**Honors Tier 1 Experience Seminar**

**Scholarly Personal Narrative**

**Spring 2013**

**Tuesday, 2:00-3:45pm, McGuffey Hall 120**

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*“We do not write about things as they are or were or will be. We write about these things as* we *are.” – Peter Ives*

**Office Hours**

Monday 1:00pm-2:00pm and Thursday 11:00am-12:00pm at Stoddard Hall 117. If possible, please let us know ahead of time that you will be coming in for office hours.

**Course Description**

Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) is a developing field of inquiry and expression that believes “your own life tells a story (or a series of stories) that, when narrated well, can deliver to your readers those delicious aha! moments of self and social insight that are all too rare in more conventional forms of research” (Nash, 2004, p.24). Throughout this course, students will explore the discipline of SPN in a collaborative learning environment that requires them to find and use their own unique voice and experiences to illustrate larger meaning for the world they live in. Each week will be guided by a central theme that highlights a different facet of the students’ lives, such as academic discipline or relationships with loved ones, in order to focus conversation and encourage students to think about aspects of their lives that may impact the direction of their life after graduation.

Students will participate in weekly reflective writing assignments as well as workshop critiques of each other’s writing in order to gain constructive feedback and learn to communicate suggestions to peers. Selected readings will guide critical discussions each week on the tenets and ethics of writing about one’s own life. All this writing and discussion will culminate in the final product of a scholarly personal narrative on a topic of the students’ choosing that considers the themes of the course and presents a personal statement of their values and learning.

In order to succeed in this course, students will need to *reflect* on their sense of self and their current position in the university setting and the larger world. After identifying a position, each student will *communicate* these ideas through narrative writing that incorporates outside academic perspectives. Each student will submit their work to a *collaborative* critique by peers and instructors and also provide *critical* feedback and an outside perspective to their peers. The insights gained throughout the semester will culminate in a final piece of writing that displays the result of their personal and critical *inquiry* and helps the student to contemplate their future after their time at Miami University.

**Course Objective and Learning Outcomes**

The primary objective of this course is to employ Scholarly Personal Narrative as a means of personal reflection that encourages informed and meaningful future direction and decision-making. Specific outcomes include:

* To use personal writing as a conduit for self-exploration and meaning making.
* To explore how students’ past experiences inform and influence their goals and future direction in and beyond college.
* To understand the defining features of the Scholarly Personal Narrative genre.
* To craft a Scholarly Personal Narrative that integrates personal experience and academic texts to convey both personal and universal points of significance.
* To participate in a collaborative learning environment that encourages peer feedback and constant revision and rearticulation of personal perspectives.

These outcomes relate to each of the Honors competencies in the following ways:

* *Communication* – Students will tell their personal stories through a written medium in order to communicate their sense of self and understanding of their life experiences.
* *Inquiry* – Students will be asked to integrate outside sources from their relevant disciplines in order to connect their writing to a larger context beyond their own lives.
* *Critical & Integrative Thinking* – Students will analyze the subjectivity of their own experiences and consider how this subjectivity impacts the nature and validity of knowledge.
* *Collaboration* – Students and instructors will provide feedback to peers in the workshop sessions in order to collaboratively improve one another’s writing and integration of course themes.
* *Self-Reflection* – Students will base all writings in their own experiences and use these experiences to determine their personal beliefs and values and the implication of these beliefs on their futures.

**Assigned Readings**

All assigned readings are available through the course Niihka site.

**Course Expectations**

Academic Integrity

Miami University places great value on academic integrity and you will be held to these high standards in this course. While it is always a matter of extreme importance to submit original work that gives credit to others as needed, it is essential in a course based around personal reflection and writing about your own experiences that you rely solely on your own work and writing. Throughout the course we will focus on developing your own unique voice and style and this is impossible to do if you are improperly using the work of others.

Collaboration and feedback from peers are important components of this course, but all assignments should be completed individually. If you have any questions about how to properly use the citation formats required for the assignments, please do not hesitate to ask.

