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# Improving Writing Skills Through Writing Family Histories

## Syllabus



**Dr. Anne F. Goiran-Bevelhimer**

## IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS THROUGH WRITING FAMILY HISTORIES

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<b>Graduate Credit:</b>	3.0 sem. hrs. graduate credits/ 4.5 CEU
<b>Graduate Prefix:</b>	See accrediting university for prefix and number
<b>Course Schedule:</b>	Asynchronous.

6-week minimum enrollment to one year maximum, from your date of registration.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Write your family stories in a “slice-of-life” vignette format. Use photographs, interviews and / or anecdotal records. Apply a variety of research strategies to gather relevant information from multiple print and digital resources. Explore a variety of writing strategies and genres to exercise effective writing techniques. Make a collection of family stories to share with others and to use as mentor texts in your classroom. Take these strategies to the classroom and get students hooked on writing using personal and family narratives.

*This course meets **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** for K-12 Anchor Standards for Writing 3,4,5,6,7,8,9, and 10.*

*Teachers taking this course will focus on their grade level or content area expectations of the CCSS and their State Standards.*

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify and collect primary and secondary sources, written and oral histories, photographs, documents and records from print and digital resources to write family stories.
2. Construct a plan for writing family histories.
3. Choose writing strategies to “produce clear and coherent writing in the development, organization, and style...appropriate to task, purpose and audience.” (CCSS Anchor Standards for Writing W4)

4. Demonstrate the process of improving writing skills through brainstorming, planning drafting, revising and editing.
5. Produce a collection of family stories to share with others and use as mentor texts in the classroom to teach writing.
6. Prepare a curriculum application for the classroom focusing on writing family histories and specific writing strategies.
7. Analyze the value of reading family histories for content and mining writing crafts.
8. Describe and use writing strategies gleaned from outside reading about writing family histories.
9. Synthesis the value of taking a course on writing family histories (researching, reading and writing) as a model to help students find authenticity and meaning in their writing to meet the rigor of the CCSS for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening.

### **TEXTS, READINGS, INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:**

*Improving Writing Skills through Writing Family Histories* by Anne Goiran-Bevelhimer, Ed.D.  
The text will be sent upon registration.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

This course is delivered asynchronously; you may start anytime and will work one-on-one with the instructor. You are expected to invest 90 hours of independent study to this course. You can submit all work and complete the course anytime between 6 weeks to one year from date of registration.

Use the text, outside readings, activities and writing assignments to complete the following course requirements:

#### **I. WRITING FAMILY HISTORIES 150-280 pts.**

Use the text to help you produce a collection of family stories to share with others:

- Identify and collect primary and secondary sources, written and oral histories, photographs, documents and records from print, and digital resources to write family stories.
- Construct a plan for writing family histories. Write a minimum of 15 stories from the 28 suggestions in the text.
- Choose writing strategies from the Writer’s Strategy Toolbox in the text and from Outside Reading to “produce clear and coherent writing in the development, organization, and style...appropriate to task, purpose and audience.” (CCSS Anchor Standards for Writing W4)
- Demonstrate the process of improving writing skills through brainstorming, planning drafting, revising and editing.
- Culminate the exercises in the text in a formal presentation, either print or digital, showing a minimum of 15 family stories, 1-2 pages each, using effective writing crafts, with appropriate details and sequence of events, prepared for a variety of audiences. Choose one story to polish and publish.

**A minimum of 15 stories valued at 10 points each is required to earn a grade for this course.**

## **II. OUTSIDE READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

### **a. Classroom Application. Create a lesson plan or unit plan (1-2 pages) that includes the following activities. 20 pts.**

- “Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism” (CCSS Anchor Standards for Writing W8) to write family histories.
- Reference to mentor texts of published family histories, including your own, for demonstrating and teaching writing skills.
- Highlight specific writing structure and crafts.
- Use technology and print sources to produce and publish family histories to share with others.

### **b. Read a published family history, biography or autobiography. 2-4 pages. 15 pts.**

- Write a summary. Please cite your source. What is important? What’s interesting? How does reading about someone else’s family history give insight to your own history? What did you learn from your outside reading that was valuable to writing your family histories?
- Analyze writing crafts, structure, organization in your outside reading. What skills, crafts and structures did you learn that you could use in your writing or teaching of writing? How can you use this reading as a mentor text? Give examples.

### **c. Read a How-to Book or Article on Writing Family Histories. 2-4 pages. 15 pts.**

- Investigate outside sources on writing strategies specific to the genre of writing family histories or biographical writing. Choose a minimum of 1 book or 1 journal articles to read.
- Summarize your reading.
- Focus the majority of your summary on writing craft, strategy, organization, and ideas.
- What did you learned about writing family histories that you could use in your own writing and teaching of writing?

## **III. Reflective Essay. 3-5 pages. 50 pts.**

Write a personal and professional reflection on the value of writing autobiographical stories. Write a 3-5-page paper, commenting on the following topics. Focus on writing family histories as an authentic and practical form of writing that connects with other writing genres.

- Teacher as Writer: Appraise the value of writing family histories and improving your writing skills through writing family histories.

- Teacher of Writing: Reflect how writing family stories engages students in authentic writing and helps them improve their writing skills to meet grade level state or Common Core Standards.
- Writing family stories leads to integrating other people’s life histories with our own. Writing family stories helps us to recognize how we fit within the connections of our ancestry. This type of writing is often referred to as “legacy” writing. What is your legacy?
- Summarize the value of writing family stories in the scope of all genres of writing: narrative, informational writing and the genre of creative nonfiction.
- What did you learn as a result of taking this class?

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND SCALE:**

Grade Distribution:

<b>I. WRITING FAMILY HISTORIES</b>	<b>150-280 pts.</b>
<b>II. OUTSIDE READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS</b>	
a. Classroom Application. Create a lesson plan or unit plan.	<b>20 pts.</b>
b. Read a published family history, biography or autobiography.	<b>15 pts.</b>
c. Read a How-to Book or Article on Writing Family Histories.	<b>15 pts.</b>
<b>III. REFLECTIVE ESSAY</b>	<b>50 pts.</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>150 pts. + 100 pts.</b>

Grade Scale:

150 points must be represented the “Writing Family Histories” for any grade to be assigned. The balance of the grade is represented by a percentage of the completion of the classroom application, written reviews of outside reading and reflection essay.

A	91-100%	150 pts. min. required +100 pts. for balance of assignments.
B	81-90%	150 pts. min. required + 81-90 pts. for balance of assignments.
C	71-80%	150 pts. min. required + 71-80 pts. for balance of assignments.
D	61-70%	150 pts. min. required + 61-70 pts. for balance of assignments.
F	Less than 60 %	150 pts. min. required + less than 60 pts. for balance of assignments.
Incomplete		Less than 150 pts. min. for ‘Writing Project.