

Oral History and the Stories of Medicine  
Writing 20  
Thompson Writing Program  
Duke University  
Fall 2009



**Section 20** W-F      **8:30-9:45 AM**      **116 Art Building**

**Section 86** W-F      **11:40-12:55 PM**      **116 Art Building**

**Instructor: Dr. Gretchen Case**  
**Office: 200H Art Building**  
**Email: [gretchen.case@duke.edu](mailto:gretchen.case@duke.edu)**  
**Office phone: 660-7092**  
**Office hours: Mondays 11:00 AM-1:00 PM and by appt.**

## Course Narrative:

Oral histories begin with the spoken accounts of people who lived through significant events and experiences. These accounts provide valuable perspectives that might not be included in already-written histories. In this course, we will explore several histories of medicine by studying interviews collected by oral historians and incorporating them into written assignments. We will also do the work of oral history ourselves: students will conduct oral history interviews with physicians and other medical providers in the communities surrounding Duke.

Through these interviews we will examine *medicine*: a complex concept that is often recorded in writing but is also a lived experience. By working with oral histories as primary sources for written accounts, we will investigate the many relationships between what is witnessed and what becomes part of the written record. We will also consider the many ways that the *doing* of medicine leads to the *telling* of medicine...and how that telling in turn influences the doing.

Your writing projects for this course will include several short essays, reflecting on weekly readings that explain practices of oral history and of medicine. These shorter assignments are designed to help you identify the main arguments of a text and incorporate those arguments into your own work. Two longer essays will require library research and fieldwork in order to create documents that engage critically with aspects of both writing and medicine.

The first of these two longer essays will incorporate existing oral histories of medicine; we will consult collections as close as Duke and as far away as the National Library of Medicine; other online sources might take us even farther. In a second project, interviews conducted by teams of students will become the basis of an essay offering a written history focused on a particular event, practice, or experience of medicine. To encourage your understanding of the process of revising and editing in academic writing, you will create multiple drafts of all graded work and receive feedback from your peers and from your instructor.

## Course Texts (all required):

Harris, Joseph. *Rewriting: How To Do Things With Texts*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2006.

Hacker, Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. (Note: You may use earlier editions or other MLA handbooks, but you will still be responsible for all MLA updates through 2009.)

All other readings will be posted on our course Blackboard site.

## **The Thompson Writing Program:**

The Thompson Writing Program (TWP) promotes the role of writing in the undergraduate curriculum at Duke. The TWP does so in three main ways. **Writing 20** offers an intensive introduction to the practice of Academic Writing. **Writing in the Disciplines** courses build on the skills developed in Writing 20 in order to offer students a more specific sense of how to write in particular fields of study. **The Writing Studio** offers free, one-on-one tutoring to students working on writing for any course they are taking at Duke. For more information about the TWP, please go to <http://uwp.duke.edu/> or call 684-0812. See also <http://uwp.duke.edu/writing20/students/goals.html> for more on the goals and practices of the Thompson Writing Program.

## **The Duke Community Standard:**

Duke University is a community dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. Citizens of this community commit to reflect upon and uphold these principles in all academic and non-academic endeavors, and to protect and promote a culture of integrity.

To uphold the Duke Community Standard:

- \* I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors;
- \* I will conduct myself honorably in all my endeavors; and
- \* I will act if the Standard is compromised.

**Please re-affirm the community standard on all assignments submitted for credit in this course by including this statement: "I have adhered to the Duke Community Standard in completing this assignment."**

## **Assignments:**

I will provide detailed prompts and further information for each of these assignments later in the semester. Please check the course schedule for due dates and remember to check Blackboard frequently for updates to the schedule.

Final semester grade will be calculated as follows:

Major Essay 1: 30%  
Major Essay 2: 30%  
Team Presentations: 10%  
Brief Essays (3, at 2% each) 6%  
Peer Review Commentaries (3, at 2% each) 6%  
Revised Brief Essay: 10%  
Interview Paperwork: 2%  
Participation/Attendance: 6%

### Brief Essays

Length: 1-2 pages

In each of 3 Brief Essays (BE), you will choose one argument made in that week's readings and explain why you feel this argument is important. You must complete all 3 Brief Essays, but will choose only 1 of those 3 to revise and submit for a grade.

### Peer Review Commentaries

Length: 1 page

You will review the work of your classmates and prepare brief, written commentaries to share during workshops with your small group or the entire class. You will participate as a peer reviewer in at least one workshop focused on the Brief Essays and two workshops focused on the Major Essays.

### Interview Team Presentations and Paperwork

During the second half of the semester, I will organize you into interview teams. Each team will conduct an oral history interview with a medical professional; this interview will be an important component of ME2. As a team, you will be responsible for completing the paperwork associated with an oral history interview and for creating a final presentation to share with the class.

### Major Essay (ME) #1

Length: 3-5 pages

This assignment requires that you use an oral text in the creation of a written text; you will work with existing oral history interviews collected at Duke and other repositories. You will employ at least one interview as a primary source and a beginning point for a discussion of a particular aspect of health or medicine. You will complete two drafts and a final version of this essay. Your first draft will not be graded, but will be reviewed by your instructor. Your second draft will not be graded, but will be reviewed by your peer editors. You will submit your final version to your instructor for a grade equal to 30% of your overall grade for the course.

