Excavating the Family Tree: Family Titles and Cultural Representations

Monday/Wednesday—3:25 to 4:40 Rush Rhees G-108

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Office: Rush Rhees 327

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 6pm-8pm in Robbins Library. Individual appointments

available on request, in person and on Skype (ProfONeil)

Course Description:

In one of the most iconic moments of American cinema, Darth Vader changes the relationship between himself and Luke Skywalker with four simple words—"I am your father." With one line, Vader is transformed from a villain into a figure capable of redemption based on a revelation not of a shared history, but of a title. In this class, we will explore the power held by such family titles. We will analyze the nature of these titles as they appear in a wide variety of literary, visual, and pop cultural categories and texts such as Superman, *Fullmetal Alchemist, Modern Family*, among many other texts ranging from Renaissance poetry to contemporary music. How do these texts present familial titles? How have such titles been portrayed historically and across cultures? We will explore these questions in all aspects of our writing, including class discussion, pre-writing, peer review, self-assessment and the revision process in order to create well-organized essays, culminating with an 8-10 page research paper.

Objectives:

Regardless of your chosen major or profession, writing will be an important part of your academic and professional life. Becoming a *good* writer is not about mastering a particular pattern or technique. It isn't about five-paragraph structures or the dutiful avoidance of the first person pronoun. Becoming a *good* writer is about understanding that your approach to writing must perpetually change depending on topic, audience and the ultimate impact that you want your writing to have. This notion of writing as a skill in constant flux is at the heart of our study of performance, as we will discuss and practice ways in which argumentative writing can be viewed as a performative process.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Read deeply—It is impossible to create good writing without starting with good reading.
- Ask engaging questions about the texts that you read.
- Locate and synthesize professional discourse on a given topic, and find openings for you to participate in those conversations.

- Develop a debatable thesis about a text or issue that grows out of your questions and participates in the academic discourse.
- Support your ideas with multiple and various kinds of evidence.
- Identify different audiences for your thesis, and adapt your writing in order to more effectively convey your thoughts to those different audiences.

Primary Writing Requirement:

This course fulfills the University of Rochester's primary writing requirement. Please be aware that you must earn a grade of "C" or better in this course to successfully fulfill that requirement.

Grading:

Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

- **10%** Participation (including Peer Review and Self-Assessment)
- **15** % Homework (Regular reading and short writing assignments)
- **10** % Essay #1 (2-3 pages)
- **15** % Essay #2 (2-3 pages)
- **15** % Essay #3 (Abstract and Annotated Bibliography)
- **35** % Essay #4 (8-10 page research paper)

Final drafts of formal essays will be assigned a letter grade (A, A-, B+, B, etc). Informal assignments will be graded with a check, check minus, or incomplete.

Required Reading/Viewing:

Required readings and film viewings may be listed in the course schedule below. I reserve the right to alter this schedule as the course progresses, but I will only do so if absolutely necessary for our work. The majority of course readings will be available in digital format on Blackboard. Whether you print these readings or have an e-reader, I will expect everyone to have access to the readings during class meetings. If you bring a digital device (e-reader, laptop, etc), the **only** appropriate use for that device in class is accessing our readings. Surfing the web is not something that needs to be done during our class meetings.

Attendance and Class Participation:

Please be in class, on time, with your homework (readings and writings) completed. Attendance is crucial for success in this course. We need you here to offer your own unique observations and feedback. Further, we will be engaging in

an approach to writing, editing and revision that you have likely never encountered before. If you accrue too many absences, it will be very difficult for you to catch up with the rest of the class. **If you need to miss class for any reason, please talk to me beforehand**. Being in class is only half of the battle—please come prepared to work collaboratively. We're here to learn from each other and (ideally) have some fun.

Late or Missed Homework/Classwork:

I do not accept late homework for any reason. Stick to the course calendar. If you need to miss class for any reason, consult the course calendar and continue on with the reading. Missing the previous class meeting is not a valid reason for being unprepared for the next course meeting. Take advantage of my office hours if you need help getting caught up.

Short Written Work:

There will be regular writing assignments in this class including short prompts in class (such as journals and self-evaluative writing) as well as writing to be completed for homework (such as short research-related assignments and Blackboard discussion prompts). These assignments will be assessed in a variety of ways, and they should ultimately help you in both constructing and revising your larger, more formal written work.

Essays:

Final drafts of all essays should be submitted via e-mail. These final drafts should follow standard MLA formatting requirements (1 inch margins, double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, etc). Late papers will lose one third of a letter grade for every day that they are late—(this policy refers to calendar days, including weekends and holidays); if you are having trouble completing your paper before deadline, please speak to me **before** the paper is due.

