

# **Personal Essay: Finding Transcendence in the Ordinary**

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Every single day there are moments that could inspire a personal essay: the kindness you see shown by a store clerk to a senior, the anger you feel at someone tailgating you on the road, the moment when your curious grandchild asks when you're going to die. The common denominator is YOU: what you think and feel. In this class you'll learn how to identify these pivotal moments, find the epiphanies therein, and write about them in a way that resonates with readers. Because the best personal essays don't just relate something that happened to you — they engage the reader with vivid details, and deep sharing, and can have a lasting impact.

In this class, which is suitable for beginners, you will learn how to mine your memories and experiences to find the stories most worth sharing, and write an essay that resonates with readers. Class structure will be equal parts lecture, brainstorming and sharing, and writing.

## **Class One: Introduction and Getting Started**

- What is personal essay and how is it different than memoir or regular essay
- Why write personal essay
- What makes a good topic
- Five things essays need to succeed
- Writing exercise: what happened to you today?

## **Class Two: Structure, and Outlining Your Essay**

- The hook - getting your reader's attention and orienting them to your essay's purpose.
- The thesis: Laying out what your essay is about. Can be done with facts or opinion.
- The telling of the personal tale: This is why I care about this subject, and why you should, too.
- The epiphany: This is what I learned, this is my new thought.
- The denouement or conclusion.
- Outlining - why it's important

## **Class Three: Deepening and Refining Your Approach**

- The importance of perspective
- Who are you writing for?
- What, if anything, is off-limits to write about?
- Sharing outlines

## **Class Four: Making Revisions**

- Sharing first drafts
- Questions to ask yourself

**Class Five: Developing Your Voice and Style**

- The role of humor
- The goal of authenticity
- Sharing revised essays

**Class Six: A Completed Essay!**

- Sharing in class
- What now?
- Submitting your work
- When should an essay become a book?