by initialing here ________.

  For those of you in online sections, please cut and paste this section into an email and send it to me using your Regent email account.

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**Special needs**

The classroom is similar to a community or a family; each one of us is different, yet we function together as a group. We all need to learn from and encourage one another. It is important to remember that each person has individual strengths and weaknesses; however, by working together we become a complete community. Learning and living are corporate, shared responsibilities.

Keep in mind what George Washington Carver once said: “How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because some day in life you will have been all these.”

No matter what we do, where we go or how we think, we are all brothers and sisters as we travel through this journey of life. Treat everyone in a way that shows respect, concern and compassion.

**Regent University's policy on accessibility**

The policy and intent of Regent University is to fully and completely comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, to the extent that they apply to the university.
Regent University will not discriminate against qualified student, faculty or staff members with a disability in any academic or employment activity, including examinations, student oriented services, recruitment, hiring, promotion, training, lay-off, pay, firing, job assignments, leave, benefits, or any other employment related activity.

Regent University will provide reasonable accommodation to the known physical and mental limitations of a qualified individual with a disability, unless to do so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the university (42 USC 12102 et seq.). It is also the policy and intent of Regent University to comply with the Virginians with Disabilities Act (VA Code Sec. 51.5.5-41). See http://www.regent.edu/admin/stusrv/student_life/disabilities/policy.cfm.

Last Updated: 3/3/2011

At times, due to unforeseen circumstances, course content may be subject to change. Please check with your professor to insure you have the most recently updated Syllabus for this course.

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