Peer Review, Self-Assessment, and Revision:

Peer Review, Self-Assessment and Revision will be built into the structure of the course. All of our work should be done in the spirit of constant revision—You should always be thinking about how new information, opinions and audiences will influence your overall argument.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center (located on the ground floor of Rush Rhees Library, near Connections) is an invaluable resource available to you. I encourage you to visit the writing center at least once for this course to get support at any stage of your writing process—from choosing a topic to revising your final draft. Nobody writes in a vacuum. My colleagues and I frequently get together to offer feedback on each other's writing and professional writers have been doing the same thing for hundreds of years. The Writing Center provides you with just such an outlet. Use it.

From the Writing Center's website: "At the University of Rochester, we are all writers, and every writer needs a reader. The College Writing Center is a place where you can find readers who can provide critical feedback at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming for a topic to polishing a final draft. To learn more about the College Writing Center services and/or to find a tutor, please visit http://writina.rochester.edu

Academic Honesty:

Academic honesty should never be an issue in this course. Early in the semester, we will discuss the reasons and methods for avoiding plagiarism. After that point, this course will have a zero-tolerance policy regarding plagiarism, up to and including receiving a zero for the assignment and a referral to the Academic Honesty Board. Please read, internalize and be aware of the following statement (this statement is official university policy, and can be found in your student handbook):

"As members of an academic community, students and faculty assume certain responsibilities, one of which is to engage in honest communication. Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of the trust upon which an academic community depends. A common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism: the representation of another person's work as one's own, or the attempt "to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source" (Council of Writing Program Administrators, January 2003, http://wpacouncil.org/node/9). More specifically, plagiarism is the use of an idea, phrase, or other materials from a written or spoken source without acknowledgment in a work for which the student claims authorship. Examples include: the misrepresentation of sources used in a work for which the student claims authorship; the improper use of course materials in a work for which the student claims authorship; the use of papers purchased online and turned in as one's own work; submission of written work such as laboratory reports, computer programs, or papers, which have been copied from the work of other students, with or without their knowledge and consent.

A student can avoid the risk of plagiarism in written work or oral presentations by clearly indicating, either in footnotes or in the paper or presentation itself, the source of any idea or wording that he or she did not produce. Sources must be given

regardless of whether the idea, phrase or other material is quoted directly, paraphrased or summarized in the student-writer's own words.

In all cases of suspected plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, the College's procedures and policies governing academic honesty will be followed. This pertains to all work in writing courses, including (but not limited to) rough drafts, final drafts, presentations, and informal writing assignments. As required by College policy, all instances of academic dishonesty are reported to the College Board of Academic Honesty. For the complete College honesty policy, see: http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/index.

In cases where academic dishonesty has been established, the typical penalties for a first event in a WSAP course are as follows. In cases of particularly egregious dishonest behavior, the penalty may be more severe.

Support Services (CETL)

Please know that this classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and that I invite you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. Further, I encourage you to make use of the resources available to you on campus, particularly the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The following information is from CETL's website: "CETL is a resource available to all students in the College. All kinds of students with all kinds of GPAs and academic records make use of our programs. We work with strong students who wish to become even better, as well as with students who have not yet tapped into the strategies needed to succeed in college, and everyone in between. We offer an extensive study group and Workshop program, individual study skills counseling, study skills workshops and a study skills course, and disability support. We are located in 107 Lattimore Hall on the River Campus. To make an appointment or to learn more, stop by our offices, call us at (585) 275-9049, or send an email: cetl@rochester.edu"

Alternatives for Battered Women Crisis Line	232-7353
Deaf Hotline TTY	232-2854
Family Court Domestic Violence Hotline	428-5787
Gay Alliance Victim Resource	244-8640
Lifeline	275-5151 or 211
Monroe County	
Domestic Violence Consortium	428-2215
Health Dept. STD/HIV Clinic	753-5375
Sheriff's Victim Assistance Office	753-4389
Rape Crisis Service	546-2777
Rochester Police Department	
Emergency	911
Victim Assistance	428-6630
SAATHI	234-1050
All phone numbers Area Code 585	

University Counseling Center (UCC)	275-3113
University Health Service (UHS)	
Eastman School	274-1230
Health Promotion Office	273-577
Medical Center	275-2662
River Campus	275-2662
www.rochester.edu/uhs	
Center for Student Conflict Management	275-4085
Title IX Coordinator	275-7814
University Director of Spiritual Life	275-8422
University Intercessor	275-9125
University Security	275-3333
www.rochester.edu/CARE	
All phone numbers Area Code 585	
We care. Call us. UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER OFFICE OF THE INTERCESSOR	

Course Calendar:

1/14 (Wednesday)

WRITE: Diagnostic—Define a specific family title.