### Major Essay (ME) #2

Length: 5-7 pages

For this assignment, you will use as a primary source the oral history interview you and your team conduct with a local medical professional. You will also conduct library research in order to contextualize this interview and develop an argument. You will complete two drafts and a final version. Your first draft will not be graded, but will be reviewed by your peer editors. Your second draft will not be graded, but will be reviewed by your instructor. You will submit your final version to your instructor for a grade equal to 30% of your overall grade for the course.

## **Course Policies:**

Attendance and Participation: You will be allowed a maximum of two unexplained absences, neither of which may be on a date that you are assigned to present in class (including peer workshops). Beginning with the third unexplained absence, each class missed may reduce your final semester grade by up to one percentage point. You may also be marked absent if you arrive to class late or leave early. Exceptions and additional absences should be discussed with me in advance. Emergencies are, of course, emergencies!

Full participation in this course requires that you read all assigned texts, complete all written assignments (ungraded and graded!), and prepare for class discussions thoroughly. You should also feel free to bring in additional material and ideas for discussion. Give your classmates and me your undivided attention and respect. Ask questions! Offer opinions!

Late work: Unless I have approved a deadline extension in advance, late assignments are subject to a penalty of one full letter grade for each 24 hours past the deadline. Late penalties begin immediately. For example, if the deadline is midnight (technically, 11:59:59 PM), a paper turned in at 12:30 AM will receive no higher than a “B” grade.

Technology: Technology in the classroom is a wonderful thing, and we will make use of laptops, iPods, etc. in our work together. However, cell phones and any other beloved gadgets that distract you or others should be turned OFF during class time so that our work is not interrupted.

Special Concerns: Please talk to me as soon as possible if issues arise that may affect your work in our classroom. The sooner I know about problems or difficulties, the more I can assist you, or help you find appropriate assistance. I am always happy to speak with you during my office hours or by appointment. Outside of office hours, I am most easily reached by email.

Office Hours and Availability: I have regularly scheduled office hours each week, during which you should feel free to visit and discuss any aspect of our course. If you want to be sure that I am available at a specific time, I do take appointments during office hours and at limited other times throughout the week.

Blackboard: We will depend heavily on the Blackboard site during our work in this course. Written assignments will be submitted through Blackboard unless I direct you otherwise. In order to receive full credit for an assignment, you must submit through Blackboard (not email) by the deadline. From time to time, problems with Blackboard arise; you will not be held responsible for issues caused by Blackboard failure. Do not panic, simply notify me of the problem by email and I will investigate.

## **General Requirements for All Written Assignments:**

1. All essays should be word-processed, double-spaced, and have 1" margins on all sides. You may adjust the margins within reason, but do not use this technique to lengthen or shorten your essays.
2. Your essays must be legible. Times New Roman 12-point font is the default for most word processing programs, but, for example, this document is typed in Constantia 12-point font. You may choose any reasonable font, but you must use 12-point font size throughout the essay. If I can't read it, I won't grade it.
3. You are responsible for following the rules of grammar, spelling, and punctuation for standard written English, even those rules we do not cover explicitly in class. Exceptions may be discussed with me in advance.
4. Every word or idea not your own—whether quotation, paraphrase, or summary—must be cited properly. For written work in this course, all citations should follow the MLA (Modern Language Association) style guidelines.
5. Always attach a Bibliography or Works Cited page to your essay. This should be a separate page, also conforming to MLA style.
6. Please re-affirm the community standard on all written assignments submitted for credit in this course by including this statement: "I have adhered to the Duke Community Standard in completing this assignment."
7. Submit your work through Blackboard according to the assignment prompt. Make sure you submit each draft to the correct page or folder.

## Resources

The Writing Studio offers Duke University undergraduate and graduate students an opportunity to meet with trained writing tutors to discuss individual writing concerns. As a studio, this is a place for you as an artist/writer to work on your art. By discussing your work-in-progress with a trained tutor, you will be better able to move toward developing the awareness and skills that will enable you to improve as a writer. For more information or to make an appointment, please go to <http://uwp.aas.duke.edu/wstudio> or call 668-0901.

For additional information about Modern Language Association citation style, please consult the MLA website at <http://www.mla.org/style>

A very helpful explanation of citation practices is provided by the Duke libraries at <http://library.duke.edu/research/citing/>

Improper citations are only one form of plagiarism, which I take very seriously. Plagiarized work will result in a failing grade for the assignment as well as disciplinary action for the student. Please consult this excellent website for more information at <http://library.duke.edu/research/plagiarism/>

You may want to invest in a few good writing handbooks, such as these favorites:

Strunk, William, Jr. and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Longman, 1999.

Schertzer, Margaret. *The Elements of Grammar*. New York: Longman, 1996.

For those of you who want a quirkier take on the mechanics of writing, try:

Gordon, Karen Elizabeth. *The New Well-Tempered Sentence: A Punctuation Handbook for the Innocent, the Eager, and the Doomed*. New York: Mariner Books, 2003.

Gordon, Karen Elizabeth. *The Deluxe Transitive Vampire: A Handbook of Grammar for the Innocent, the Eager and the Doomed*. New York: Pantheon, 1993.