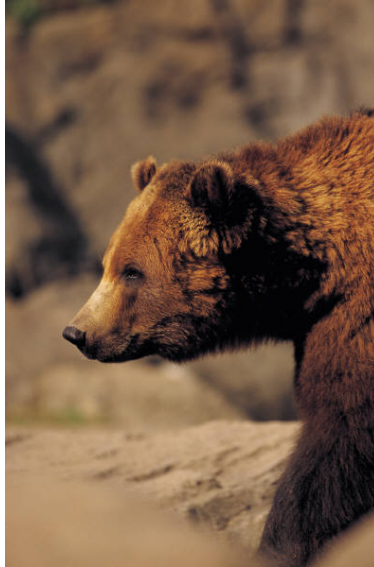


# Personal Narratives

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English 335 / 535 . Section 001  
*Fall 2006*



*Dr. Marguerite Helmers, instructor*

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Office Hours MWF 11:30-12:30 & MW 2:00-3:00pm

*All other times by appointment. I am available after class to answer questions.*

## *Framing Questions: Theories of the Self*

- Is all nonfiction, including autobiography, biography, and memoir to be construed as truth? Are events reported as they happen? And what does that mean—“as they happen”? “As they happen for whom?”
- To what extent does nonfiction borrow fictional techniques and to what effect?
- Who is the narrator? Is the narrator a literal and true representation of the physical author? Is the narrator the author?
- What is the difference between the natural “self” and a constructed, textual self?
- Who is the “I” (or “eye”) of the text? Through whose point of view do we read?
- How does the author represent himself or herself? Is he or she acting or role playing?
- How do we read resistantly?
- What rhetorical processes of selection construct a text? In other words, out of all possible facts, evidence, and representations, how do we get the text we have?
- What literary or filmic traditions of genre inform the narrative?
- What does a text about someone or something else (an “objective reality”) say about the author or creator?
- Why might an author choose to fashion himself or herself as a particular character type?

### *In this class you will . . .*

- Contribute to class discussions
- Make a presentation
- Complete homework, including reading, research, and writing
- Work on a paper or project that requires integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Include diverse perspectives (different races and genders) in class discussions and writing assignments
- Work with other students on projects during class
- Use an electronic medium to discuss or complete assignments
- Analyze the basic elements of literature
- Synthesize and organize ideas, information, and experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships

### *Book Purchases / Required Readings*

- *Among Grizzlies*, Tim Tredwell
- *Jarhead*, Anthony Swofford
- *Into the Wild*, Jon Krakauer
- *A Place to Stand*, Jimmy Santiago Baca
- *Nickel and Dimed*, Barbara Ehrenreich
- *In Cold Blood*, Truman Capote

### *Required Viewing*

- *Grizzly Man*, Dir. Werner Herzog (2005)
- *Capote*, Dir. Bennett Miller (2005)
- *Jarhead*, Dir. Sam Mendes (2005)
- A classic WWII film (1940s-1965), such as *Sands of Iwo Jima*, *Bridge at the River Kwai*, *Flying Leathernecks*, *From Here to Eternity*

#### *Not required, but of interest:*

- *In Cold Blood*, Dir. Richard Brooks (1967)

### *Writing Assignments*

Assignments are given a letter grade, ABCDF. Assignment directions and further ideas for getting started will be distributed and discussed in class as assignments arise.

#### Tim Treadwell news articles, due September 20

Provide print-out of article(s) *with* MLA citation(s)

5%

This is an exercise in using Lexis / Nexis, which needs some massaging to yield results, but which is a primary source for working with news journalism. Find what you can in the press about Treadwell and his mission. You may use his name as a search term or Grizzly People. Some of what you will find are film reviews (the next assignment), so you'll want to note those and get past them and then look at obituaries and commentary.

Grizzly Man reviews, due September 22

Provide print-out of review(s) *with* MLA citation(s)

\*Graduate Students: Please write a short expose on the components of a good review  
5%

Reviews are a staple critical form in the humanities. This assignment is intended to draw you into working with particular databases, finding authoritative reviews, and gauging a film's contemporary reception.

