

Prof. Sheryl Kroen
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Class time: W: 5-7: 11:45-2:45
Classroom FLI 229

219 Keene-Flint
273-3384
Off. Hrs.: M, F: 10:30-12:00

EUH 4930: Writing Lives

Description: Recently biography has enjoyed a renaissance, but it is not the biography of the old days. Subjects are often unknown men and women; biographies take many forms, from a straight monograph to a memoir, a journal, or a novel. In this course we will read several superb experiments in biography that will take us from the seventeenth through the early twentieth centuries in Europe; we will discuss together the methodological opportunities and consequences of this renewed genre; students will pursue their own research using biography of one form or another.

Course Requirements: This is a discussion-based seminar, and the assignments are designed to facilitate serious in-class work, and independent research. All students are required to attend and participate actively in seminar. In addition to reading the common weekly assignments, students will write 4 (out of 6 possible) 1-2 page critical analyses of the readings, with an eye to facilitating discussion. Students will write a longer, 10-15-page research paper pursuing one of the topics raised by the seminar. All of the assignments have been designed to facilitate the writing of this research paper. This includes the abstract, the annotated bibliography, the 5-page drafts, and the oral presentations. We will be sharing our work in seminar, reading each other's drafts, responding to oral presentations.

Attendance policy: one unexcused absence is permitted without penalty; thereafter the "attendance" part of class participation will go down one grade per absence (from A to A-, from A- to B+, etc.). Late work will not be accepted without penalty.

Weekly Writing Assignments 40% (4 of 6 possible)

Due: 1/18; 1/25; 2/1; 2/8; 2/15; 2/22

Final Paper 40%

Initial abstract: 2/27 or 2/29
Annotated Bibliography: 3/5
5-page draft: 3/21
10-page draft: 4/2
Presentations: 4/9; 4/11; 4/16
Final paper due: 4/23

Class participation 20% (attendance, discussion, workshops)

Required Reading:

Natalie Zemon Davis, Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth Century Lives (1995)

Robert Harmes, The Diligent: A Voyage through the worlds of the Slave Trade (2002)

Emma Rothschild, Inner Lives of Empire (Harvard University Press, 2011)

Edmund de Waal, The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010)

Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929)

Virginia Woolf, Orlando (1928)

Carolyn Kay Steedman, Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives (Rutgers University Press, 1987)

or

Stuart Hall, Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands (2017)

READER's Choice (see below)

Policies and Expectations:

Come to class prepared to discuss the texts assigned for each day. The readings provide the raw material for all discussions. The more prepared you are before class, the more you will get out of both lectures and discussions. Class participation is essential. Students can expect a respectful and open atmosphere in which to participate in discussions.

In writing your papers be sure to give proper credit whenever you use words, phrases, ideas, arguments, and conclusions drawn from someone else's work. Failure to give credit by quoting and/or footnoting is plagiarism. All incidents of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of students and met with sanctions (e.g failing grade for affected assignment, failing grade for the course, etc.). Please review the University's student code of conduct and conflict resolution procedures.

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Week by week schedule:

1/15 Introductions: you, me, the seminar

1/22 Natalie Zemon Davis: A writing woman (1928-2023)

Natalie Zemon Davis, Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth Century Lives (1995)

Read the three "biographies," but also the preface, conclusion, and extensive footnotes. Come to class ready to discuss Davis's arguments and how she made them.

Read also:

Natalie Zemon Davis, "Decentering History: Local Stories and Cultural Crossings in a Global World," History and Theory 50 (May 2011), 188-202. (Available through the library).

Write: 1-2-page analysis of Davis's Women on the Margins

1/29 Biography and the Black Atlantic

Robert Harmes, The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade (2002)

Write: 1-2-page analysis of Harmes

2/5 Exploring the Enlightened Disposition in the Age of Adam Smith

Emma Rothschild, Inner Lives of Empire: an Eighteenth Century History (2011)

Write: 1-2-page analysis of Rothschild

2/12 The Camondo Family, also on the Rue de Monceau

Explore website to the Musée Nissim de Camondo in Paris

Edmund de Waal, The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance (2010)

Carefully read this memoir/biography/autobiography, and come in ready to discuss the author's method, his evidence.

Write: 1-2-page analysis of de Waal on its own or in relation to the Musée de Camondo

2/19 Virginia Woolf

Read: Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929)

Virginia Woolf, Orlando (1928)

Write: 1-2-page analysis of either or both texts by Woolf

2/26 Read: Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (1949), introduction (see file on Canvas) and Franz Fanon, case studies from The Wretched of the Earth (1963) (see file on Canvas)

Read either Carolyn Steedman, Landscape for a Good Woman (1987)

or Stuart Hall, Familiar Stranger: A Life Between Two Islands (2017).

Or Catherine Hall, Lucky Valley: Edmund Long and the History of Racial Capitalism (2023) available at UF library online.

Write: 1-2-page analysis of either Steedman, Stuart Hall, or Catherine Hall

3/5 Artistic representations of Lives

This is an opportunity to explore artists' efforts to write lives in various media: paintings, sculptures, installations, songs, plays, and novels are all potential subjects.

Some sample novels I recommend: A.S. Byatt, Possession: A Romance; Elena Ferrante, My Brilliant Friend; Andrea Levy, Small Island; Claire Keegan, Foster

3/12 No class: Meetings with Professor to discuss abstracts.

Due: one-page abstract, or summary of paper topic for final research project.

3/19 Presentations of topics and sources in class, brainstorming session

Due: Annotated Bibliography for your research paper

3/26 Due: 5-page draft of your final research project: Workshop in class

4/2 No class, individual meetings with professor

4/9 Due: 10-page draft of your final research project. Workshop in class

4/16 Presentation of final papers

4/23 Final Papers due in class.