Identity, Culture & Me
Professor Betty Ming Liu
Mondays & Wednesdays, 6:20-9:20 pm ET
May 31-June 28, 2023
Location: Zoom Newsroom

To contact your professor: BML3@nyu.edu
Phone: TK
Office hours: Tuesdays 6-9 pm ET

Course Description
Welcome to personal essay writing! Bring us your stories and reflections about gender, race, culture, diversity, the immigrant experience, film, fashion, food, gaming, health and wellness victories and challenges…if the topic is important to your identity, let’s explore it. You can be funny, serious or off-beat. What matters is developing your authentic voice with a journalistic flair for strong reporting and concise, conversational writing. This short course will carry lasting impact because the personal essay is so adaptable.

Learning Objectives
By the end of our four weeks together, you will leave with the skills to:
- confidently continue developing your voice
- polish a solid draft of one, 700- to 1,000-word personal essay
- interview subjects, conduct research, and evaluate information
- write clear, accurate and engaging prose in an audience-appropriate manner
- work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diverse perspectives
- demonstrate critical thinking, independence and creativity appropriate to the role of journalism in a democracy society

Course Structure
This online course uses a “flipped classroom” model. This means that before each class, you will prepare on your own by reading articles, watching videos, listening to podcasts, and going through other assigned material. All assignments must also be completed before the live class session. You will file your stories in our class folder in the NYU Google Drive, then share the link in Brightspace. Now, you’re ready to discuss the course materials, answer questions, and work in a virtual newsroom to edit and publish our stories.
Course Structure (continued)
Our live Zoom class works like a newsroom, where you’ll get into an energetic, writing and reporting rhythm. This setting provides valuable experience in pitching story ideas, proposing and presenting material at editorial story meetings and collaborating with colleagues. Every week, you’ll work on your personal essay, edit each other’s work, find graphics and visuals for your piece, engage in social media, and discuss the everyday challenges that reporters and editors face in their newsrooms.

Course Requirements

Required Texts
“Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen” by Jose Antonio Vargas
https://amzn.to/3ZmvG5s (I am going to see if I can get a digital copy for our class to share.)

Attendance/Participation
We’ll do some of our most important work in class, so attendance is key. You can't, for example, skip all or part of a session because you have an interview lined up with a source who can only speak during class time. And, out of respect for your peers, please log in on time – or even a few minutes early. NYU will excuse an absence for a death in the family or severe illness.

Deadlines
- Assignments for Monday classes are due Sundays, at 12pm ET.
- Assignments for Wednesday classes are due Tuesdays, at 12pm ET.

Academic Integrity
Any plagiarism or unauthorized collaboration on assignments will result in a failure and can be grounds for failing the course, or in extreme cases, expulsion from the program. All quotes must be original and verifiable. That means you must include contacts for sources at the end of your draft to clarify or verify quotes. If you draw from someone else’s work without properly crediting them, you could fail that assignment. Please be sure you have read the Cardinal Sins section of the NYU handbook by the first class.
Grades

Your weekly assignments (total grade percentage = 70%)

1. **Resources Worksheet** – (10%) Due Sunday, June 4, 12pm ET
2. **Personal Essay, memo** – (10%) Due Tuesday, June 6, 12pm ET
3. **Personal Essay, first draft** – (10%) Due Sunday, June 11, 12pm ET
4. **Personal Essay, second draft** – (10%) Due Tuesday, June 13, 12pm ET
5. **Expert Q&A, first draft** – (5%) Due Sunday, June 18, 12pm ET *(Note: No class June 19)*
6. **Expert Q&A, second draft** – (5%) Due Tuesday, June 20, 12pm ET
7. **Personal Essay, third draft** – (10%) Due Sunday, June 25, 12pm ET
8. **Personal Essay, final draft** – (10%) Due Tuesday, June 27, 12pm ET
   - **Resources Worksheet update, extra credit** – (5%) Due Tuesday, June 27, 12pm ET

The rest of your final grade will be comprised of the following:

- **Class Discussions** – (10%) Covers in-class discussion. To find your voice, we/you need to hear your voice. We look forward to your questions and perspectives on the news.
- **Editorial Professionalism** – (10%) Covers attendance and etiquette as you demonstrate your ability to respectfully and supportively collaborate with colleagues.
- **In-class exercises and assessments** – (10%) Covers the quality of your in-class work, from completing writing exercises and participation to non-published assignments.

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Class Schedule

**May 31, Wednesday, Topic of Class 1: Introduction**
Journalism writing and reporting skills
Finding your personal essay concept and exploring your identity
Assignment: Readings + Complete and submit *Resources Worksheet*
Planning: Start contacting potential sources

**June 5, Monday, Topic of Class 2: Structuring your personal essay**
Your most valuable writing tool: The nut graph
Interviewing skills
Assignment: Readings + Complete and submit *Personal Essay Memo*
Planning: Pitch your idea for a Q&A
June 7 Wednesday, Topic of Class 3: Show don’t tell
Building in scenes and transitions
How to write up quotes
Assignment: Readings + Complete and submit Personal Essay, First Draft
Planning: Set up and conduct your Q&A interview before June 14

June 12 Monday, Topic of Class 4: Sharing your stories with the world
Writing style and getting published
Polishing your pitches
Workshopping your Personal Essay, First Draft
Assignment: Readings + Complete and submit Personal Essay, Second Draft

June 14 Wednesday, Topic of Class 5: The power of rewriting
Developing your voice
Organizing, editing, rewriting
Working with dialogue
Assignment: Readings + Complete and submit Q&A, First Draft

June 19, Monday, NO CLASS
Assignment: Complete and submit Q&A, Second Draft

June 21 Wednesday, Topic of Class 6: Putting the personal into personal essays
Defining your boundaries
Exploring your wheelhouse and social media relationships
Takeaways and calls to action
Assignment: Readings + Complete and submit Personal Essay, Third Draft

June 26 Monday, Topic of Class 7: Getting ready to wrap up
Discussing “Dear America” assigned textbook
Getting creative with personal essays
Kickers
Assignment: Complete and submit Personal Essay, Final Draft
Optional: Submit an updated copy of your Resources Worksheet for extra credit

June 28 Wednesday, Topic of Class 8: Presenting and partying!
Personal Essay readings
Conversations with the authors
Where do we go from here?
Accommodations
Students with disabilities that necessitate accommodations should contact and register with New York University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at 212-998-4980 or mosecsd@nyu.edu. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Diversity & Inclusion:
The Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute is committed to creating an anti-racist learning environment that embraces diversity, complexity, and honesty. We are an intellectual community enriched by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, sex, gender identity, class, ethnicity, sexualities, abilities, religion, and culture. Our student body is excitingly international. We welcome a multiplicity of perspectives. We acknowledge that listening to other perspectives on some of these issues may be personally challenging, and we accept that challenge. We further acknowledge that our profession, journalism, and our home, New York University, have participated in the systemic racism that underpins U.S. history. We are committed to teaching and practicing fair, rigorous, and engaged journalism that helps all our communities move toward justice and equality.

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