DO: Introductions (who taught you how to write? How is writing done? What is adaptation?). Syllabus. Break class into three regular groups (The Mommas, the Poppas and the Kids Are Alright). Peer review/importance thereof (Mali's "The the impotence of proofreading"). Importance of attendance (Cost of UR), Plagiarism Story, discussion about "first drafts." Discussion about the way I provide feedback (evaluative vs. summative). Other notices—no books, Museum of Play, grading philosophy, etc.

THINK: We all know these titles. What are our initial ideas on what those titles mean? Where do those assumptions come from? How much is based on our own families? How much on our popular culture?

HW (Due next class): Read Judith Butler's "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" (On Blackboard). No Class on Monday (MLK Jr. Day).

I NOTICED:

1/21

WRITE: Journal—What is a thesis statement? What have you been taught about them so far?

DO: Introduce Paper one and do a 5-5-5 (5 minutes for questions, 5 brainstorming minutes in group and 5 brainstorming minutes as a whole class). Discussion of Butler, performing gender, and the binary nature of family titles. Triangle, close reading. What is a thesis? "A Birthday Party."

THINK: What is the connection between family titles and gender? How do we define gender? How does the gender of the definer impact the definition/conceptualization of the defined?

HW (Due next class): Look through your iTunes (or other music device), and make a list of the songs you currently own that contain any of the following terms (or synonyms for these terms): Mother, Father, Husband, Wife. Jot down any trends that you notice.

I NOTICED:

1/26	WRITE: Journal—Based on your trip through your own music collection, what did you notice? Did anything surprise you about what you found? What kinds of things DID you find? DO: Thesis—Letter Jacket Diagnostic. Family titles in music: Murdock/Womack, The Decemberists/Merchant, Everclear/Madonna, and Danzig/The Pretenders. (Lyric sheet for all of these songs on Blackboard—please either print this out before class, or access it on a digital device as soon as you get to class). THINK: Besides gender, what other things impact the definitions of these titles? Do you think there IS one, primary definition of these titles that transcends these variations? If so, why? HW: Read Theodore Roethke's poem, "My Papa's Waltz" and Mary E. Wilkins' short story, "The Revolt of 'Mother'" (both on Blackboard). Also—Blackboard post—In the discussion forum on Blackboard, add a short post where you state the two things you are comparing/contrasting and write out the formal thesis statement that you developed as a result of that comparison/contrast.
1/28	 WRITE: Journal—First thoughts—how are the portrayals of these titles different in literary texts compared to the musical texts that we discussed last time? Explain. DO: Movie preview introductions (workshop and thesis activity). Discussion—Wilkins, Roethke, and clips from Shakespeare's Merry Wives of Windsor and Wilde's An Ideal Husband. THINK: With each text/representation that we encounter, we should be adjusting our definitions for these family titles. How have these literary texts influenced your definition? HW: Watch the pilot episode of "How I Met Your Mother" and the pilot episode of the show "Dinosaurs" (I'll see if I can find a link for you). Also, read the article about "Video game mothers" (on Blackboard). I NOTICED:
2/2 Paper 1	WRITE: Journal—Choose one of the four titles we've been discussing so far (mother/father/husband/wife). How was that title handled in each of the two shows you watched for

first draft due	homework? In what ways did the two shows similarly represent the title? In what ways were they different?
	DO: Discussion—Dinosaurs, HIMYM, clips from Real Housewives of Orange County, Clip from M*A*S*H, gaming mother article. Pre-Peer-Review-Workshop.
	THINK: How does genre impact the portrayal of these titles? Does pop culture reflect reality? Does reality reflect pop culture?
	HW: First draft of paper one due. First drafts have a rolling deadline—you may email them at any point between this date and by midnight (at the latest) on Friday the 19 th . We have peer review on Monday. For Wednesday, read the issue of Superman (on Blackboard) and the two articles from tytropes.org (links on Blackboard).
2/4	Peer Workshop Day: Movie Previews and introductory paragraphs; Cutting a Scene
	HW: Make sure you finish the readings assigned last week.
	I NOTICED:
2/9	WRITE: Journal—How important is the biological connection between people and their titles? Beyond the readings, how many examples of step/adopted titles can you think of? Were those representations generally positive or negative?
	DO: Logical fallacies/Monty Python. Step/adoptive titles—unique perspective for younger generation. Back to <i>Star Wars</i> , Superman, archetypes (wicked stepmother, not my real dad), Brady Bunch vs. Modern Family, Brad Paisley, Spider Man, Fresh Prince of Bel Air. Intro to Library Day One.
	THINK: Are family titles based more on biology or on social construction? Is it one OR the other? If not, how much influence does each have?
	HW: Work on your papers. At some point before our 2/16 class, you need to visit the Strong Museum of Play (there is a handout with information on the museum and what you should do there on Blackboard). Also, please read the Berenstain Bears story (on Blackboard) by the 2/16 class.