For more general information about academic integrity at Miami, please consult: http://www.miami.muohio.edu/integrity/

Miami’s full academic integrity policy can be found in chapter 5 of the Student Handbook: http://miamioh.edu/documents/secretary/Student\_Handbook.pdf

Respect for Diversity

Miami University and the instructors of this course value an inclusive learning environment that respects and celebrates the experiences of all people, regardless of their race, color, religion, pregnancy, sex, national origin, age, (dis)ability, military status, veteran status, sexual orientation, and gender expression. We all bring a plethora of unique experiences and identities to our shared time in the classroom; these experiences will challenge each one of us, but with challenge comes growth. While there will inevitably be differences of opinion and belief, this classroom is an inclusive space that welcomes constructive dialogue and respectful behavior.

Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

In compliance with, and in the spirit of, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we will work with any student who has a documented disability that will impact his/her work in the classroom. In order for us to make effective accommodations, please contact us as soon as possible. For more information, visit the Office of Disability Resources: http://www.units.muohio.edu/oeeo/odr

Religious Observances

In accordance with Miami University’s official policy on religious observances, you must give written notification within the first two notifications of class if you will be unable to attend class or submit an assignment. So long as you provide this advance warning, we will work with you to figure out an acceptable accommodation to work around your religious practices. Regardless of the reason for an absence, though, students are responsible for the material covered during every class period.

Attendance

Due to the interactive nature of this course, you should attend all class sessions. If you must miss a class for a legitimate reason (e.g., illness or family emergency) please contact us as soon a possible prior to class. Absences not approved will be considered unexcused. Your grade will be dropped a full letter if you have three unexcused absences. Your grade will be dropped an additional half letter for each additional unexcused absence.

Late Work

Although we know that writing can be a messy, unpredictable process, a course of this nature ultimately relies on completing assignments in a timely manner. When we fail to meet deadlines, we impact not only ourselves but also our peers who are providing us feedback. As such, the following assignments must be submitted on the listed due date unless you are granted an extension due to a legitimate emergency: Where I Am From Essay, Work Draft, Peer Notes, and Final Scholarly Personal Narrative. We will accept weekly journals up to one week after their assigned due date with a small point reduction. Please notify us if you will be submitting a journal late.

**Course Assignments**

Below are the assignments for this course. All citations of scholarly work should adhere to American Psychological Association (APA) Sixth Edition or Modern Language Association (MLA) Seventh Edition formatting. Although we want you to follow conventional guidelines in regards to referencing other works, Scholarly Personal Narrative can often be a much more fluid form of writing. As such, take risks with your writing and explore new ways to express your thoughts! Please bring a hard copy of your assignment or notes on a peer’s work to all necessary class sessions.

**Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date.**

Assignment 1: Where I Am From Essay

Using selections from the book *Where I Am From* as guides, write your own “Where I Am From” essay. You may write this in any style you would like (e.g., poem, prose, narrative essay), but what you write should focus on your own experience, as your experience serves as the foundation for Scholarly Personal Narrative. Do not worry about including other scholarly texts or existing research. Simply write about *where you are from...*

We hope you will share these essays with others in the class on February 4th. We will also share our own essays.

**Length: Student’s Discretion**

**Due: February 4th**

Assignment 2: Weekly Journals

For the majority of our class sessions, you will prepare a short journal entry about a particular topic. *These topics are often broad questions, but you should always ground your writings in specific experiences from your own life.* These short pieces will aid you in 1) collecting your thoughts in preparation for class discussion and 2) identifying key experiences and themes that could be developed into a full Scholarly Personal Narrative. While these entries do not need to be heavily edited, they should demonstrate effort and thoughtfulness on your part. Journal entries should be no shorter than 1 full page (double spaced) without headings, but you are always welcome to write more.

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| **Journal** | **Due Date** | **Topic** |
| **1** | February 11th  | Define, in your own words, “truth” and “reality.” How did you arrive at those definitions? Try to elaborate as much as possible and provide examples. |
| **2** | February 18th  | Write about your current academic discipline and how you came to this course of study. What role do writing and personal reflection play in your discipline? |
| **3** | February 25th  | Write about a passion that you hold near and dear to your heart. How does this passion manifest itself in your daily life? What about this passion intrigues you? |
| **4** | March 4th  | What is the purpose of college? Why are you pursuing a college degree? Why didn’t you choose an alternate option? |
| **5** | March 11th  | Write about your experience at Miami University. How do you feel about your college career thus far? What moments or experiences stick out to you the most? |
| **6** | March 18th  | What are your thoughts on nature versus nurture? To what extent do we control our identities and the direction of our lives? What do we owe to those who have influenced our lives? |
| **7** | April 1st  | Write about an ethical dilemma you’ve faced during your life. What features of the situation made it a dilemma for you? How did you decide on a course of action? |
| **8** | April 8th  | What are the essential requirements for your career after Miami? How do your personal values, traits, and the opinions of outside sources impact these requirements? |
| **9** | April 15th  | Write about an identity you possess (race, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, etc.) and think about frequently and one you think about rarely. |
| **10** | April 22nd  | How much control do you have over your identity, how you live out your life, and how people perceive you? How does who you are influence where you are going? |
| **11** | April 29th  | Write about what you have learned from this course. What have you agreed and disagreed with? Where will you go from here? |

**Length: At least 1 page**

**Due: Ongoing, see chart**

Assignment 3: Workshop Draft and Peer Notes

Later in the semester, after you have had the chance to explore Scholarly Personal Narrative and produce some writing, we will participate in workshops to discuss and critique each other’s work. The writing you submit to the workshop should be a draft or portion of a draft of your Scholarly Personal Narrative in progress. As such, it should meet the tenets for Scholarly Personal Narrative discussed at the beginning of the semester. These workshops will enable you to gain feedback on your current work and learn how your peers are approaching their own work. In these sessions you will take on the role of writer or peer.

For one workshop, you will serve as the writer. Your responsibilities are as follows:

* Determine 5-7 pages of Scholarly Personal Narrative writing you wish to have reviewed by your peers.
* Email a copy of your workshop draft to the class no later than 5:00pm on the Friday before your assigned workshop.

For all other workshops, you will serve as a peer. Your responsibilities are as follows:

* Review the drafts of all writers prior to the assigned workshop.
* Submit a hard copy of each draft marked with your notes and copy edits to the writer on the day of his or her workshop.

If we also review another peer’s writing on the day of your workshop, you are still expected to provide notes for that person.

**Length: 5-7 pages**

**Due: Ongoing**

Assignment 4: Final Scholarly Personal Narrative

Your final assignment is to write a Scholarly Personal Narrative that synthesizes and builds upon the work you have done throughout the semester. While we want to put as few restrictions upon this piece as possible, it should minimally:

* Articulate your personal perspective and explain how this perspective developed and where it will lead you in the future
* Describe the experiences that have contributed to the formation of your perspective
* Include at least 3 relevant scholarly texts that speak to your perspective and knowledge

**Length: 10-15 pages**

**Due: May 4th**

**Evaluation and Grading**

Below are general guidelines we will use when assigning grades. As the course progresses, we will provide more specific criteria for individual assignments.

A = Work of superior quality that demonstrates thoughtful and meaningful reflection and engagement in course material; excellent writing style.

B = Work of good quality that demonstrates a fair amount of reflection and engagement in course material; writing that is generally strong but may include some errors and weak spots.

C = Work that minimally addresses the assignment and demonstrates basic reflection and engagement; minimally adequate writing.

D = Work that falls short of addressing the assignment and demonstrates little reflection and engagement; writing contains numerous errors and does not meet style expectations.

F = Failure to complete an assignment or work that in no way meets the expectations of the assignment.

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| A = 3.85 – 4.0 | C = 1.85 – 2.14 |
| A- = 3.5 – 3.84  | C- = 1.5-1.84 |
| B+ = 3.15 – 3.49 | D+ = 1.15 – 1.49 |
| B = 2.85 – 3.14  | D = 1.00 – 1.14 |
| B- = 2.5 – 2.84  | D- = 0.85 – 0.99 |
| C+ = 2.15 – 2.49  | F = 0.00 – 0.84 |

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| **Assignment** | **Due Date** | **Contribution to Grade** |
| Where I Am From Essay | February 4th  | 15% |
| Journals | Ongoing | 25% |
| Workshop Draft | See assigned date | 10% |
| Peer Notes | Ongoing | 15% |
| Final Scholarly Personal Narrative | May 6th  | 35% |

**Course Outline**

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| **Week 1 Introductions, Syllabus, and the Role of Vulnerability****January 28th**  |
| *Learning Goals*In our first session we will review the basic outline and outcomes of the course. We will also begin to construct a safe, supportive learning environment that is necessary to engage in the process of writing and sharing our own stories.*Assignments*None*Required Readings*None |
| **Week 2 Where I Am From****February 4th**  |
| *Learning Goals*Today’s session is designed to move the class beyond surface level introductions. You will share key elements of your past in order to give your peers a better understanding of who you are in the present. *Assignments*Where I Am From Essay*Required Readings*Selections from Borrego, S. E., & Manning, K. (2007). *Where I am from: Student affairs practice*  *from the whole of students’ lives*. Washington, DC: NASPA. |
| **Week 3 Truth, Reality, and Writing****February 11th**  |
| *Learning Goals*In today’s session, we explore definitions of knowledge and truth and how we come to understand those concepts. We then explore the basics of postmodernism, which views knowledge and truth as subjective ideas influenced by our individual experiences and place in society. We turn to writing as a means of recording and expressing our personal truths in a way that makes sense to others.*Assignments*Journal 1 (Define, in your own words, “truth” and “reality.” How did you arrive at those definitions? Try to elaborate as much as possible and provide examples.)*Required Readings*Grenz, S. J. (1996). *Star Trek* and the postmodern generation. In *A primer on postmodernism*  (pp. 1-10). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.Lamott, A. (1994). Getting started. In *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life* (pp. 3- 15). New York, NY: Anchor Books. |
| **Week 4 Introduction to the Tenets of Scholarly Personal Narrative****February 18th**  |
| *Learning Goals*In our last session we explored writing as a way of expressing our personal truths. Today we move into a very particular form of writing, Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN), that combines personal stories and outside scholarly sources in order to achieve new levels of meaning and understanding. The purpose of today’s session is to understand the basic underpinnings of SPN and to discuss the extent to which you have engaged in this type of reflection in other academic spaces. *Assignments*Journal 2 (Write about your current academic discipline and how you came to this course of study. What role do writing and personal reflection play in your discipline?)*Required Readings*Nash, R.J. (2004). Chapter 2: What is Scholarly Personal Narrative writing?. In *Liberating*  *scholarly writing: The power of personal narrative* (pp. 23-51). New York, NY: Teachers  College Press. |
| **Week 5 SPN Techniques and Tips****February 25th**  |
| *Learning Goals*Now that we’ve established the basic components of SPN, this session will focus on techniques and practical guidelines for constructing an SPN. Any good piece of writing is more than neatly organized words, however. We begin to challenge you to think of topics and ideas that are particularly noteworthy and meaningful to your own lived experience.*Assignments*Journal 3 (Write about a passion that you hold near and dear to your heart. How does this passion manifest itself in your daily life? What about this passion intrigues you?)*Required Readings*Nash, R.J. (2004). Chapter 3: Tentative guidelines for writing Scholarly Personal Narratives. In *Liberating scholarly writing: The power of personal narrative* (pp. 52-74). New York, NY:  Teachers College Press. |
| **Week 6 Giving and Receiving Constructive Feedback****March 4th**  |
| *Learning Goals*Through this and previous weeks’ journal entries, we invite you to continue unearthing meaningful stories. Writing, however, should never be done in a vacuum. This week we explore ways of sharing our work with others, providing constructive feedback, and continually refining how we articulate our ideas through prose. *Assignments*Journal 4 (What is the purpose of college? Why are you pursuing a college degree? Why didn’t you choose an alternate option?)Bring a printed copy of your Journal 1-4 entries to class*Required Readings*Lamott, A. (1994). Someone to read your drafts. In *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing*  *and life* (pp. 162-171). New York, NY: Anchor Books.Lickerman, A. (2010). *How to give and receive feedback*. Retrieved August 1, 2013, from  http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/happiness-in-world/201002/how-give-and-  receive-feedback. |
| **Week 7 Peer Journal Critiques and Midterm Check-In****March 11th**  |
| *Learning Goals*In today’s hands-on session we have the chance to practice critiquing and receiving feedback on writing. We will also recap what has been covered in the course and clarify any unclear concepts before moving into the larger ethical implications behind the logistics of writing. This week will allow us to broadly think about where we have been and where we are going.*Assignments*Journal 5 (Write about your experience at Miami University. How do you feel about your college career thus far? What moments or experiences stick out to you the most?)*Required Readings*Read, mark-up, and critique the Journal 1-4 entries for your peer critique partner |
| **Week 8 Ethics: Do we own our lives?****March 18th**  |
