

## The Craft of Counterstory: A Writers' Workshop

### Course Description

Counterstory is a writing and research method of Critical Race Theory, founded in creative non-fiction genres of oral history, slave narrative, and *testimonio*. As a narrative form, counterstory illuminates other(ed) perspectives about genre and dominant ideology, and functions as a method for social justice-oriented writers to intervene in and counter practices that dismiss or decenter racism and those whose lives are affected daily by it. Students will craft counterstories in genres of allegory, dialogue/book review, and autobiographic reflection based on personal experience and supported by data and literatures on their chosen topics.

This course will instruct on and concentrate on three genres of counterstory:

1. Counterstory as allegory
2. Counterstory as dialogue/book review
3. Counterstory as autobiographic reflection

Class sessions will alternate between

1. Discussion of varying examples of the three types of counterstory, with examples to read by authors writing in these genres;
2. Trying our hand at writing counterstory and sharing our drafts with each other through workshops—I am open to incorporating past writing projects into the genre specifications of counterstory;
3. Discussion of how we might engage with students around creative nonfiction and fiction through readings, assignment prompts, research projects, and creative classroom activities inspired and informed by counterstory. We will devote specific time at the end of class sessions to further discuss of sample assignments.

### Required Materials

#### Required Course Book:

none

#### Additional Course Readings:

Available as PDF files or links to e-books on Canvas

### Course Objectives

Learning objectives for this course are broad. Discussions responses on Canvas will be aimed at modeling these objectives and giving students an opportunity to see them in action; discussions, activities, assignments, and papers represent opportunities for students to practice these objectives and receive feedback that will be useful in improving as scholars. These objectives will be framed around the content of this particular course and reflect the contemporary and ongoing conversations concerning an introduction to writing studies and its applications and implications in a multitude of fields and disciplines. The broad objectives are that students will:

1. Demonstrate proficiency in critical and constructive thought
2. Demonstrate proficiency in communicating complex ideas through writing

3. Possess an understanding of writing as a process
4. Understand application of basic rhetorical concepts for framing research and in problem solving

## **Major Assignments and Grading**

### **Major Assignments**

Required Work [Assignment Sheets located on Canvas]

### **In-Class Writing Exercises/Prompts (5%)**

On occasion, I will distribute writing prompts that will tie into what we have been reading and learning about counterstory. The prompts will provide you a chance to try your hand at different genres of counterstory as they push you to experiment with different forms and styles (keyed into the readings/examples of counterstory texts). These prompts also give you a body of writing to draw on as you think about your final projects. You will find that during the course of the week you may “hit upon” a rich vein of material or take a new direction in your writing that you did not anticipate.

I will give some time for writing in class (anywhere from 15-25 minutes). When we return from the writing sessions, we will have “read arounds” (large and small group) where everyone reads a short excerpt or piece and specific workshop sessions where group members present a piece of writing they are developing for discussion and feedback.

### **Canvas Reader Response Discussions (15%)**

This assignment will be conducted BEFORE each class period in relation to assigned reading due for the upcoming class day. Within this assignment you will contribute to the class discussion board a question and quotes from the assigned daily reading(s). You should pose open-ended questions that generate conversation and cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no.” Your question can address a specific reading or a theme running through several readings. Quotes may be anything from the reading that resonate with you. Along with the quote, write a paragraph or two explaining why you find the quote significant. Personal reflections that are connected with the readings/discussions are perfectly appropriate for this assignment.

### **The Counterstory Genre Drafts (45% total):**

Counterstory Allegory Draft (15%)

Counterstory as Dialogue/Book Review (15%)

Counterstory as Autobiographic Reflection (15%)

### **Final Counterstory (20%):**

For the major course project, you will submit an extended revised counterstory or a set of shorter pieces of counterstory. I will provide a specific assignment sheet mid-week so you can think about how to focus your project.

### **Participation (15%):**

In-class writing workshops and discussion, *Canvas* discussions, participation, preparedness, and presence are all vitally important to this writing workshop.

## Grade Breakdown

Note: To earn a passing grade, you must complete all major writing assignments.

- 90-100%=A
- 80-89.99%=B
- 70-79.99%=C
- 60-69.99%=D
- 59.99% and less=F

## Daily Schedule

### Week 1: Introduction to class, brief introduction to key terms and concepts

Due: N/A

Assign: "Discussion" writing

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Due: "Discussion" writing

Assign: From Martinez *Counterstory: The Writing and Rhetoric of Critical Race Theory* "Prologue" and "A Case for Counterstory" pp. 1-9 (stop before The Tenets of CRT) and "Discussion" writing

### Week 2: Introductions, cont., CRT and Counterstory, a history

Due: Martinez from *Counterstory: The Writing and Rhetoric of Critical Race Theory* "Prologue" and "A Case for Counterstory" pp. 1-9 (stop before The Tenets of CRT) and "Discussion" writing

Assign: Martinez from *Counterstory: The Writing and Rhetoric of Critical Race Theory* "A Case for Counterstory" pp. 9-31 and "Discussion" writing

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Due: Martinez from *Counterstory: The Writing and Rhetoric of Critical Race Theory* "A Case for Counterstory" pp. 9-31 and "Discussion" writing

Assign: Bell "Foreword: The Civil Rights Chronicles" pp. 4-43

### Week 3: The First Published CRT Counterstory

Due: Bell "Foreword: The Civil Rights Chronicles" pp. 4-43

Assign: Bell "Foreword: The Civil Rights Chronicles" pp. 43-83 and "Discussion" writing