2/11	Library Day One (introduction to using the U of R library resources).
	We will meet in the entry hall of Rush Rhees Library.
	I NOTICED:
2/16 Paper 1 final draft due	WRITE: Journal—What was the most interesting thing you noticed at the Strong Museum of Play? What was the strangest thing? Which exhibit seemed most aimed at boys? Which one seemed most targeted for girls?
uue	DO: Introduce unit two (Sons/Daughters/Brothers/Sisters/Boyfriends/Girlfriends) and Paper two and do a 5-5-5. Youth titles—Strong Museum discussion, Berenstain Bears, Ben Jonson, "boy" books vs. "girl" books, religious orders/titles. Writing—Magic triangle, identifying audience.
	THINK: How are the youth titles different from their adult counterparts?
	HW: Read the article by Rawlins on audience (on Blackboard)
2/18	WRITE: What, if anything has been your experience with writing to an audience? Have you ever been asked to do that before? How did it go? What does it mean to you to "write to an audience"? Think back to the last paper you wrote in high school—what was it about? Who was your audience for it?
	DO: Gender break—Sons/Brothers/Boyfriends. Titus Andronicus, Harry Potter, Fullmetal Alchemist, Iconographic representations. Discussion of Rawlins/audience. Seth Letter
	THINK: How do your pre-existing associations with these titles differ from the ones in our texts this week? Are they the same? Different?
	HW: Read the articles by Collins (on subtext) and Morley (on performing writing)—both on Blackboard. Read the issue of Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane (on Blackboard)
	I NOTICED:
2/23	WRITE: Journal—What was your reaction to the Superman/Lois

	Lane comic? What details surprised you the most? How do you think this issue was received when it was first published? DO: Gender break—Daughters/Sisters/Girlfriends. Frozen, King Lear, Superman's Girlfriend Lois Lane, My Sister's Keeper. Iconography. Subtext lecture/carding esteem. THINK: Subtext and history can impact our ideas of these titles. What other things might similarly impact how we think of sisters, daughters and girlfriends?
	HW: Bring in four quotations from your sources that you are considering using for paper two.
2/25 Paper 2 first draft due	WRITE: At what point did you start to feel like a real adult? Has it happened yet? If not, what does that moment look like in your mind? If so, what was that moment?
inst utut uuc	DO: Coming of age narratives—fictional and sociological. Sentence structure, topic sentences and transitions. Pre-Peer-Review Workshop.
	THINK: How does culture play a role in how we think of the differences between youth titles and adult titles? How is the transition different based on gender?
	HW: Prepare for Peer Review
	I NOTICED:
3/2	Peer Workshop Day: Two-Line Scene quotation workshop, Blocking for Subtext (Folger and Miazga), and (time permitting) Cutting a Scene and Soliloquy conclusions.
3/4	WRITE: Journal—In what ways has school changed since the 1400s? Were there subjects/clubs/etc at your school that seemed to be gendered one way or the other?
	DO: Notions of education (Vives, Erasmus, On Manners, etc). Targeting audience writing workshop.
	THINK: What are the connections between titles and power? Are all titles empowering, or do some of them limit personal agency?

	HW: TBD
	I NOTICED:
SPRING BREAK	3/7 through 3/15
3/16	Peer Workshop Day: Two-Line Scene quotation workshop, Blocking for Subtext (Folger and Miazga), and (time permitting) Cutting a Scene and Soliloquy conclusions.
	HW: Work on paper two. Watch the pilot episodes of Duck Tales and Full House.
3/18	WRITE: Journal— Why is research important? Why bother looking through books and articles when we can just do our OWN close readings and explain what we see?
	DO: Introduce unit three (larger family titles) and paper three. Do a 5-5-5. Aunts, Uncles, Nieces and Nephews—Uncle Sam, media representations, Aunt Jemima (titles and race). Witing and research: Kinds of evidence, vague academic tone.
	THINK: What kinds of research am I interested in? Deciding on a major is important, but what will your special interest <i>within</i> that major be?
	HW: Watch <i>12 Angry Men</i> , and complete the note-sheet on your assigned juror.
	I NOTICED:
3/23	WRITE: Do you have relationships with your grandparents/great grandparents? How would you define that relationship? What do you call those grandparents (grandma? Nanna? Something else?). If you do not have a relationship with a grandparent, what have you observed about grandparent-grandchild relationships amongst your friends or on television?
	DO: Titles— Grandmother/Grandfather/Grandson/Granddaughter—Titles in play (Grandma/Nana Gregory, Moms and Pops vs. MaJeanne, etc). Golden Girls, Simpsons, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Article abstract, Kids books, Memes. Writing—Using sources, floating quotations, two line scenes. 12 Angry Men as metaphor for Lit

