

**PLSC 379: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

**SPRING 2020**

**When:** MONDAY 4:10 pm-6:40 pm

**Where:** UR DOWNTOWN-RM 118

Dr. Andrea Y. Simpson, Instructor

Office: Weinstein Hall, Room 202K

Office Hours: Tuesday 11-1 pm and by appointment

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Course Blog: <https://blog.richmond.edu/autoethnography/>

Welcome to PLSC 379: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY. The first time I taught this course, it was in the Richmond City Justice Complex, also known the city jail. I created a course on autoethnography as part of a personal project for a seminar I was in sponsored by the Catholic Diocese of Richmond. The course profoundly affected the way I viewed prisons and incarcerated citizens. Since that time, three colleagues and I have received a grant to explore a prison education program for the University of Richmond. This course is our first foray into a possible program designed for formerly incarcerated citizens and students to engage each other in a learning community. Why did I choose autoethnography?

This is my 27th year in the professoriate. I began teaching at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1993, and came to the University of Richmond in 2004 because I knew it was the kind of institution that would value student-centered instruction. I think learning is enhanced by creating a community in the classroom. We do that by respecting each other’s perspectives and making sure that we come together prepared to talk about the readings. My teaching style is highly interactive. We are learning from each other. Although I am the Ph.D. in the room, I don’t have all of the answers. I cannot see some things in ways that may be beneficial to my understanding of the subject. Our higher education system requires an assessment of student performance. This is always challenging for me because I fear that a focus on grades impedes learning. You should know that while I provide ample feedback, improvement in my course means a great deal to me. At the end of the day, when I see improvement in your performance, I must factor it into your final grade. Remember that asking good questions are as good as giving good answers in class.

This is the maiden voyage of this course, so as we learn together, I will appreciate feedback from you along the way on readings, assignments, and any other aspect of the course.

Autoethnography is a methodology that allows us to illuminate and speak to larger issues in our communities and in the world through writing about our own lives. This methodology, or way of producing knowledge, is also known as narrative inquiry, and more broadly as “qualitative” research. Some of you may remember being introduced to the scientific method in elementary school. You are surely familiar with the forming a hypothesis, experimenting or “testing” your hypothesis through data analysis, then either confirming, or rejecting, the null hypothesis, In the social sciences, we call this “quantitative” methodology, and it dominates the field. In this course, we will learn how autoethnography, as a way of knowing, offers insights that cannot be gained through quantitative methods. What is exciting for me, and I hope for you, is that we will learn this through the explication of a time, an incident, a moment, or an experience, in our own lives augmented by research on the context in which these events took place. We will interview people who were in our lives to find out what they remember about our story. We will, hopefully, write something that will help others understand that while we are responsible for our decisions, there are structural and systemic issues that limit, or increase, our agency.

Course Goals and Objectives

* Students will understand the appropriate uses of autoethnographic research
* Students will learn how to design, frame, and execute an autoethnographic project
* We will be able to recognize what kinds of research questions are appropriate for this methodology
* We will work collectively to offer criticisms so that our projects are authentic and meet the criteria of autoethnographic research
* We will understand how to incorporate other research data into our work to elevate it beyond autobiography

Texts

Denzin, Norman K. 2010. ***Interpretive Autoethnography***, Thousand Oaks: Sage

Publications.

Kim, Jeong-Hee. 2016. ***Understanding Narrative Inquiry,*** Jeong-Hee Kim,

Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Articles

All articles are accessible on the blog at: <https://blog.richmond.edu/genderpoliticsprison/>

**Grading and Assignments**

Summary and Annotated Bibliography on Topic: 15*%*

Final Autoethnography: 25%

Participation: 20%

Presentation: 15%

Midterm: 25%

Autoethnographic Topic and Annotated Bibliography

You will summarize your choice of the autoethnographic topic that you will write about. Include a general description of the event, time, or moment, and why you chose it. You will then include an annotated bibliography of sources you will use to complete this project. The annotation is a summary of the information in each source you will use. I expect at least ten sources for the final product.

<https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/common_writing_assignments/annotated_bibliographies/annotated_bibliography_samples.html>

More tips are available on the course blog site at: <https://blog.richmond.edu/autoethnography/>

Final Autoethnographic Paper and Presentation

Your ethnography should be at least 15 pages long. The presentation you prepare will be a short version of your story and what you think it says about a larger question. Here is an example of a Prezi of an autooethnographic project,

<https://prezi.com/i7gtkafbr7os/visual-autoethnography-project/>

Attendance

***Because class discussion is at the heart of this course, you are required to be in class, and what we do in the course of our class meetings will determine a large portion of your grade. Excused absences for illness or other crucial events are allowed.***

Students are responsible for all information in the class, regardless of their personal attendance. If a student is absent, it is his or her responsibility to inquire about what they have missed. Absences due to university activities (e.g., sports, mock trial, etc.) must be discussed with the instructor before the relevant class period(s). An official notice must be shown to the instructor. Arrangements concerning absences are entirely at the instructor's discretion.

Please be on time for class to avoid unnecessary disruptions of speeches, lectures, and discussions.

We live in a digital age and you may need your laptop, tablet, or other device to take notes or to do in-class research. We will also do a lot of class discussion, so please be ready for us to ask you to put your screens away.

Grievance Procedures

Occasionally, students are unsatisfied with some dimension of the course. In such cases, you should first provide a written argument in support of your position to the instructors and request a meeting. All grade appeals on specific assignments must be made within one week of the return of the assignment.

\*\*Any students who need accommodations for learning or who have particular needs are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty: Pledging

Students are expected to pledge the following statement on all assignments turned in for credit, including exams, papers and laboratory reports: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work." Academic honesty is—defined broadly and simply—the performance of all academic work without cheating, lying, stealing, or receiving assistance from any other person or using any source of information not appropriately authorized or attributed. The University of Richmond and your professors take academic honesty very seriously.

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense.

For more information visit

<http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html>

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Week 1 Introduce Ourselves

1/13 Review Syllabus

Discuss “Two Autoethnographies”

**Week 2 NO CLASS-MLK HOLIDAY**

**1/20**

Week 3 “The Validity of the One”

1/17 Guest Speaker: Dr. Archana Pathak

Special Assistant to the Vice President for Inclusive

Excellence

Interim Director of the Q Collective

Division for Inclusive Excellence

Associate Professor

Dept. of Gender, Sexuality & Women's Studies

Virginia Commonwealth University

Week 4 **Interpretive Autoethnography**, Chapters 1-4

2/3

**SUMMARY AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE MONDAY, 2/10**

Week 5 Readings: **Interpretive Autoethnography**,

2/10 Chapters 5-6

“As Seen On TV: An Autoethnographic Reflection

on Race and Reality Television”

Week 6 Readings: Chapter 3 in **Understanding Narrative Inquiry**

2/17 How can we apply this to our projects?

Week 7 Review for Midterm

2/24 Discuss Autoethnographic Topics

Week 8 Midterm-In Class

3/2

**Week 9 NO CLASS-SPRING BREAK**

**3/9**

Week 10 Readings: Chapters 4 and 5, **Understanding Narrative**

3/16 **Inquiry**

Week 11 Readings: Nursing and Worth: An Autoethnographic

3/23 Journey, Chapters 6-7

Week 12 Readings: “Easier Said than Done: Writing an

3/30 Autoethnography”

Week 13 "Apparently Being a Self-Obsessed C\*\*t Is

4/6 Academically Lauded": Experiencing Twitter Trolling of Autoethnographers”

Week 14 Presentations

4/13

Week 15 Presentations

4/20