OLLI Class, Winter 2018
Life/Story, a Memoir Workshop

Overview

This workshop is about writing your own real-life stories. Each session begins with a brief lecture on craft and writing process--what makes a piece of writing good, but also, what process do you go through to write well? In each session, there will be some in-class writing based on prompts, followed by a discussion of what we've just written. In the course of the six weeks, we'll deal with how to remember the forgotten, how to find the heart of a story, how to dig up crucial details, and how to fine-tune one's language. Given the size of the class, three to four writers will have an opportunity to be "workshopped" at each session. Every student can expect to take at least one turn at bat. Students who already have a memoir in progress may workshop an excerpt from it. At the end of the workshop, with students' permission and agreement, I may edit and post selected works on a blog I run, which focuses on memoir as a literary art. Students scheduled to read at each next session will need to share their work with the group beforehand by email. Please note that students will not receive "assignments." The emphasis will be on students finding and writing stories of their own choosing, not on fulfilling projects prescribed by the instructor.

Week One Lecture:
> *What is a memoir?*
> *Writing process: an overview*
> *Writing from prompts*
> *Freewriting*

Week Two Lecture:
The essence of story
Recognizing the story in the facts
Freewriting--with a compass
Rough draft

Week Three Lecture:
Writing process: remembering the forgotten
Using "source materials"—diaries, letters, journals
The parallel timelines trick
Finished first draft

Week Four Lecture:
Writing process: revision
Separating the editor from the writer
Story structure
Theme
Second draft

Week Five Lecture:
Writing process: line and content editing
Drama, description, and action
What is good dialog?
How to kill your babies

Week Six Lecture:
Language editing
Syntax, word choice, errors
Privacy issues
Submissions