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Due: Bell “Foreword: The Civil Rights Chronicles” pp. 43-83 and “Discussion” writing

Assign: Bell et al. “The Civil Rights Chronicles Revisited: Comments and Introduction” pp. 46-64 and “Discussion” writing

#### **Week 4: The Legal World Ablaze by Story**

Due: Bell et al. “The Civil Rights Chronicles Revisited: Comments and Introduction” pp. 46-64 and “Discussion” writing

Assign: Bell et al. “The Civil Rights Chronicles Revisited: Comments and Introduction” pp. 65-82 and “Discussion” writing

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Due: Bell et al. “The Civil Rights Chronicles Revisited: Comments and Introduction” pp. 65-82 and “Discussion” writing

Assign: Lawrence “The Id, the Ego, and the Superego” Delgado “Ethereal Scholar,” and Williams “Alchemical Notes” and “Discussion” writing

#### **Week 5: Story Set in Motion**

Due: Lawrence “The Id, the Ego, and the Superego,” Delgado “Ethereal Scholar,” and Williams “Alchemical Notes,” and “Discussion” writing

Assign: Matsuda “Looking to the Bottom” pp. 323-347

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Due: Matsuda “Looking to the Bottom” pp. 323-347

Assign: Matsuda “Looking to the Bottom” pp. 348-373

#### **Week 6: Story Set in Motion and Counterstory Genre, part I: Allegory and the Fantastic**

Due: Matsuda “Looking to the Bottom” pp. 348-373

Assign: Matsuda “Looking to the Bottom” pp. 373-399 and “Discussion” writing

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Due: Matsuda “Looking to the Bottom” pp. 373-399 and “Discussion” writing

Assign: Martinez “Derrick Bell and Counterstory as Fantasy/Allegory,” Bell (from *And We Are Not Saved*) “The Real Status of Blacks Today,” “Discussion” writing, and CRT Allegory Counterstory draft

## **Week 7: Counterstory Genre, part I: Allegory and the Fantastic**

Due: Martinez “Derrick Bell and Counterstory as Fantasy/Allegory,” Bell (from *And We Are Not Saved*) “The Real Status of Blacks Today” and “Discussion” writing

Assign: Prepare your CRT Allegory draft for in-class workshop

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Due: CRT Allegory draft for in-class workshop (writing time and workshop time)

Assign: Prepare your CRT Allegory draft for writing read arounds

## **Week 8: Counterstory as Allegory: Read arounds/Workshop**

Due: CRT Allegory draft for writing read arounds

Assign: Prepare your CRT Allegory draft for writing read arounds

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Due: CRT Allegory draft for writing read arounds

Assign: Prepare your CRT Allegory draft for writing read arounds

## **Week 9: Counterstory Genre, part II: Dialogue/Book Review**

Due: CRT Allegory draft for writing read arounds

Assign: Delgado “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative,” Delgado “Rodrigo’s Chronicle,” Martinez “Richard Delgado and Counterstory as Narrated Dialogue” and “Discussion” writing

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Due: Delgado “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative,” Delgado “Rodrigo’s Chronicle,” Martinez “Richard Delgado and Counterstory as Narrated Dialogue” and “Discussion” writing

Assign: Prepare your CRT Dialogue/Book Review draft for writing read arounds

## **Week 10: Counterstory Genre, part II: Dialogue/Book Review**

Due: CRT Dialogue/Book Review draft for writing read arounds

Assign: Prepare your CRT Dialogue/Book Review draft for writing read arounds

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Due: CRT Dialogue/Book Review draft for writing read arounds

Assign: Prepare your CRT Dialogue/Book Review draft for writing read arounds

### **Week 11: Read Arounds and Reading Day Week**

Due: CRT Dialogue/Book Review draft for writing read arounds

Assign: Martinez “Patricia Williams and Counterstory as Autobiographic Reflection” and Williams “On Being the Object of Property” and “Stop Getting Married on Plantations” and “Discussion” writing

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No Class, Reading Day

Assign: Martinez “Patricia Williams and Counterstory as Autobiographic Reflection” and Williams “On Being the Object of Property” and “Stop Getting Married on Plantations” and “Discussion” writing

### **Week 12: Counterstory Genre, part III: Autobiographic Reflection**

Due: Martinez “Patricia Williams and Counterstory as Autobiographic Reflection” and Williams “On Being the Object of Property” and “Stop Getting Married on Plantations” and “Discussion” writing; CRT Autobiographic Reflection Counterstory drafting discussion

Assign: Prepare your CRT Autobiographic Reflection draft for writing read arounds

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Due: CRT Autobiographic Reflection draft for writing read arounds

Assign: Prepare your CRT Autobiographic Reflection draft for writing read arounds

### **Week 13: Dossier in Review, Revising Toward Application**

Due: CRT Autobiographic Reflection draft for writing read arounds

Assign: Prepare your CRT Autobiographic Reflection draft for writing read arounds

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Due: CRT Autobiographic Reflection draft for writing read arounds

Assign: Final Counterstory Portfolio Assignment

**FALL BREAK: NO CLASS**

**Week 14: Counterstory in Review, Revising Toward Publication**

Due: CRT Counterstory draft of your choosing (any genre from the semester for writing time and workshop time)

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Final In-Class read arounds

**Week 15: Counterstory in Review, Revising Toward Publication**

Final In-Class read arounds

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Final In-Class read arounds

**Week 16: Final Counterstories due**

Final Counterstories due