| *Learning Goals*Writing about our own experiences inevitably involves talking about our relationships with and experiences that include other people. In our first session about the ethical implications of telling our own stories, we consider whether or not we can write about other people, especially if that writing is unflattering. Can writing be harmful? How do we be truthful in telling our stories without causing harm?*Assignments*Journal 6 (What are your thoughts on nature versus nurture? To what extent do we control our identities and the direction of our lives? What do we owe to those who have influenced our lives?)*Required Readings*hooks, b. (1999). Writing autobiography. In *Remembered rapture: The writer at work*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.Nash, R.J. (2004). Chapter 6: Writing ourselves as educators and scholars. In *Liberating scholarly* *writing: The power of personal narrative* (pp. 130-136). New York, NY: Teachers College  Press.**Workshop:****Workshop:** |
| **Week 9 Ethics: Why do certain discourses get privileged in the academy?****April 1st**  |
| *Learning Goals*Academia has traditionally valued an objective, detached point of view when writing. In today’s session we will consider why this may be and how personal narratives can enrich our understanding of the world in which we live. Recognizing that most people in this course will not be career writers, we begin to consider how this course can be integrated into future work in other disciplines.*Assignments*Journal 8 (What are the essential requirements for your career after Miami? How do your personal values, traits, and the opinions of outside sources impact these requirements?)*Required Readings*Nash, R.J. (2004). Chapter 6: Writing ourselves as educators and scholars. In *Liberating scholarly*  *writing: The power of personal narrative* (pp. 141-156). New York, NY: Teachers College  Press.**Workshop:****Workshop:** |
| **Week 10 Ethics: Are facts the same as truth?****April 8th** |
| *Learning Goals*In writing autobiographically we rely on our own memories and interpretations of how events occurred. It is impossible, therefore, to construct a completely objective representation of the event. How do we balance the need for truth and authenticity with the subjectivity of reflective writing? Can we tell the truth even if we don’t have all the facts?*Assignments*Journal 7 (Write about an ethical dilemma you’ve faced during your life. What features of the situation made it a dilemma for you? How did you decide on a course of action?)*Required Readings*Ives, P. M. (2002). The whole truth. In R. L. Root & M. Steinberg (Eds.), *The fourth genre:*  *Contemporary writers of/on nonfiction* (pp. 147-156). New York, NY: Longman.Nash, R.J. (2004). Chapter 6: Writing ourselves as educators and scholars. In *Liberating scholarly* *writing: The power of personal narrative* (pp. 136-141). New York, NY: Teachers College  Press.**Workshop:****Workshop:** |
| **Week 11 Critical Narratives: The danger of a single story****April 15th**  |
| *Learning Goals*Reading the stories of others can alert us to the ways in which our lives and personal understandings of the world are fundamentally different from and similar to those around us. This week we challenge ourselves to see the ways in which people are unique and multi-faceted. We also seek to explore how our multiple identities inform our stories in visible and invisible ways.*Assignments*Journal 9 (Write about an identity you possess - race, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, etc. - and think about frequently and one you think about rarely.)*Required Readings*Adichie, C. (2009). *The danger of a single story*. TED: Ideas worth spreading. Retrieved July 22,  2013, from http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\_adichie\_the\_danger\_of\_a\_  single\_story.html.McIntosh, P. (1990). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Independent School, 49*,  31–36.**Workshop:****Workshop:** |
| **Week 12 Critical Narratives: Privileged and oppressed voices****April 22nd**  |
| *Learning Goals*Although everyone has a voice, we recognize that not all voices are heard equally. We explore some of the reasons for this disproportionate representation and problematize the exclusion of marginalized voices. We search for ways to be more open minded and critical consumers of narratives.*Assignments*Journal 10 (How much control do you have over your identity, how you live out your life, and how people perceive you? How does who you are influence where you are going?) *Required Readings*Alvarez, J. (2003). On finding a Latino voice. In *The writing life: Writers on how they think and*  *work* (pp. 126-133). New York, NY: PublicAffairs.Desai, A. (2003). Bicultural, adrift, and wandering. In *The writing life: Writers on how they think*  *and work* (pp. 118-125). New York, NY: PublicAffairs.**Workshop:****Workshop:** |
| **Week 13 Moving Forward: Implications for our work and lives****April 29th**  |
| *Learning Goals*As we near the end of the course, we begin to consider how the skills developed in writing our SPN’s will continue to inform the ways in which we process our lives and interact with others. How can we continue to be reflective and intentional in how we perceive and interpret the world even when not writing about a situation? How can embracing subjectivity and vulnerability lead us to more authentic lives? *Assignments*Journal 11 (Write about what you have learned from this course. What have you agreed and disagreed with? Where will you go from here?)*Required Readings*Brown, B. (2010). Cultivating creativity: Letting go of comparison. In *The gifts of imperfection:*  *Let go of who you think you’re supposed to* *be and embrace who you are* (pp. 93-97).  Center City, MN: Hazelden.Brown, B. (2010). Cultivating calm and stillness: Letting go of anxiety as a lifestyle. In *The gifts of*  *imperfection: Let go of who you think you’re supposed to be* *and embrace who you are* (pp. 111-116). Center City, MN: Hazelden.Lamott, A. (1994). The last class. In *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life* (pp. 225- 237). New York, NY: Anchor Books.**Workshop:****Workshop:** |
| **Week 14 Final SPN Presentations****May 6th**  |
| *Learning Goals*In our final session we will each read portions of our final SPN’s in order to appreciate each other’s hard work and insights.  *Assignments*Final Scholarly Personal Narrative*Required Readings*None |

