

GLS 592-802 CLASS NARRATIVES
Spring 2017, Online

Erin Sroka, Instructor
srokae@uncw.edu

“Class is a cocoon—it takes genius to think your way out of it.” —Zadie Smith

Office Hours: by email. Expect a response within 48 hours M-F,
72 hours on weekends. Skype by appointment.

Required Textbooks:

- *Class Matters*, correspondents of *The New York Times*, Bill Keller, Introduction. 2006. Holt, Henry & Co, Inc. ISBN 9780805080551
- *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*, Dee Brown, 1970. ISBN 0805086846
- *Citizen: An American Lyric*, Claudia Rankine. 2014. Graywolf Press. ISBN: 978-1555976903
- *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*, Pauli Murray, 1956. Black Women Writers Series. ISBN 0807072095
- *The Underground Railroad*, Colson Whitehead. 2016. Doubleday. ISBN: 978-0385542364
- *Love Me Back*, Merritt Tierce. 2015. Anchor. ISBN: 978-0345807137
- *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and a Culture in Crisis*, J.D. Vance. 2016. Harper. ISBN: 978-0062300546

- E-book versions are acceptable.
- Additional course reading material on Blackboard

Tech Requirements:

- Regular access to computer with Internet
- Skype account (for office hours, as needed)

Course Summary:

In GLS-592-802, we will explore class in America through story. We'll look to works of journalism, fiction, and creative nonfiction that deal with class directly—treating class as a major element in a character's trajectory—and texts that keep class on the periphery while revealing cultural assumptions about who gets what in America, and why.

We will treat the pursuit of the American Dream as plot, considering the varying trajectories it can take—telling the story of social mobility in some cases, class entrenchment in others. Our readings will portray routes of ascent from poverty to wealth, falls in the opposite direction, and stories in which mobility is frustrated, where class acts as the ultimate foil for a character's attempts to change her station or control her world.

We will read with an eye for key ideas like equality and inequality, fairness and competition, success and failure, personal responsibility, hard work, talent, and luck. We will watch for common tropes that emerge from all class stories, defining concepts like the American Dream, wealth, poverty, and social mobility as we go.

Some of our texts give historical accounts of the racial and class-based underpinning of American society. Many of our texts explore race as an essential determining factor in who gets what in America and why; among our tasks this semester is to tease out the intersections between race, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, ability, and class.

Coursework will be part creative writing, part critical analysis. The discussion board will offer room for both critical thinking and creativity, as students will be asked to both respond to course texts and introduce their own topics surrounding class in America.

Students will complete a total of three (3) writing assignments. Each one will offer an opportunity to tell a true story that is either personal, cultural, or both. Students are expected to engage deeply with these assignments, putting forth their best work while using the writing process to clarify and develop their own ideas about class.

Course Organization

The course is organized into four units. Most units are comprised of one reading week, one discussion week, and one writing week. Within units, **each week runs on a Monday - Sunday schedule**. New material opens on Mondays and is due on **Sundays at 11:59pm**.

Due dates for discussions fall on **Wednesdays and Sundays at 11:59pm** on discussion weeks. Due dates for writing assignments are **Sundays at 11:59pm** on writing weeks.

Reading Weeks

The first 1-2 weeks of each unit will be a reading week. The reading content for most units will include 1 – 2 books, and may include supplemental essays or videos. The **course reading is heavy** at times, so plan accordingly. Students who wish to seek outside criticism and academic analysis of course texts are encouraged to do so, and to weave any outside ideas into discussion posts and writing assignments with proper citation.

I highly recommend highlighting, taking notes, and/or keeping a **running list of quotes** from our reading material. Each source discusses class in its own way, and students will find it useful to reference the language and ideas used by each source in their discussions, writing assignments, and in their own cumulative exploration of the subject matter.

Discussion Weeks

The second week of each unit will be reserved for discussions of the unit's readings. There are **two deadlines each week** to ensure the quality of the conversation as a learning experience. Each student must make an initial post in response to the instructor's topic by **Wednesday at 11:59pm** and must respond to three classmates' posts by the following **Sunday at 11:59pm**. Discussion grades depend on students making at least four posts to each topic per week (one original post and three replies). For detailed information on discussion boards, including grading information, see the *Discussion Criteria* document.

The number of discussion questions for each unit will be limited in favor of providing a broad enough topic that students should be able to respond with the

ideas that most interest them regarding each reading. My aim is for the discussion boards to provide an opportunity for students to share their most pressing reactions, and to interact with each other's ideas. Some topics will ask students to find an example of a certain kind of class narrative, providing the class with a link and their own analysis of the story.

Writing Weeks

The third week of each unit will be the writing week. Each week, students will be given 1-2 writing prompts to choose from, or they may pursue an idea of their own that relates to the subject matter. Writing assignments should be between 1,000 and 3,000 words, and can be either creative nonfiction or academic writing. Prompts may be **personal**, in which students mine their own lives and experience for stories, or **cultural**, in which students explore the world around them. Crossover between the personal and cultural is encouraged in these pieces; it is more important to follow your own interests and creativity than to stick to the prompt exactly. Those pursuing their own ideas may choose to cover anything from a critical review, to food, media, public figures and events, anything that inspires a creative response to a representation of class.

For each writing assignment, **I expect your best, most polished work**. I will deduct points for spelling and grammatical errors beyond 2 per assignment. For more on writing expectations, see the document, *Writing Guide*.

Writing Share

When writing is due on **Sundays at 11:59pm**, students will turn in their work to me using the Assignment tool on Blackboard. They will also post a copy of their work on the Discussion board link for that week. Students will be expected to read each other's work, but comments are not required.

Participation

Active participation is crucial to your success in this course. What does this mean in Class Narratives, online version?

- Participate in class discussions. Post early and often. Make your responses thoughtful and valuable to your classmates. For detailed information on discussions, see the Discussion Criteria document.
- Post your writing in the allotted discussion board during writing weeks.

- Be on time. Meet discussion deadlines. Turn in all written assignments by Sunday at 11:59am, no exceptions. **Late work turned in within one week of due date will result in a 30% grade deduction.** Any work later than that will receive a zero.
- Work hard. Make it clear that you are putting in an effort and putting forth your best work every time. Read all the readings and engage with them fully.
- Ask questions. Do your part to make the course a valuable experience, and ask for what you need.

Grading Rubric

Discussions **50%**

Writing Assignments **40%**

Participation **10%**

GLS Grading Scale

Grade	Grade Point	
A	4.00 qp	Excellence
A-	3.67 qp	
B+	3.33 qp	
B	3.00 qp	Completely satisfactory
B-	2.67 qp	
C+	2.33 qp	

C	2.00 qp	Minimally acceptable
F	0 qp	Failure
S		Satisfactory progress (thesis)
U		Unsatisfactory progress (thesis)
I		Work incomplete
W		Withdraw passing

Technology

For problems and computer help or assistance contact the UNCW ITSD Computer Help Desk at uncw.edu/tac or visit

Location: Randall Library

Phone: (910) 962-4357

Email: tac@uncw.edu

Hours: 7:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays

7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Fridays

Writing Services

The University Writing Center, located in DePaolo Hall and online at <http://uncw.edu/ulc/writing/center.html>, provides assistance to students who wish to improve their writing skills. Students are encouraged to take advantage of their services.

GLS SLOs

In accordance with Assessment procedures, every course taught in GLS will have to address some of the GLS Student Learning Outcomes. In this course, the student will:

Gain complex knowledge of class narratives through course content, discussions, and research.

Develop advanced skills in order to intelligently discuss the issues of class embedded in literature, media, and cultural narratives.

Develop a sophisticated opinion concerning these issues using advanced critical thinking skills.

Gain the ability to objectively and articulately debate these issues, utilizing rhetoric learned in the course.

Develop a rich and advanced understanding of class narratives and become a more informed reader or consumer of media.

Develop advanced writing skills through course assignments in creative nonfiction.

UNCW Zero-Tolerance Policy

UNCW practices a zero-tolerance policy for violence and harassment of any kind. For emergencies contact UNCW CARE at 962-2273, Campus Police at 962-3184, or Wilmington Police at 911. For University or community resources visit <http://uncw.edu/wrc/crisis.htm>.

Special Needs:

If for any reason you have needs for special accommodations to fulfill class requirements and succeed in this class, contact me within one week of the beginning of the course, by phone, or email. Your special needs may be related to physical disabilities, learning disabilities, or any other special need you may have. If you would need special accommodations due to unexpected events in your personal life during the course of the semester, contact me as soon as possible. Refer to Student Support Offices and Services section of the university's Student Catalogue.

Plagiarism:

I expect that you complete your own work. If you use ideas and excerpts from other people and/or resources you must cite and properly reference them in your work. Review the university's policy with respect to plagiarism. If the policy is not clear to you, please ask me for an explanation or examples.

All written work must be authored by the student and written solely for this course. Students agree to use course evaluation materials such as assignments, tests, and

instructor feedback for their own learning purposes only. Copy and/or distribution of such course materials is strictly prohibited. If a student drops or withdraws from the course and re-enrolls in the course in a later semester, all written work must be authored by the student in the present semester.

Academic Honor Code:

The UNCW Provost has asked all UNCW faculty to make reference -in course syllabi - to the "Academic Honor Code" which can be found in the Student Handbook of Student Life, Section V. All UNCW. -Academic Honor Code. Please regard this as a reminder that all UNCW students and faculty are held to the terms of the Academic Honor Code. UNCW practices a zero-tolerance policy for violence and harassment of any kind. For emergencies contact UNCW CARE at 962-2273, Campus Police at 962-3184, or Wilmington Police at 911. For University or community resources visit <http://uncw.edu/wrc/crisis.htm>.