

3rd SEMESTER COMMON COURSE:

ENG3A05/SIGNATURES: EXPRESSING THE SELF

CALICUT UNIVERSITY (2017 Admission Onwards)



Prepared by

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Syllabus

ENG3A05/SIGNATURES: EXPRESSING THE SELF

Lecture Hours per week: 5

Semester to be taught: 3

Credit: 4

Total Contact Hours: 90

Internal: 20

Objectives of the Course

- a. To enable the students to read and critically appreciate the different genres of expressing the self.
- b. To appreciate the fluid and flexible narratives of self-expression that transcend the conventions of the genre.
- c. To understand how personal narratives intersect with the larger social realities.
- d. To read personal narratives that move beyond the individual self to express the collective self.
- e. To understand how the distinctions between fact and fiction blur in personal narratives.

Course Description (Summary)

Module 1: Autobiographical Writings and Memoirs : 28 Hours.

Module 2; Speeches and testimonies : 25 hours.

Module 3: Diary entries and letters : 25 hours.

Evaluation : 12 hours

Total : 90 hours.



Module 1: Autobiographical Writings and Memoirs

Lesson 1: 'Excerpts from the Memoirs' by Pablo Neruda.

Lesson 2: 'Pilgrim at Tinker creek' by Annie Dillard.

Lesson 3: 'I Stand with you Against Disorder' by Jeanette Armstrong.

Lesson 4: 'When I was growing Up' by Nellie Wong.

Module 2: Speeches and Testimonies.

Lesson 5: Art, Truth and Politics by Harold Pinter.

Lesson 6: Final speech in the Movie 'The great dictator' By Charlie Chaplin.

Lesson 7: A Solitary Human Voice From Voices from Chernobyl: The Oral History of Chernobyl by Svetlana Alexievich.

Lesson 8: Breaking Silence by Janice Miri Kitani.

Module 3: Diary Entries and Letters

Lesson 9: Excerpts from the Diary of a Young Girl by Ann Frank.

Lesson 10: Excerpts from the Secret diary of Adrian Mole Aged 133/4 by Sue Townsend.

Lesson 11: Letters from the Mothers of Nenjamparambu to the Supreme Court by MA Rahman.

Lesson 12: Letter to Adolf Hitler by MK Gandhi.



Lesson 1: 'EXCERPT FROM MEMOIRS' BY PABLO NERUDA

- The 'Word' is a beautiful poem which shows Neruda's passion for poetry. In the poem Neruda says words are so beautiful that he wants to fit them in his poems. He imagines words to be like fruits and vegetables with which he can prepare tasty dishes. To Neruda, the words glitter like coloured stones. According to Neruda, an idea undergoes a complete change by shifting the position of a word or placing a new word in the middle of a phrase. Neruda compares vowels to coloured stones, silverfish, foam, thread, metal and dew. He compares words to stalactites, slivers of polished wood, coals, pickings from a shipwreck and gift from the waves. Stalactites are icicle like rocky structures hanging from the roof of caves. Neruda says that he uses words in his poems like glittering stalactites. Pablo Neruda is a famous poet of Chile. Chile was conquered by the Spanish Conquistadors in the 16th century. They carried off all the riches and gold of Chile to Spain. However, Neruda is happy that they gave a beautiful language to Chile, the Spanish language. The poem has a fine message. We should love words, because without words there will be no communication or meaning to our life. The poem is a wonderful example of Neruda's love and passion for words, images and poetry.

Lesson 2: 'PILGRIM AT TINKER CREEK' BY ANNIE DILLARD

- Annie Dillard's "Pilgrim at Tinker Creek" can be considered as a spiritual excursion into the natural world. One day when the writer was walking on the side of a creek, she notices a small frog floating on the surface. It was not trying to escape like other frogs. As the writer looked at the frog, it slowly started collapsing, leaving the skin floating on the water. It was sinking in front of the writer's eyes like a deflated football. Actually, it was a giant water bug which was sucking the frog dry.
- Annie Dillard has sharply described the attacking strategy of the giant water bug. The giant water bug catches the frog with its strong front legs, paralyzes the victim with enzymes, shoots poison that dissolves the victim's muscles, bones, organs and sucks out the body juice. What remains is the floating frog skin on the water surface.
- Annie Dillard says every living thing is an emergency survivor without any protection in this world. The frog and the water bug, both were created by God. They have an equal right to live. But what actually happens is that the water bug catches the frog, injects poison into its body and sucks its body juice dry. Where is the sense of justice here? The writer quotes Koran saying Allah has not created anything in jest. Blaise Pascal believes that God is hiding, leaving the living creatures God



created to their fate. However, Einstein believes that God is subtle but not malicious. The writer believes that the creator is not responsible for the death of anything in nature.

Lesson 3: 'I STAND WITH YOU AGAINST THE DISORDER' BY JEANETTE ARMSTRONG

- The Okanagans are people of British Columbia that is dry and hot. River Columbia flow through Okanagan. They are mainly fishermen and hunters who live with what nature provides and so the people of Okanagan are very much bonded to nature.
- The Okanagans strongly believe that each person is born into a family and community. The actions of the individual affect both the family and the community. Without the family and community, a person is nothing. The Okanagan believes that individuals have four main capacities. They are the physical self, the emotional self, the thinking self and the spiritual self. All the four capacities have to operate together for a person's life to be successful and content.
- The Okanagans refer to relationship to others by the word "Our one skin". This means everyone in Okanaga shares not only the place they live, but are also bonded together by common thoughts, culture and the feeling that community comes first. Modern man is selfish by nature, but Okanagan believes in sharing everything.
- The Okanagan believes that the body is operated by four forces mainly the physical self, the emotional self, the thinking self and the spiritual self. The Okanagan believes that the body is earth itself. Their flesh, bone and blood are all part of the earth. Their body moves through all the cycles that the earth moves. For the Okanagan, the body is pure and sacred. What is provided by earth, finally returns to earth by death.

Lesson 4: 'WHEN I WAS GROWING UP' BY NELLIE WONG

- There are images of self pity and loathing in the poem "When I was growing Up". The poet is a Chinese American, who is not happy with her yellow skin. The poem is autobiographical and describes the pain of a Chinese girl, growing up in America. The poet was proud of her English, her grammar and her spelling. She felt she belonged to the group of smart Chinese children.
- She was a well educated girl, but her skin was yellow and this made her ashamed as she was living with white people in America. She felt dirty all the time. She thought God made white people clean. She bathed several times a day. However it couldn't make her white. This made her



desperate. She was ashamed of Chinese people, their yellow skin, small size, their weak bodies and their habit of spitting in the streets. She wanted to run away to purple mountains, to clean and white houses by the sea with space to breathe, uncongested by yellow people.

- Growing up was a very painful period for the writer. The line “When I was Growing Up” is repeated 11 times in the poem. The poet was truly influenced by the white culture popularized by the newspapers, magazines, TV programmes and cinema. The lucky girls were those with fair skin, curly hair, cotton dresses and cashmere sweaters.
- The whole poem shows how living in a place far away from one’s own place of birth or culture can be very painful to children while growing up. The scars left by the pain of growing in an alien culture will take a long time to heal. Some carry the scars for a life time.

Lesson No 5: Art, Truth and Politics by Harold Pinter

- “Art, Truth and Politics” is the Nobel Prize acceptance speech delivered by Harold. Since Pinter was very ill and in hospital, the lecture was videotaped and played in the Nobel Prize ceremony venue. In the speech, Pinter makes a strong case against America for supporting anti national and anti people forces and leaders all over the world. Harold Pinter has always been a left wing writer and dramatist. Pinter had always criticized American policies in Asian, African and Latin American countries. Iraq was invaded by the USA under the pretext that it possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction. More than one lakh Iraqis, many of them innocent civilians were killed in the invasion. Later it was proved that the American President had lied publicly. The allegation was not true.
- Similarly the Americans had helped the Contras in overthrowing the Sandinistas, who were actually helping the poor people of Nicaragua, by bringing in several reforms. The Americans actually helped the Contras in killing 30,000 poor Nicaraguans. When the Contras came to power poverty came back to Nicaragua. It was the continuation of American policy of helping the rich against the poor. USA interferes everywhere in the affairs of the world, on the pretext of helping people, protecting freedom, human rights and democracy, but the final result will be that the people of that country will always lose their freedom, individual rights and the country will be subjected to internal strife, riots and poverty. This is what forces Pinter to be a critic of USA.
- Pinter thus reveals the actual anti democracy mind set of the American government. Wherever America had intervened anywhere in the world, it



had always caused destruction, war and loss of people's rights. Pinter in his speech is highly critical of the government of England for becoming the junior partner of America. He even calls George Bush (the American President) and Mr. Tony Blair (The English Prime Minister) as war criminals. Pinter's speech is a call for political resistance to militarism and war.

LESSON 6: FINAL SPEECH IN THE MOVIE "THE GREAT DICTATOR" BY CHARLIE CHAPLIN

- Dictatorship is the rule of one man over many where as democracy is the rule of the people, for the people, by the people. In dictatorship, only one man's voice is heard and all other voices are suppressed. All people want is to have a chance to work and lead peaceful lives. Young people may want to have a bright future and older people may want social security and peace of mind. By promising these things, greedy and cruel people come to power. But these people, once they come to power, forget their promises and enslave the people. Dictators are greedy and cruel people who are never happy or satisfied with their wealth and power. They go on killing people without any kind of feeling of guilt. We have so many examples in history such as Hitler, Mussolini, Mao and Stalin.
- Dictatorships produce a nation of unhappy suffering people. Whereas, democracy has the power to create happiness and wealth for the people. Democracy creates an atmosphere where people have the freedom to choose the life they want; they have the opportunity to work for it. Democracy gives the chance for the people to dream about a better future. In fact, democracy is capable of building a world that is better with less greed, less jealousy and equal opportunities for everyone including the less privileged and the downtrodden.
- Charlie Chaplin has a very positive and optimistic view of the new world order. He presents the new world order by quoting from the Bible. In the 17th Chapter of St. Luke it is written that, "The Kingdom of heaven is within man", which means that men definitely have the power to change the world to a better living place. Men have the power to create happiness. Men have the power to make this life free and beautiful. Democracy has great power. It has the power to change. It is the power of the people. Chaplin in his speech says that men should use the power of democracy to change the world, where all men will have equal rights and chance to work for a better life and the chance to create a better world. A world, where people will have everything they want. A world, where everyone will be free and happy. That is Chaplin's vision of a new brave world order, where democracy shall reign supreme.



LESSON 7: A SOLITARY HUMAN VOICE FROM VOICES FROM CHERNOBYL: THE ORAL HISTORY OF CHERNOBYL BY SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH

- Lyudmilla Ignatenko is a young 23 year old girl who was married to Vasily Ignatenko. Vasily was a fire fighter in Chernobyl Nuclear Reactor Plant. They lived in a dormitory near the Reactor. They were a lovely couple, who loved each other. Lyudmilla was 6 months pregnant when the explosion shook the Chernobyl Nuclear Reactor on 26 April 1986. Not knowing the seriousness of the explosion and the radio activity that will follow, Vasily rushed to the spot, thinking that it was a normal fire. Due to the dangerous radioactive emissions, Vasily was seriously affected. Vasily was all puffed up after the explosion. You could hardly see his eyes because of the puffed up face. The patient's from Chernobyl after the explosion had turned radioactive. So Lyudmilla was not allowed to go near her husband.
- Later, the patients were airlifted to Moscow, the state capital for better treatment. Vasily's condition was really bad. His skin was peeling off. He was passing stool filled with mucous and blood 25 to 30 times every day. His body became covered with boils. When he turned his head, the hair started falling in clumps on the pillow. During the last few days, pieces of his lung and his liver were coming out of his mouth. Lyudmila nursed him in the best possible manner. Before his death Vasily asks Lyudmilla to name their child Natashenka if the baby was a girl child. Vasily dies a horrible death and is buried at Moscow. Even his body is not given to the family because of the radioactive threat. Two weeks before she is due, Lyudmilla gives birth to a baby girl. Lyudmilla named her baby Natashenka. The baby died after 4 hours. The baby died because the child was born with cirrhosis of the liver. She also had congenital heart disease. Lyudmilla doesn't get custody of the body because even the child's body was radioactive. The story is a reflection of the stark reality of the nuclear disaster victims, most of whom died a horrible death. At the same time, the victims and survivors of the disaster faced a fate more horrible than death.

LESSON 8: BREAKING SILENCE BY JANICE MIRI KITANI

- The mother of the poet Janice Miri Kitani is giving testimony against the war crime injustices to the Commissioner of War Crimes in the poem. The poet Janice Miri Kitani and her family had come to America from Japan before the II World War to have a comfortable life. Thus they became Japanese Americans. They cultivated land and worked hard to make the land fertile. Slowly because of their hard work they were making their life comfortable. Suddenly, the II World War broke out and America was at war with the Japanese. The Japanese were considered as enemies of the state by the American government and they were



rounded up and taken to an American military camp. The military people who came to take them to the camp strictly told that they can take only what they can carry. Their neighbours who were Germans and Italians were not taken to the camp because they had white faces. The Japanese Americans were taken just because of their skin colour and oriental faces.

- The government confiscated their property and they lost everything for which they had worked hard. They were forced to sign documents and were forced to live in silence, suffering untold miseries in the camp. They had to keep their mouth shut for fear that the American military and authorities will torture them or even kill them. Rohwer is the internment camp to which the poet's mother and her family members were taken. The mother was young and she spent her youth in the camp. So she feels her youth was buried in the camp. Miri Kitani describes in the poem, how the Japanese Americans suffered pain, misery and brutality in concentration camps and how their life changed due to the II World War.

LESSON 9 : EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL BY ANNE FRANK

Anne Frank was a Jew. Written in the background of II World War, "Diary of Anne Frank", describes the atmosphere of fear and hatred in which people lived under the cruel dictator Hitler. The diary was originally written in Dutch. Her diary is a testimony of the cruelties inflicted by Hitler and the Nazi Germany Secret Police, the Gestapo. Anne Frank's family was hiding in a hide out when the diary was written.

In the diary, Anne Frank tells us how Jews were treated badly under Hitler's rule. In Nazi Germany, there were many laws against the Jews. They were forced to wear a yellow star to identify them as Jews in the public. They were banned from public transport and were forbidden to drive. They had to be inside their homes by 8.00 PM at night. They were banned from entering drama clubs/theatres, cinemas and other public places. They could shop only in Jewish shops. And could study only in Jewish schools. Since the anti Jew feeling or hatred was growing in Holland, Anne felt that sooner or later they may have to move out of Holland.

Anne Franks' only hope is that the anti Jew feeling among the Dutch people where she lives is a passing thing and that everything will be all right soon. In the diary, Anne Frank narrates about how fearful they became when their vegetable man was arrested. The vegetable man was picked up for sheltering two Jews. The vegetable man was their source of vegetables and food. As the family was hiding from the authorities, once the vegetable man was arrested, the family had to think about cutting down on food. The whole family was going to be hungry. They also felt bad, because they knew that the arrested vegetable man was going to be tortured badly.

There are good and bad people in each and every community. However, when the



majority wants to blacken the minority, the bad deeds done by a small section of the minority community is turned against the whole community and in this way the seeds of hatred are sown against the minority community. This had happened to the Jews in Germany and Holland. If a Christian did a mistake, he alone was to blame, but if a Jew did a mistake, the whole Jewish community was blamed. In such an atmosphere, life becomes a horrible reality. That was the horrible reality of Nazi Germany under the cruel inhumane dictator Hitler, who was responsible for the death of millions of innocent people.

LESSON 10: EXCERPTS FROM THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE AGED 13 ¾ BY SUE TOWNSEND

- Mrs. Thatcher, the British Prime Minister doesn't want a strong and healthy generation who will grow up to protest against her in future. So youngsters are given unwholesome food in schools. The remark is meant as a joke.
- President Reagan is 70 years old. He is the American President. He has many duties and responsibilities. Yet he is always smiling and looking cheerful. Mole's father is only 41. However, he looks old and tired.
- Adrian Mole is anxious because if his mother is employed, there will be no one to look after him. He will be forced to do the cooking, cleaning and washing himself.
- Adrian Mole's mother thinks that marriage is like being in some kind of prison.
 - Latchkey kid is a kid who is at home without adult supervision, especially after school until a parent returns home.
- Mole suggested to his girlfriend that she could have a small job in a cake shop. However, she told him that she had no plans for marriage and she was actually planning to go to a university after school.
- Adrian Mole is unhappy with his teachers because no one recognized him as an intellectual.
- When Adrian asked his father about "Assertive Training", he told Adrian that God alone knows what was assertive training. Whatever it was, according to him, it was bad news for him.



LESSON 11: LETTERS FROM THE MOTHERS OF NENJAMPARAMBU TO THE SUPREME COURT BY M.A. RAHMAN

- Many years ago, streams of the hillside were diverted to the village singlehandedly by Mammadcha, a villager. Armed with only a spade, he diverted the stream to the village below and thus the village got the name Kaithode.
- The Kaithode or the stream dug by Mammadcha was a blessing for the villagers, since it supplied pure water. However, after the endosulfan from the hills above started getting mixed up in the water and flowed down stream, it poisoned everything and everyone and the stream became a curse.
- How did the Endosulfan pollute the water bodies or How did endosulfan affect the food chain? Answer: Endosulfan sprayed over the hills and plantations used to get washed into the streams during the rains. Endosulfan was banned in 2000. At that time there was a large stock of endosulfan that was remaining unused. This large stock was buried underground without any safety precautions. However, after the endosulfan from the hills above started getting mixed up in the water and flowed down stream, it poisoned everything and everyone and the stream became a curse. There is every possibility that endosulfan had contaminated the entire food chain of the place. From plants it must have entered the vegetables and fruits, then animals and finally the human body in large quantities. The countless number of disfigured and deformed children born with severe medical problems is a result of the endosulfan contamination in large quantities.

LESSON 12: LETTER TO ADOLF HITLER BY M. K. GANDHI

- Gandhi was not a friend of the dictator Hitler. However, he addressed Hitler as a friend to avoid addressing him by formal means.
- “We seek to convert them, not defeat them on the battle field”. What does Gandhi mean? Gandhi means that his fight with the British is not a violent one. He wishes to convert the British by peaceful non violent methods.
- Gandhi warns Hitler by saying that Hitler may have some temporary victories through his violent methods, but there is always the risk of a greater destructive power coming and defeating Hitler in his own violent games.
- Gandhi’s letter to Hitler shows his great faith in his non violent struggle



against the British. Gandhi had already won his struggle against the white man's rule in South Africa. The struggle was won by non violent means of non cooperation. In non violent struggle, there is nothing called defeat. The question of victory and defeat comes only when there is a fight between two parties. But in a non violent struggle, there is no such fight. The strategy is to win over the minds of people who oppose you. According to Gandhi, properly organized non violent struggle is more powerful than any violent battle in the world. It was with his non violent methods that Gandhi defeated the British Empire.

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