You have *two choices* for this assignment:

- 1) Find a longer, considered review from an authoritative source and identify the main points of the review.
- 2) Cumulatively, a series of short reviews can provide insight into the reception of a film. Find 5-10 short reviews and ascertain the strength and flaws of the film for contemporary audiences. If they are really short, do more rather than less.

Suggested databases: Academic Search, Humanities Full Text, Lexis / Nexis

Grizzly Man presentations, due week of September 25

Length: one page, single-spaced write up  
10%

Our central project is to break down the layers of self-fashioning embedded in the film *Grizzly Man*. The film's footage of Tim Treadwell was shot by Treadwell himself. Thus, one question is, how does Treadwell address the "audience" for his self-reportage and how does he use the camera to create a "self"? What type of character is he in his own films? Another question for this project is how does director Werner Herzog select from hundreds of hours of Tim Treadwell's self-created footage to show an audience a (not *the*) "Tim Treadwell"? What type—or types—of character does he create?

Working with one to two people, re-screen the film and isolate a short sequence or even one shot. This will be re-presented to the class. Whose version of self are we watching? What audience is intended? *Additional ideas for this assignment will be presented in class, so make sure you look for the handout and take notes from discussion.*

Chris McCandless news articles, due October 11

Provide print-out of article(s) *with* MLA citation(s)  
5%

Another exercise in using Lexis / Nexis. Find what you can in the press about Christopher McCandless.

Essay #1, due October 13

Length 5 pages, double spaced  
15%

Find a reasonably full profile (meaning lengthy, considered, more than one page) in *Rolling Stone*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *New Yorker*. Describe the attitude of the author to the subject. Closely analyze the language used, the dialogue, and the incidents reported. How does the author represent the subject? *Additional ideas for this assignment will be presented in class, so make sure you look for the handout and take notes from discussion.*

Critical Article on *In Cold Blood*: Read & Summarize, due October 27

Length: 2 pages with full MLA citation

\*Graduate students: Please locate and summarize 2 critical articles

5%

One of your tasks as a student in English is to become adept at interpreting readings and finding information. *In Cold Blood* was an enormously influential work in literary and journalism history. Find one article that takes articulates a critical point of view on the book and write a summary to share with me and with the class. We will build a class bibliography.

**Note:** You will need to begin your hunt for articles early as many require Interlibrary Loan to obtain.

Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, due November 10

7 entries: on autobiography, the philosophical concept of the self, or nonfiction literature / the New Journalism. (Approximate total word count: 700 words)

\*Graduate students: Please increase the length of the bibliography to 10 entries

20%

This assignment is designed to help you do better research. An annotated bibliography is a properly formatted list of peer-reviewed works that can serve as the basis for research; peer-reviewed works are found in the scholarly databases accessed through Polk Library, databases such as the MLA Bibliography, JSTOR, and Project Muse. Each of the seven entries should relate to a theme: autobiography, the philosophical concept of the self, or nonfiction literature. Each of the seven entries contains a short summary (75-100 words) of the work that has been selected to appear on the bibliography. There are *no* open-access website allowed for this assignment (not even Wikipedia) and *no* articles from popular magazines such as (but not limited to) *Time*, *Newsweek*, *People*, or *Vanity Fair*. The bibliography must be formatted appropriately, using MLA style. *Additional ideas for this assignment will be presented in class, so make sure you look for the handout and take notes from discussion.*

Essay #2, due December 8

Length 8-10 pages, double-spaced **plus** List of Works Cited

\*Graduate students: Please increase the length of your essay to 15 pages

25%

Using your annotated bibliography as a starting point, apply a critical perspective to one or two of the works read for this course during the semester. Your topics should be drawn from issues in autobiography, the philosophical concept of the self, or nonfiction literature / the New Journalism. You will be asked for an abstract early on. The essay must use MLA format. *Additional ideas for this assignment will be presented in class, so make sure you look for the handout and take notes from discussion.*



## *Participation Grades*

The remaining 10% of the final grade for the course will be made up of participation, which is graded on this scale. Most or all of the criteria must be met in order to achieve the following grades:

