

## Preliminary Web Course Description

\*Please note: This is a preliminary web course description only. The department reserves the right to change without notice any information in this description. The final, binding course outline will be distributed in the first class of the semester.

### School of English and Theatre Studies

Course Code: ENG*4720	Course Title: The Essay: Reading Others, Writing Ourselves, a Seminar in Two Registers	Date of Offering: W'21 <b>Winter 2021</b>
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Course Instructor: Robert Enright	Course Format: Creative Writing Workshop Seminar
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#### Brief Course Synopsis:

The title of this writing seminar comes from a comment made about the essays of Michel de Montaigne, that ‘in reading him, we read ourselves’. If we add John Dryden’s idea that we read “for delight and instruction” then we’ll find the focus of our approach for the seminar. The motivation for reading is double-barrelled and reading and writing share that same doubled and complementary purpose. They are horse-and-buggied, hand-and-gloved: you pick your preferred conjunctions but take as conviction that all serious writers are serious readers. We will treat the assigned essays written by others with the same scrupulous attention that we give to the writing you will be doing during the semester. For the most part, the writers we’re considering are modern and contemporary (with a few digs into the past through Plutarch, Montaigne, Francis Bacon and Ralph Waldo Emerson) and our range will include writers who are part of the BIPOC and LGBTQIA communities. (Please regard this list as suggestive and not exhaustive and keep in mind that we will be considering only a single essay by each writer). Here is our congregation of wordsmiths, arranged without preference or prejudice through the convenience of the alphabet: Hilton Als, Billy-Ray Belcourt, John Berger, Dionne Brand, Rachel Cusk, Joan Didion, László F. Földényi, Jonathan Franzen, Leslie Jamison, Porochista Khakpour, Janet Malcolm, Ian Penman, Amy Sillman, Zadie Smith, Susan Sontag and Jia Tolentino. There are others that will come from your own lived bibliography and they will be welcome. There is always another place at the writer’s table. Since the literary form of the essay is a journey of discovery through language, so will our exploration involve a kind of “essaying forth” into the places where experience and words take us. What we will be reading and writing about will be the arts, culture, society and politics. Those subjects will be seen through the construction of self that is the starting point and the core of all essays.

#### Methods of Evaluation and Weight:

1. 2 preliminary mini-essays on an idea, object or subject - 10% each
2. 1<sup>st</sup> essay - 15%
3. 2<sup>nd</sup> and longer essay - 25%

4. Editing and revising 2<sup>nd</sup> essay -15%
5. Workshop participation - 25%

It is important that we are all involved in the analysis and discussion of the seminar's reading and writing. I want you to be active and enthusiastic participants in the discourse around the material we're considering. Given the nature of our contact because of the pandemic, we will be inventive and patient in finding the best way to make the seminar involve an inclusive miscellany of voices.

Texts and/or Resources Required (e.g. Internet access, specific textbook title, lab kit, etc.)

Internet. The readings will be provided.

This course counts towards the following distribution requirement(s) for students who registered at the University prior to the Fall of 2018:

Information about mode of delivery (synchronous/asynchronous/other details):  
Synchronous

\*Students who registered at the University of Guelph after Fall 2018 must fulfill the "new" major and minor requirements. Students who registered at the University of Guelph prior to Fall 2018 must fulfill the requirements of the Calendar in effect when they first enrolled unless they have filed a Schedule of Studies Change Request to change to the 2018-2019 calendar. For more information, please consult the major and minor checklists at <https://www.uoguelph.ca/arts/sets/undergraduate/english/current-student-information>.