Our thanks to Dr. Stephen Quaye at Miami University for allowing us to use portions of his Student Development Theory I syllabus and providing his expert guidance and support in constructing this course.

**Assigned Readings**

Adichie, C. (2009). *The danger of a single story*. TED: Ideas worth spreading. Retrieved July 22, 2013, from http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\_adichie\_the\_danger\_of\_a\_

single\_story.html.

Alvarez, J. (2003). On finding a Latino voice. In *The writing life: Writers on how they think and work* (pp. 126-133). New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

Borrego, S. E., & Manning, K. (2007). *Where I am from: Student affairs practice from the whole*

*of students’ lives*. Washington, DC: NASPA.

Brown, B. (2010). *The gifts of imperfection: Let go of who you think you’re supposed to be and*

 *embrace who you are*. Center City, MN: Hazelden.

Desai, A. (2003). Bicultural, adrift, and wandering. In *The writing life: Writers on how they think and work* (pp. 118-125). New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

Grenz, S. J. (1996). *Star Trek* and the postmodern generation. In *A primer on postmodernism* (pp.1-10). Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.

hooks, b. (1999). Writing autobiography. *Remembered Rapture*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.

Ives, P. M. (2002). The whole truth. In R. L. Root & M. Steinberg (Eds.), *The fourth genre: Contemporary writers of/on nonfiction* (pp. 147-156). New York, NY: Longman.

Lamott, A. (1994). *Bird by bird: Some instructions on writing and life*. New York, NY: Anchor Books.

Lickerman, A. (2010). *How to give and receive feedback*. Retrieved August 1, 2013, from http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/happiness-in-world/201002/how-give-and-receive-feedback.

McIntosh, P. (1990). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Independent School, 49*, 31–36.

Nash, R.J. (2004). *Liberating scholarly writing: The power of personal narrative*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.