### ***A: Excellent***

Reading has been done completely  
Significant preparation for class discussion (formulation of independent ideas, outside research, efforts toward comprehensive analysis, and attention to in-class themes)  
Active, constructive, and thoughtful participation in class discussion  
Willingness to initiate discussion  
Intellectual generosity (listening to others)  
Positive, hard-working attitude  
Active participation and contribution to group assignments

### ***B: Very Good***

Reading has been done completely  
Some additional preparation for class discussion  
Consistently attentive attitude  
Thoughtful and constructive participation in the day's discussion  
Intellectual generosity (listening to others)  
Positive, hard-working attitude  
Active participation and contribution to group assignments

### ***C: Worthy, but needs improvement***

Reading has been done completely, but without effort at analysis or independent comprehension  
Passive or occasional participation in class discussion  
Participation and contribution to group assignments  
Arriving to class late  
Occasional ringing cell phones  
Wearing iPod or other headphones at the start of class  
Reading the newspaper during some group projects and discussion  
Doing work for another course during some group projects and discussion  
Reading and writing email during lab times  
Checking NFL, fantasy sports, poker websites or other during some lab times  
Coming to class without a copy of the appropriate text

### ***D: Marginal***

Only part of the reading completed  
Reading has been done poorly  
Participation that is not constructive  
Disrespectful of intellectual ideas of texts and classroom  
Arriving to class late  
Sleeping in class  
Ringing cell phones  
Wearing iPod or other headphones

Reading the newspaper during some group projects and discussion  
 Doing work for another course during some group projects and discussion  
 Reading and writing email during lab times  
 Eating extensive meals  
 Checking NFL, fantasy sports, poker websites or other during lab times  
 Coming to class without a copy of the appropriate text

***F: Unacceptable:***

Books were not purchased  
 Reading has not been done  
 Participation that is not constructive or is disrespectful  
 Behavior or attitude that interferes with the professor's ability to teach or other students' ability to learn in a conducive and positive environment  
 Arriving to class late  
 Sleeping  
 Ringing cell phones  
 Wearing iPod or other headphones  
 Reading the newspaper during some group projects and discussion  
 Doing work for another course during some group projects and discussion  
 Reading and writing email during lab times  
 Checking NFL, fantasy sports, poker websites or other during lab times  
 Coming to class without a copy of the appropriate text  
 Eating extensive meals

*Grading Summary*

10%	Participation
15%	Essay #1
25%	Essay #2
20%	Annotated Bibliography
10%	<i>Grizzly Man</i> presentations
5%	<i>Grizzly Man</i> reviews
5%	Tim Treadwell news articles
5%	Chris McCandless news articles
5%	Critical article on <i>In Cold Blood</i>

*Attendance*

I expect you to attend all class sessions. If you are unable to attend, I ask that you explain to me why you will not be in class. For medical reasons, please supply a dated, signed excuse from a doctor. After 3 missed hours of class, your final grade will be lowered on a percentage basis: number of class hours missed divided by 42 class hours per semester (and this will include all absences). Please remember that, if you have the sniffles or you didn't do the reading or your hair got stuck in your electric dryer and you miss class three times because of this—and then your car breaks down or you have the stomach flu and you miss class two more times because of it, that you will be registered as having 5 absences.



### *Late Papers*

All assignments are due in paper form at the beginning of the class period (unless otherwise specified). Please be responsible for delivering your own work to me on time. In exceptional circumstances, such as documented illness, I will accept a late paper.

### *Late Persons*

While there are no bells in college, class begins at the time listed in the timetable. You may be late once due to weather; however, repeatedly walking into class late will affect your participation grade: it is not constructive, it is disrespectful, and it interferes with students' ability to learn in a conducive and positive environment. Announcements, such as changes to the schedule, clarification of essay assignments, and announcements of English Department and campus events, are made in the first-10 minutes of class. Missing these will impair your ability to succeed.

### *Plagiarism*

Plagiarism is a punishable offence, covered by the university rules. I can tell when your writing is not your own. We will discuss writing and plagiarism in this class. In the meantime, if you have any doubts about how to properly cite research, talk to me before you write.