	review.
	THINK: What does it mean when we make titles our own? How can these titles be in a state of play and what does that do to the nature of the titles?
	HW: None.
3/25	No Class (Conference Travel)
3/30	Library Day Two. We will meet in the lobby of Rush Rhees Library.
Paper 2 final draft due	HW: Implement Library Day Two knowledge into your third paper.
4/1	WRITE: Journal—What is a research question? How is it different from a thesis?
	DO: Title—Godparents/Godchildren. Culture/religion specific? Parallel ideas in other religions/cultures? Fairy Godmother archetype (website, Cinderella, Shrek 2), honorary title, the Godfather films. Writing: Code switching (intro and activity).
	THINK: How important is culture in the construction of these titles? Do certain titles or ideas of titles transcend cultures?
	HW: Starting next class, a portion of each class will be spent in writing workshops. For next class, you will need a written out version of your current thesis statement.
	I NOTICED:
4/6 Paper 3 first	WRITE: 8-10 pages of academic writing. How scared of this are you? Have you written anything of this length before? What are your opinions on longer papers?
draft due	DO: Introduce unit four (the breakdown of the binary) and paper four. Do a 5-5-5. Breakdowns in the binary—cousins, blood brothers, soul sisters, etc. Writing workshop—thesis refinement and audience selection.

	THINK: What does it mean when the binary breaks down? Are these titles less "real" than the others, or was the binary less important than we thought? Or is it something else? Regardless, what does it do to our understanding of family titles? HW: It's go time—if you haven't started turning your abstract into an outline and/or paper, it is time. You have all the tools—now write a slammin' paper. For Wednesday, please bring in some of the book sources that you are thinking of using in your final paper.
4/8	 WRITE: Take a few minutes and search the net, using the terms "Master" and "Mistress." Don't spend any time on the individual sites, just scan the search results and see what they look like. What do you notice? Is there a difference in the search results of these two terms? DO: Masters and Mistresses, cultural appropriation of terms, OED. Writing workshop—Source evaluation/lit review: Books. THINK: Why is it important to find not just ENOUGH sources, but the RIGHT sources? What ARE the "right" sources? HW: Seriously? I just wrote two days ago that it was go time. We are so DONE with homework—your whole focus for this class is now all about your big paper. Your first draft needs to be received by no later than Friday, April 17th (though they should probably be sent sooner). Also, bring in a few of the scholarly articles you are thinking of using for next time. I NOTICED:
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Paper Three	WRITE: Journal—What are your "go-to" curse words? Can you think of any curse words or exclamations that involve family titles? Make a list.
Final Draft Due	DO: Melissa Mohr excerpts, the etymology of title-based curse words. Writing workshop—Source evaluation/lit review: Database/scholarly articles.
	THINK: How do notions of adaptation come into play in this discussion?
	HW: When you come, bring in some of the popular/web sources you are thinking of using for your final paper.

4/15 Paper 4 first draft due (very informal)	No Class: Individual Conferences
4/20	 WRITE: Journal—How far back can you track your family history? Do you have any famous relatives? What, if anything, do these more ancient connections mean to you? DO: Family branding—heraldry, family reunions, family reputations, heritage, etc. Writing workshop—Source evaluation/lit review: Popular/web articles and sources. THINK: Are the "blood" aspects of family relationships distinct from the "narrative" aspects of those same relationships? How might they overlap? HW: Keep working on your research papers.
4/22	Peer Workshop Day: Cutting a scene, blocking for subtext and two-line scene quotation use. I NOTICED:
4/27	Peer Workshop Day: Free for all—use the time in class and your group in whichever form of peer review suits you.
4/29	READ: I'll have something for you to read.
Paper 4 Final Draft Due (sort of)	EAT: I'll have something for you to eat. DO: Respond the reading, taking it forward, the realities and responsibilities of writing and reading in the world in which we live, and course evaluations.
	THINK: At the beginning of the semester, we defined a family title. Would you change any of those definitions after our work this semester? Why/why not? How can these ideas be applied

beyond our specific topic?
HW: Go forth, and be amazing.
FINAL I NOTICED: