Dr. Genie Giaimo

Meeting Time: Mondays & Wednesdays 2:50 – 4:05 p.m.

Location: Munroe Hall 217

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00 – 2:30 and by appointment

## FYSE 1004: Meaningful Writing

What makes writing meaningful (to audience as well as authors)? In this course we will explore meaningful writing through literary analysis, educational research, and personal engagement. We will read personally revelatory texts written by authors like Eula Biss, Alison Bechdel, and Oliver Sacks, we will learn about educational research from the *Meaningful Writing Project*, and we will define meaningful writing for ourselves through exploring our positionality as writers (not just as readers). To do this, we will both read and write about topics and genres beyond the academy including writing over a lifetime, medical narratives, journalism, and community writing.  **AMR, CW, LIT. Public Humanities Lab Initiative supported by the Axinn Center for the Humanities.**

**Course/Student Learning Objectives**

1. Create a meaningful writing-intensive project.
2. Engage in the feedback/revision processes.
3. Become comfortable contributing extensively to in-class discussion.
4. Practice finding, evaluating, synthesizing, and citing sources.
5. Understand how community emerges and develops through writing practices.
6. Develop confidence as a writer (inside and outside academia/college).
7. The FYS program has learning goals that mirror our course goals, [view them here](https://www.middlebury.edu/college/academics/first-year-seminar/learning-goals).

**Academic and Personal Resources at Middlebury (AKA Everyone Needs a Little Help)**

I have been a Writing Center Director in four different Colleges and Universities, additionally, I have created several community writing centers in Boston, MA, as well as Columbus, OH. What I have learned from this valuable experience is that writers thrive when they engage with others about their ideas and their writing process. There is nothing wrong with wanting to share your writing and, in fact, I expect you to do so with your peers and our course writing tutor. However, sometimes in a college class, we have other questions such as: how to plan for assignments in different classes, or subject-specific questions in STEM. For these questions, and others related to your academics, we have many resources through the CTLR and Library. Of course, sometimes, our needs are outside of the realm of academic support, in which case Anderson Freeman Center, Counseling Services, and Disability services will be places to turn for answers. Because of the robust support at Middlebury, and the many challenges we face as we transition into and through college, I hope you will make use of support from the following resources:

* [**Writing Center**](https://www.middlebury.edu/office/teaching-learning-research/student-resources/writing-center) **(go/WC)**: Jack Torpey, [jtorpey@middlebury.edu](mailto:jtorpey@middlebury.edu) is our course tutor. Hinda Ibraahim, [hibraahim@middlebury.edu](mailto:hibraahim@middlebury.edu) is shadowing and will also offer tutoring.
* [**Library Liaison**](https://www.middlebury.edu/library/) **(go/Library)**: Carrie Macfarlane, cmacfarl@middlebury.edu
* [**CTLR**](https://www.middlebury.edu/office/teaching-learning-research/student-resources) **(go/CTLR)**: (Peer tutors for all subjects, professional tutors for writing, quantitative skills, and time management/ learning resources).
* [**Anderson Freeman Center**](https://www.middlebury.edu/office/anderson-freeman) **(go/AFC)**: Inclusive community, particularly supporting BIPOC and first gen students.
* [**Counseling Services**](https://www.middlebury.edu/office/center-health-wellness/counseling-services) **(go/counseling)**: Support on all kinds of emotional/social issues, including adjusting to college life!
* [**Disability Resource Center**](https://www.middlebury.edu/office/disability-resource-center): Offers supportive accommodations to students.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING PHILOSOPHY

This course uses a modified [labor-based grading model](https://wac.colostate.edu/books/perspectives/labor/). To begin, we will create an individual learning plan that includes your goals in addition to mine. During the semester, you will receive qualitative (written) and personalized feedback for each assignment. You will not, however, receive numerical or letter grades until the end of the course. This “ungrading” model might make some students feel apprehensive as they might wonder how they are performing in the course. You can always discuss your learning in the course with me. I also break down each assignment by points that is factored into the outcomes for the course (writing logs, for example, are cumulative and worth a fairly large portion of final grades but, also, they are [low stakes](https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/cross-discipline-skills/low-stakes-writing-assignments) writing that takes place over the semester). The points breakdown will allow you to calculate your final grade if you feel apprehensive about this assessment model and, again, you can always check in with me (Dr. G). Throughout the semester, however, you will also have opportunities to revise long-form assignments and to self-assess your performance and revisit your goals for the course. I will be here to guide you in your learning process, too.

## TEXTS AND MATERIALS

* Various chapters from *The Meaningful Writing Project* (Geller et al.) and other selected readings will be scanned and uploaded on Canvas. You will also need a notebook for class, a functioning Middlebury e-mail account, an active Canvas account, and a reliable means to save your work electronically (USB stick, external hard drive etc.) **Please set-up announcement notifications on Canvas**!

**Breakdown of Assignments**

* **Readings:** Readings must be completed before you come to the class for the day. All readings will be uploaded to Canvas as reading packets unless specified in-class or the syllabus (e.g., video, and other media clips). We will work through the readings in our class so please make every effort to complete them. Of course, many of the readings are about highly personal and potentially stressful material such as abortion, suicide, illness, death. Etc. So, please review content warnings, below, and reach out to Dr. G if you want to talk or substitute readings. Additionally, I have full copies of many of these texts, so please reach out if you want to read more material as we are going for breath rather than depth.
* **Writing Logs (4):** These are critical responses to course material. They should be developed and engage directly with the reading material and make use of direct citation, essay structure and MLA/APA formatting conventions (12-point font, 1-inch margins, standard serif font etc.) They should demonstrate learning through specific engagement with reading and other course materials. While summary might be important at the start of the term, as you learn about the disciplinary and methodological details of interviews, critique and connection between readings will be expected. We cover a lot of material in this class so responses should be focused rather than a comprehensive summary of all the week’s material.
* **Writing Projects (4):** Each unit is focused on different types of meaningful writing (from outside the academy). Paper 1 is on journalism. Paper 2 is on medical narratives. Paper 3 is on life writing. We will co-create Project 4. These projects will conform to genre expectations so length will vary (e.g., journalistic writing is shorter than life writing) but these should reflect the conventions and topics that are present in the meaningful writing units as they are demonstrated in the selected readings. Use our readings as models for your writing!
* **Portfolio:** At the end of the course, you’ll put together your 4 revised writing projects, including an introduction to your writing and reflection on your learning goals and your learning outcomes for our course. Try to make the introduction less academic/formal. Aim for a conversational and inviting tone, as you would in the introduction of a trade book. Also, get creative! You may include your own artwork, photography, or other writing (don’t go overboard though as this is a wrap-up project!)

**PROJECTS OVERVIEW:**

* Learning plan: 5%
* Reading Responses (4 during the semester): 15%
* Writing Project 1 (draft 1 and 2): 15%
* Writing Project 2 (draft 1 and 2): 15%
* Writing Project 3 (draft 1 and 2): 15%
* Writing Project 4 (draft 1 and 2): 15%
* Portfolio: 10%
* Attendance and Participation, 10%

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| **Assignment** | **Description** | **Due Date** |
| **Learning Plan** | At the beginning of the semester, you will create an individual learning plan that includes your own learning goals in addition to the course’s goals. We will revisit this plan a couple of times throughout the semester. 300 – 500 words, double spaced. | 1. 9/14 |
| **Reading Responses (4)** | These responses analyze and respond to the readings for our class. They are less formal than writing projects but require citation as they engage with assigned reading. 300 – 500 words, double spaced. | 1. 9/21 2. 10/5 3. 10/17 4. 11/2 |
| **Writing Projects 1 - 4** | These projects will conform to genre expectations so length will vary (e.g., journalistic writing is shorter than life writing) but should reflect the conventions and topics that are present in the meaningful writing units as they are demonstrated in the selected readings. Use these as models for your writing! | 1. 10/10 2. 10/24 3. 11/9 4. 11/28 |
| **Portfolio** | A final compendium of your four revised writing projects accompanied by an introduction to your work and reflection on your learning goals and your learning outcomes for our course. | 12/16 (tentative) |

**Formatting for Written Work**

Unless specified otherwise, writing assignments should be typed double-spaced, 12-point font (Times New Roman), with 1-inch margins. All writing should be electronically uploaded as an MS Word document to Canvas. APA citation style should be used for any research-intensive writing (MLA may be used for the reading responses). We will engage [low stakes](https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/developing-assignments/cross-discipline-skills/low-stakes-writing-assignments) and [high stakes](https://www.stthomas.edu/wac/forfaculty/developing/activelyuseassignmentsinclass/highstakes/) writing as the course combines these two approaches to teaching writing.

**Participation, Respect, and Attendance Defined**

Because of the nature of the Middlebury semesters, things move quickly. This means that you need to do your best to avoid missing class (unless there is a crisis or you are ill). Attendance, however, does not simply mean presence. You are expected to come to class prepared to participate, which means having done the reading and writing assignments. I also expect you to be intellectually and socially present in class discussion, group work, and other assigned tasks.

**COVID Clause & Masking Requirement**

**Masks are required in all indoor in-person class meetings for the duration of the semester. If you forget your mask, I will ask you to return to your room to get one. If this becomes habitual, it will impact attendance.**

Additionally, if more than 3 students (20%) cannot attend class due to illness, we will move to remote learning via Zoom. A recurring meeting link will be shared on Canvas. Because of the nature of our course (which is discussion and writing-heavy), it will not be possible for me to do hybrid learning in-class. **Please do not come to** **class if you are ill, especially if you have COVID. Instead, let’s create an alternative learning plan for absentee students** as it is likely the semester will once again be disrupted by illness. I will continue to upload class notes to Canvas. However, each student should have 1 – 2 “buddies” to debrief about class, engage in in-class activities like peer review, etc. We can assign or choose buddies after the first class.

**This course also has a set of guidelines about engagement in class discussion including:**

* “Pass” or “pass for now” if you are not willing or ready to respond.
* Allow others to finish their speaking and avoid interrupting.
* Avoid attempts to persuade.
* Respect time boundaries.
* “Move up” or “move back” to share airtime.
* Speak for yourself and not on behalf of others.
* Maintain confidentiality regarding stories and students.
* Take the learning, but not others’ stories.
* Attend to technology in ways that allow you and others to be as present as possible.

I have aimed to make the workload as manageable as possible—sometimes even offering students the option of reading one of several assigned articles—I am, however, open to feedback and happy to discuss workload adjustments.

**Technology Statement**

I welcome the use of technology in the classroom and have found it to be a valuable learning and communication aid, especially during the pandemic. However, please consider the honor code when you use your computer in-class. We are all here to engage with one another and writing is a task that requires intense attention. To divide your attention during class discussion or class activities not only harms your learning process; it also harms the learning processes of those around you and inhibits the creation of community. Of course, if you want to go the analogue route for note taking feel free to do so. Please note, however, that I will ask you to post on Canvas and this includes any feedback you provide to your classmates during in-class peer review, group discussion notes, and the like.

**Middlebury College Policies**

**Honor Code Pledge and Academic Integrity**

Because writing is often a collaborative endeavor, it can be hard for students to reconcile peer review, collaboration, and other communal elements of writing with the honor code ("I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment"). The Middlebury Writing Center—online and drop-in tutors, and our course tutor—are authorized to support your writing needs. You will also be expected to conduct peer review in this course; **this means that you are allowed to engage with your classmates on writing but please do not copy or replicate each other’s work**. Please don’t feed each other suggestions or answers (however helpful it may seem at the time), as it impacts your paper’s content and is considered stepping over into unauthorized support. We will discuss the honor code in-class but email me with questions or concerns.

**Disability access/accommodation**

Students who have letters of accommodation are encouraged to contact me as early in the semester as possible to ensure that they are implemented. For those without accommodations, assistance is available to eligible students through the Disability Resource Center. Please contact the DRC for more information. All discussions will remain confidential.

**Detailed Class Schedule**

**Unit 1—Who am I as a writer?**

9/6 (Class 0): Introductions, overview of syllabus, one paragraph defining meaningful writing, assign class buddies.

9/12: Getting to know each other, course expectations, writing process activity.

9/14: Meaningful writing—engage in writing prompts around meaningful writing experiences and discuss as class. Develop a rubric for meaningful writing collaboratively.

**Due 9/14: Learning plan due today!**

**Unit 2—What is Meaningful Writing?**

9/19: Reading Due Today: First half of Unit 2 Reading Packet on Meaningful Writing: “What Meaningful Writing Means for Students,” Eodice et al. (2017); Chapter 1 in *The Meaningful Writing Project*; [Explore researchers’ website](https://meaningfulwritingproject.net/); Return to class rubric and revise based on previous chapters read.

9/21: Reading Due Today: Second half of Unit 2 Reading Packet on Meaningful Writing: Chapter 2 & 3 in *The Meaningful Writing Project*; Discuss; Return to class rubric and revise based on previous chapters read: After reading about meaningful writing and thinking about yourself as a writer and collaboratively designing a meaningful writing rubric, do some brainstorming about the kinds of writing that are meaningful to you. What qualities do they have? Share examples in pairs and then as a group. Deconstruct some of these examples.

**Due 9/21 Reading Response #1 due today by class**

9/26: Reading Due Today: <https://ilovelibraries.org/what-libraries-do/>; Visit from Librarian Carrie MacFarlane (30 – 35 minutes); debrief about reading response 1 feedback; introduce assignment 1

**Unit 3—Meaningful Writing Example 1 (Journalism)**

9/28: Reading Due Today: Unit 3 Reading Packet on Narrative Journalism; discuss in-class; discuss assignment 1 ideas

10/3: \***Class held via Zoom\***: Journalist Nicole Pollack (’21.5) visits class

**Due 10/5 Reading response #2 due today by class**

10/5: Engage in a journalistic writing assignment—find a lead and do a short write-up in a journalistic reportage format (resource here: <https://writingcenter.uagc.edu/journalistic-writing> and here: <https://mediakron.bc.edu/readingnarrativejournalism/resources-for-students>)

**10/10: Paper 1, Draft 1 due in-class today; Revision Day (post revised draft by end of this week)**

**Unit 4—Meaningful Writing Example 2 (Medical/Health Narratives)**

10/12: Reading Due Today: Unit 4 Reading Packet Part I on Medical Narratives: Narrative based medicine articles; “The Joy of Old Age (No Kidding),” Oliver Sacks; Excerpt *From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find the Good Death,* Caitlin Doughty; “How to Write a Pain Book,” Lisa Levy. Bonus material: [Doughty’s YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCi5iiEyLwSLvlqnMi02u5gQ).

10/17: Reading Due Today: Unit 4 Reading Packet Part II on Medical Narratives: “The Empathy Exams,” & “Grand Unified Theory of Female Pain,” Leslie Jamison; “The Pain Scale,” Eula Biss; in-class, will review artwork/audio from [Health Story Collaborative](http://www.healthstorycollaborative.org/) & discuss in-class.

**Due 10/17 Reading Response #3 due today by class**

10/19: In-Class: Continue to discuss class readings; write a short health/medical narrative, preferably about yourself.

**10/24: Paper 2, Draft 1 due today; Writing Conferences with Dr. G in lieu of group class (post revised draft by end of this week)**

**Unit 5—Meaningful Writing Example 3 (Life Writing)**

10/26: Reading Due Today: Unit 5 Reading Packet Part I on Life Writing: Introduction & Ch 2 of *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks; excerpt from *Hunger of Memory*, Richard Rodriguez; Chapter 1 from *Above the Well*, Asao Inoue; Discuss education/literacy narratives.

10/31: Halloween surprise!

11/2: Reading Due Today: Unit 5 Reading Packet Part II on Life Writing: Ch 1 & 2 of *Fun Home*, Alison Bechdel; in-class, we will watch 2 interview clips: [this short interview clip with Bechdel](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7TWm2CPZCo) & [this one with Bechdel](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7Eq4rnkCeY); discuss memoir and graphic memoir

**Due 11/2 Reading Response #4 due today by class**

**11/7: Continue discussing unit 5 reading packets 1 and 2;** Write (draw?) life writing narrative, preferably about yourself but it could be about someone else (oral history, for example), you may draw upon the literacy narrative elements in Rodriguez and hooks or their educational narratives/autobiographies.

11/9: **Paper 3,** **Draft 1 due in-class today; Revision Day** **(post revised draft by end of this week)**

**Unit 6—Meaningful Writing Example 4 (Co-Created in-class)**

11/14: In-class, discuss revision process, brainstorm project 4 and co-write with your peers

11/16:Individual/TeamWriting Conferences for Paper 4—**No group class today**

**11/21: Thanksgiving—No Class**

**11/23: Thanksgiving—No Class**

11/28: **Paper 4, Draft 1 due by end of day; Meet with co-writer(s) and/or take time to write on own today** (**post revised draft by end of this week, Sunday 12/4 8p.m.**)

11/30: Peer review session for project 4; discuss portfolio for class

12/5: Showcase Project 4—“Gallery Walk”

12/7: Debrief as class re: learning outcomes, return to and revise meaningful writing paragraph from “class 0” & complete student evaluations

12/9: First Year Symposium (3:30 – 7:30p.m. though students are not expected to be there for the whole event but a set time)—this is an opportunity for our class to publicly share our writing. We will discuss as a class if/how we want to participate. We need to decide by October 17.