### *Writing Center*

The Writing Center will help you conceptualize your essays (for this class and others). The Writing Center is not a proofreading or editing service. All Writing Center services are free, but you need to schedule an appointment. The Writing Center is located in the basement of Radford Hall. The phone number is 424-1152; you may also email them at [wcenter@uwosh.edu](mailto:wcenter@uwosh.edu).

### *Daily Syllabus*

*The syllabus contains major points that will appear on each day's agenda; however, this is not the complete list of what we will do each day in class. Time will be spent addressing research and writing assignments and there will be time for small group projects, as well.*

#### ***Week One***

Wednesday, September 6  
Introductions

Friday, September 8  
The portrait: how visual techniques illustrate character

#### ***Week Two: The Self as Hero***

Monday, September 11  
*Among Grizzlies* (1-47)

Wednesday, September 13  
*Among Grizzlies* (49-93)

Friday, September 15  
*Among Grizzlies* (95-140)

### ***Week Three***

Monday, September 18  
*Among Grizzlies* (141-191)

Wednesday, September 20  
➤ Research: newspaper articles on Treadwell

Friday, September 22  
Complete independent screening of *Grizzly Man*  
➤ Film reviews

### ***Week Four***

Monday, September 25  
Film and the presentation of self: group presentations

Wednesday, September 27  
Film and the presentation of self: group presentations

Friday, September 29  
Film and the presentation of self: group presentations

### ***Week Five: The adventurer***

Monday, October 2  
*Into the Wild* (Author's Note-60)

Wednesday, October 4  
*Into the Wild* (61-97)

Friday, October 6  
*Into the Wild* (98-132)

### ***Week Six***

Monday, October 9  
*Into the Wild: The Stikine Ice Cap* (CH 15; 133-156)

Wednesday, October 11  
*Into the Wild* (157-203 [end])  
➤ Research: newspaper articles on Christopher McCandless

Friday, October 13  
➤ Essay #1: profiles in magazines

### ***Week Seven: Fictional Technique***

Monday, October 16  
*In Cold Blood* (3-74)

Wednesday, October 18  
*In Cold Blood* (77-155)

Friday, October 20  
*In Cold Blood* (159-206)

***Week Eight***

Monday, October 23  
*In Cold Blood* (206-269)

Wednesday, October 25  
*In Cold Blood* (269-343[end])  
Complete independent screening of *Capote* (the film)

Friday, October 27  
➤ Critical Article on *In Cold Blood*

***Week Nine: Race, Class, Representation***

Monday, October 30  
*A Place to Stand* (Prologue-70)

Wednesday, November 1  
*A Place to Stand* (71-132)

Friday, November 3  
*A Place to Stand* (133-175)

***Week Ten***

Monday, November 6  
*A Place to Stand* (176-235)

Wednesday, November 8  
*A Place to Stand* (to end)  
Tribute web pages, a form of biography

Friday, November 10  
Complete independent screening of classic WWII film  
➤ Annotated Bibliography due

***Week Eleven: Arms and the Man, Traditions of War Writing***

Monday, November 13  
*Jarhead*  
There are different editions of this book. If you have the Pocket Books movie tie-in (MV), read to page 84. If you have the Scribner edition (S), read to page 61.

Wednesday, November 15  
*Jarhead* (PBMV to 154 ; S to 110)

Friday, November 17

*Jarhead* (PBMV to 224; S to 159)

***Week Twelve***

Monday, November 20

*Jarhead* (PBMV to 297; S to 210)

***Week Thirteen***

Monday, November 27

Complete independent screening of *Jarhead*, the film

Wednesday, November 29

*Nickel and Dimed*: Getting Ready and Serving in Florida

Friday, December 1

*Nickel and Dimed*: Scrubbing in Maine

***Week Fourteen: Adopting a Character***

Monday, December 4

*Nickel and Dimed*: Selling in Minnesota

Wednesday, December 6

*Nickel and Dimed*: Evaluation

Friday, December 8

➤ Essay #2 due

***Week Fifteen*** . December 11-15