

**THE MAKING OF THE MODERN SELF:  
Writing and Identity from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century  
WRIT 125-09**



(Detail: Picasso's *Girl Before a Mirror*)

Fall 2011  
**M. and Th. 9.50-11am, FND 121**

**Instructor:** Francesca Southerden

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**Office hours:** 3-4pm, Mondays and Thursdays; or by appointment at other times.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Dante Alighieri, *Inferno* 5 [ER]

Francesco Petrarca, *Sonnets*: selections from the *Rime Sparse* (1, 5, 36, 46, 61, 62, 133, 211, 212, 234, 273, 320, 333, 336 and 364) [ER]

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (The Arden Shakespeare, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series edn, 2006)

Michel de Montaigne, 'To Philosophize is to Learn How to Die', in *Essays: A Selection* [ER]

Emily Dickinson, *Selected poems* (50, 280, 378, 443, 598, 657, 754, 761, 937, 1099) [ER]

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Mariner Books, 2005)

James Joyce, 'The Dead', in *Dubliners* (Norton Critical Edition, 2006)

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Bedford-St Martin's, 2008)

**This Course has a Sakai Project Site:**

<https://sakai.wellesley.edu/portal/>

- Log on using your Wellesley domain username/password

The texts [ER] by Dante, Petrarch, Montaigne, and Dickinson are all available in the Resources folder of the Sakai project site. Other materials will also be deposited there through the semester, including handouts and worksheets used during classes, and tips for various aspects of writing. I may also assign a limited amount of secondary reading, to which you will also have access there.

**Course Description:**

What do we understand by the term 'selfhood', and especially 'the modern self'? Can, or should, we think of the 'birth' of the 'modern self' as having occurred in a specific historical period? If so, when? What techniques do writers use to bring that self into being and what influences – historical, cultural, philosophical, psychological, and linguistic – help to shape it? Are literature and writing primarily a means of self-expression or self-creation?

This course will explore themes such as these through writing assignments based around the close-reading of selections from some of the great works of world literature that contribute to the debate about the origins and development of the self and the notion of the individual. We will consider why and how works of the past still matter so much to our image and understanding of ourselves today, and you will be encouraged to think about how your own choices as a writer shape those discourses, and your own.

**Course Organization:**

The course will be divided into four parts. While texts will be studied in a roughly chronological order, you will be encouraged to consider the connections and relationships between them by focusing on FOUR KEY THEMES as they relate to the development of selfhood within and across historical periods:

- I. THE SELF AND DESIRE
- II. THE SELF AND DEATH
- III. SELF AND OTHER (OR THE GENDERED SELF)
- IV. THE SELF AND MEMORY

Structuring the course thematically will encourage you to think about the aspects of the self that transcend more rigid historical demarcations – for example those between the medieval and Renaissance self, or early-modern and modern subjectivities – as well as offering you the possibility to engage with questions and topics that go beyond the scope of this topic alone.

**Elements of Writing:**

You will develop your writing skills and practices through a combination of SHORTER AND LONGER WRITING ASSIGNMENTS. These will be sequenced to help lead you through each of the stages of the writing process, from brainstorming to writing a first best effort, to revising, re-evaluating, and completing a full research paper.

Short assignments and in-class writing exercises will include:

**Reader-response exercises:** especially drawing out from texts a particular problematic, and/or accounting for authorial choices in terms of language, style etc, with the aim of relating these to your own writing.

**Summaries and reviews of material** covered in reading and preliminary writing; short paragraphs used to develop a thesis and get feedback on it.

The aim of these short exercises is to help you to first formulate and then organize your ideas, to create a body of material on which you can draw to create semi-autonomous paragraphs of analysis and an outline of your argument to develop into longer assignments.

Long assignments will consist of:

**FOUR PAPERS** on guided topics related to your reading and discussion.

At least **one paper (Paper 3) will be a FULL-SCALE RESEARCH PAPER**, in which you will engage not only with the primary texts but also secondary criticism in order to compose your argument. To help you with the independent research you will need to do for this paper, you will attend a **LIBRARY RESOURCES WORKSHOP** prior to undertaking this assignment.

Longer assignments will be sequenced to reflect your growing competence as a writer and researcher, encouraging you to engage with increasingly complex questions while focusing on a specific dimension of your own writing as follows:

Paper 1. Intro to Analytic Writing [or knowing where to begin...]

Paper 2. Developing a Strong Thesis / Thesis Development [or learning where to go next...]

Paper 3. Supporting the Thesis: Close Reading and Writing from Sources [or acknowledging no writer is an island...]

Paper 4. Synthesis and Closure [or fighting the anxiety of endings...]

### **Revision Process:**

Through the course of the semester, you can expect to be revising your papers at the level of both argument and structure. As you revise your work, you'll have the opportunity to reconsider your stance, identify any leaps or flaws in logic, rethink word choice and sentence structure and, hopefully, draw new conclusions.

Our focus in class will remain on 'higher level' concerns such as argument, organization of ideas, development of those ideas and structure.

You are expected to attend to 'lower level' concerns such as grammar and punctuation with relative ease and independence, though help will always be on hand for anything you may not have understood fully, whether in the form of individual assistance or class-wide revision of particular rules, so it is always better to ask if you are unsure about anything.

Learning to identify areas of your writing that need work is a crucial part of the creative process. By focusing attention on these areas, you will be able to improve your accuracy, attention to detail, and how articulate you are.

### **Conferences**

In addition to receiving regular feedback on your writing from me, and your peers, you will have **THREE OR FOUR PRIVATE CONFERENCES** with me to discuss the progress of individual papers, and the status of your writing in general.

These conferences are an intrinsic part of the course and are **MANDATORY**.

Consequently, missing a scheduled conference will constitute an absence.

Do please feel free to schedule additional conferences with me whenever you need them.

### **Grading**

This is a **GRADED COURSE**.

All long assignments will be given letter grades at the final draft stage and must be completed and handed in on time. Short homework assignments will receive written or oral feedback only, not a letter grade, but punctual submission is still expected. Failure to complete short or long assignments on time will affect your class preparation grade.

Receiving credit in the course means that all written work, especially the four paper assignments, must be of above the C- level.

The **FINAL GRADE** of the course will be determined according to the following percentages:

Portfolio – 70%

Shorter written assignments and class preparation – 15 %

Class Participation (including class presentations and collaboration in peer editing) – 15%

This course has **NO FINAL EXAM**. Instead, students are required to submit a **PORTFOLIO of written work**.

This will consist of the four major papers, two pieces of writing drawn from amongst the shorter written assignments (including those done in class) and a cover letter explaining your experiences and evolution as a writer.

To allow you time to revise your papers for final submission as part of the portfolio, and to write your cover letter, the portfolio will not be due until the last day of the exam period. Additional guidance for how to write the cover letter will be provided closer to the time.

In order for you to get the most out of this course, it is essential that you commit to writing out of a spirit of genuine intellectual inquiry, rather than to obtain a particular grade. While the revision process – essential to all good academic writing – is an opportunity for you to try and improve the quality of your work, it does not automatically imply that you will increase your grade, unless your writing demonstrates considerable progress.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION** is essential to a successful performance on the writing course.

This includes willingness to take part in discussion, including the discussion of your own writing and that of others (during in-class editing), and adequate preparation for every class, especially when giving a presentation on an assigned topic.

### **Absence Policy – Fall 2011**

Like all courses in the Writing Program, this course has a **STRICT ABSENCE POLICY**.

All sections of Writing 125 require each student's regular participation, not only as a writer but also as a reader, editor, and critic of her own and her classmates' work. Regular attendance is therefore expected and required. Any student who is **ABSENT MORE THAN FOUR TIMES** (the equivalent of two weeks of class) will be **ASKED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE COURSE**. Please note that there is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Please note that four absences is the maximum allowed and students are expected to attend all class meetings.

In this section, late papers and failure to attend scheduled conferences will also count as absences.

*On missing class for religious holidays:* The attendance policy is intended to allow you a generous number of absences (four) for reasons like religious holidays and illness, and in a normal semester, you should be able to stay well within the attendance limit, even if you have several holidays. But do talk to me if it turns out that your religious observances push you over the limit—I can make adjustments to the policy for this reason, and this reason only.

**Late Policy**

If you require an extension, you must contact me *at least* 24 hours in advance of the due date. Extensions will only be granted for good reasons, such as serious illness or family emergency. Having a lot of work to do for other courses is not a good reason.

If you have a *disability* and need disability-related accommodations, you are encouraged to work with Jim Wice, the Director of Disability Services (if you either have a physical disability or are uncertain whether you do) to arrange those accommodations. Jim's office is located in the Pforzheimer Learning & Teaching Center in Clapp Library. See: <http://www.wellesley.edu/DisabilityServices/DShome.html> for information.

**Writing Tutors**

Writing tutors are on hand to offer additional help and guidance with long assignments, or to address any writing-related issues you might have. Tutors will work with you on a one-to-one basis and can look at your work at any stage of the writing process.

For more information, see:

<http://www.wellesley.edu/Writing/Program/tutors.html>

## WRIT 125-09: The Making of the Modern Self

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Due to the unique nature of the writing course, the following schedule is subject to change in order to help meet the needs of your writing and that of the group. You will, however, be notified of any amendments to the schedule in good time. *Look out for updates in Sakai.*

#### Wk 1

Sept. 1            *Introduction to the course*  
**'Who am I?' / 'Who do you think you are?': Defining a Criteria for Selfhood**  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: The Problem of the Self: A Preliminary Definition

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#### I. The Self and Desire [Dante and Petrarch]

#### Wk 2

Sept. 5            LABOR DAY: no classes

Sept. 7            *Monday Schedule*  
**Reading Due:** Dante, *Inferno* V  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: *That's Amore* – Desire and the medieval self

Sept. 8            Topic for discussion/in-class writing: What's the problem with Francesca?

#### Wk 3

Sept. 12           **Writing due:** Analysis of lines 88-107 of Francesca's speech  
**Reading Due:** Petrarch, *Selected sonnets*  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: Petrarch and Paradox, or how does the Petrarchan 'I' experience desire?  
**\*\* Paper 1 Assigned \*\***

Sept. 15           **Class presentations:** choose one of the poems by Petrarch that you have read and describe the kind of 'I' it represents. Pay attention to both language and imagery.  
**Writing tools:** Help with *outlining* for Paper 1

#### Wk 4

Sept. 19           **\*\* First Best Effort (FBE) of Paper 1 due \*\*** (*Bring 3 hard copies of your paper with you to class*)  
**Writing lab:** In-class editing and tips for revising your paper.

Sept. 22           **Reading due:** Roy Porter 'Introduction', in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, ed. by Roy Porter (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-13 [ER].

Topic for discussion/in-class writing: *Changing portraits: from medieval to Renaissance ideas of the self* (= introduction to topic II)

**CONFERENCES THIS WEEK:** Schedule a conference with me (to discuss Paper 1). Sign up sheets will be sent round in good time.

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## II. The Self and Death [Montaigne and Shakespeare]

### Wk 5

- Sept. 26 **Reading Due:** Montaigne's 'To Philosophize is to Learn How to Die'  
In-class writing: Thesis summary of Montaigne's 'Essay'.  
\*\*\* **Paper 1 Revised due** \*\*\* *Bring a hard copy to class and post an elec. copy in the SAKAI drop folder.*
- Sept. 27 4.15pm: PLAGIARISM TALK by Professor Ann Velenchik [location tbc].  
Sept. 28 12.30pm: PLAGIARISM TALK by Professor Ann Velenchik [location tbc].  
ATTENDANCE at ONE of these talks is MANDATORY.
- Sept. 29 **Class presentations:** According to Montaigne, what are the alternatives open to the self that is conscious of death?

### Wk 6

- Oct. 3 **Reading Due:** *Hamlet*, Acts I and II  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: Analysis of Hamlet's soliloquy, 'Oh that this too solid flesh would melt...' (Act I, Sc. II)  
\*\* **Paper 2 Assigned** \*\*
- Oct. 6 **Reading Due:** *Hamlet*, Act III  
Sc. I) **Writing due:** Analysis of Hamlet's soliloquy, 'To be or not to be...' (Act III,

### Wk 7

- Oct. 10-11 FALL BREAK: no classes
- Oct. 13 **Reading Due:** *Hamlet*, Acts IV and V  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: Why does Hamlet delay?  
**Writing lab:** help with paper in progress - *defining a topic; creating an argument*

### Wk 8

- Oct. 17 \*\* **FBE of Paper 2 due** \*\* (*Bring 3 hard copies of your paper with you to class*)  
In-class editing
- Oct. 20 Topic for discussion/in-class writing: The graveyard scene (Act V, 1)

**CONFERENCES THIS WEEK:** Schedule a conference with me (to discuss Paper 2). Sign up sheets will be sent round in good time.

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### III. Self and Other (or: The Gendered Self) [Dickinson and Woolf]

#### Wk 9

- Oct. 24      **\*\* Paper 2 Revised due \*** *Bring a hard copy to class and post an elec. copy in the SAKAI drop folder.*  
**Reading Due:** Dickinson, *Selected Poems*  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: Close-reading of a poem, focusing on the images used to portray the self.
- Oct. 27      **Writing due/discussion of:** Article Critique: Dickie on 'Dickinson's discontinuous sense of self'

#### Wk 10

- Oct. 31      **Reading Due:** *Mrs Dalloway*, pp. 3-55  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: How, in being 'Mrs Dalloway', is the protagonist 'Clarissa no more'?  
**\* Paper 3 Assigned \***
- Nov. 3      **LIBRARY VISIT – CLAPP LIBRARY:** 'How to use resources and interact with critical scholarship'. This session will help you to frame a research topic for Paper 3.

#### Wk 11

- Nov. 7      **Reading Due:** *Mrs Dalloway*, pp. 55-100  
**Class presentations:** Clarissa and Septimus. Are we right to view Septimus as Clarissa's double?
- Nov. 10      **\*\* FBE Paper 3 due \*\*** (*Bring 3 hard copies of your paper with you to class*)  
**Writing lab:** In-class editing and other writing tips

**CLASS CONFERENCES:** Schedule a conference with me (to discuss Paper 3). Sign up sheets will be sent round in good time.

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### IV. The Self and Memory [Woolf continued, and Joyce]

#### Wk 12

- Nov. 14      **Reading Due:** *Mrs Dalloway*, pp. 100-157  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: Analyze Peter's metaphor of the 'aquatic' self (p. 157). How does it add to our understanding of the relationship between the public and the private self in the novel?
- Nov. 17      **Reading Due:** *Mrs Dalloway*, pp. 157-190  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: 'She must go back. She must assemble' (p. 182). How do past and present interact in the final scenes of the party?



**\*\* Paper 3 Revised due \*\*** - *Bring a hard copy to class and post an elec. copy in the SAKAI drop folder.*

### Wk 13

Nov. 21 Reading Due: Joyce's 'The Dead'.  
Topic for discussion/in-class writing: What prompts Gabriel's crisis of identity?  
**\*\*Paper 4 assigned\*\***

Nov. 22-27 THANKSGIVING BREAK. No classes

### Wk 14

Nov. 28 Classes resume.  
**Writing Due:** One page analysis of final two paragraphs of story  
Topic for discussion: Is the epiphany with which 'The Dead' closes positive or negative?

Dec. 1 **\*\* FBE Paper 4 due \*\*** *Bring a hard copy to class and post an elec. copy in the SAKAI drop folder.*  
**Writing lab:** Working toward a good conclusion and tips for preparing the final portfolio

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### Wk 15

Dec. 5 Final conferences: to discuss paper 4 and portfolio

Dec. 16 **FINAL PORTFOLIO to be deposited in SAKAI drop folder by 4.30pm.**