es·say
noun
/ˈesə/

1. a short piece of writing on a particular subject.
2. an attempt or effort.

Description
In this class, we will study the beginnings, growth, and current manifestation of a form that resists laziness, worships question, and incites argument: the essay. Although as a form the essay is constantly evolving, at its core lives an obsession with meaning, opposition, and ultimately, risk. Every essay attempts the impossible—truth—and in its finest failings, embodies a writer’s struggle to understand. The aim of this class is to help you become a better writer and reader by writing and reading a lot of good work. Because each essay is a story that has been handled (edited, sliced, contained, chosen, shifted, distilled) by an adoring author, we will consider them as rigorous experiments and then attempt to do the same.

The good essay is simultaneously self-contained and uncontainable—by zooming in on a finite subject, these little obsessions end up illuminating the world at large. We will read about culture wars, jump shots, race, love, vegetation, loss, plastic hot dogs—you name it. You will research and write about things that matter to you and to your community.

We intend to have a very good time.

Required Items
The Best AMERICAN ESSAYS 2016, Edited by Jonathan Franzen.

All other readings will be available on the class website.

A bound notebook that will house your critical journal and in-class entries.

A folder for your working portfolio.

Working Portfolio
This folder should contain every writing assignment that you complete, including in-class writing and hard copies of your own work with my written comments. Your final grade will be based on a curated version of this bulk: the final portfolio.
The Writing Proficiency Requirement

WRIT 201 is an approved course in partial satisfaction of the Writing Proficiency Requirement. This class is designed to give students the opportunity to develop the ability to write with clarity of thought and precision of language. The faculty of the University of Montana requires that all graduates demonstrate the following competencies in their writing:

* communicate a unified message supported by evidence, examples, or arguments;
* develop ideas thoroughly and logically with clear connections among them;
* develop a purposeful organizational plan that befits the message;
* respond appropriately and effectively to new or given information;
* use language that is clear and precise;
* employ a voice that is consistent and appropriate to the audience and purpose;
* use correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Students in WRIT 201 will be given ample opportunity to develop and demonstrate these qualities and skills as they respond to the range of texts required for this course.

Course Requirements

The writing that you turn in must be printed in legible font and stapled. The three major essays must be in MLA format.

Bring any assigned reading, a pen and your notebook to every single class.

Homework assignments must be completed before class begins.

Informed engagement in class discussions, projects, and peer review workshops.

Typed (500-750 word) reading responses.

Three revised (1500-2000 word) essays.

A final portfolio including your revised essays, selected class projects and written responses.

Etiquette

Show up, be kind, do good work.

Attendance

Come to class.

If you miss class, it is up to you to get caught up. If you know ahead of time that you will be absent, let me know and plan on completing the assignment for the day it is due. You are allowed three unexcused absences--any additional absences will negatively impact your grade.

Grading

Your final grade in this class will be based on the quality of your participation in class discussion, your reading responses, and your revised essays as presented in your final portfolio.
Final grading will be weighted as follows:
   Participation, attendance, projects, and written responses: 40%
   Final portfolio: 60%

**Plagiarism**
You know it when you smell it. Questions? See the UM Student Conduct Code and come talk to me. Repercussions for plagiarism include failing an assignment, failing a course, and even expulsion.

**Disabilities**
Come talk to me during office hours if you will be needing accommodations. If you have a letter from your DSS coordinator, please bring it to this meeting.

**University Writing Assessment**
This course requires an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the university’s writing program. This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the following University’s Writing Learning Outcomes.

*This syllabus is subject to change*