RHETORICAL SITUATION: In your life and career beyond RWS 305W, often you will need to communicate the significance of various life experiences through descriptive details and important insights. Whether in a job interview, a profile, a mentorship, a personal statement or networking in the field, your ability to share life lessons in an engaging way is at the heart of the memoir assignment. Your audience is an educated readership interested in who you are.

GENRE: Writing a memoir involves memory work; memoirists draw on their pasts, looking back at events, people, and places that are important to them in order to recreate through written language moments or episodes of lived experience. Your job is to not just recreate experiences, but to imbue them with significance readers will understand.

The memoir writer is both participant and observer; the impulse to remember helps remind us of how we were…Memoir writers take incidents from childhood, focus on moments of revelation, show how crisis and insights have challenged their perspectives, experiences and values. Memoir writers write from a desire to bear witness to things that might otherwise have been overlooked or forgotten. The memoir is an act of self-discovery and also written for the public to read; memoirs impact the audience in an emotional way.

PROMPT: For this assignment you will recall a person, place or event from your past and write a memoir. You will need to use details and sensory impression to re-create the moment for your audience. Your job is to reveal the meaning of the past so that readers understand the significance the memories hold for the present. Through your writing your audience should be able to visualize the moment. You should chose to revisit a memory that you have some distance from (not a recent break-up say, or a current family crisis).

* Consider tensions or conflict from high school or adolescence (Caldwell)
* Focus on a past job, special place you used to live, or beloved item you lost (Bragg)
* Pick a photo that holds emotional associations and explore a detail that recalls a moment
* Select a family ritual or tradition that might be especially important to you
* Consider an aspect of your own cultural ancestry (language, food, heirloom) and explain how it has entered your life and what it reveals about your relationship to your culture.
* Focus on some special aspect of your educational experience, a teacher or event (Landry)
* Focus on a childhood incident or injury (Walls)
* Explain a memorable life lesson or revelation (Yim)
* Look through an old journal to find moments when you had your values challenged, had a difficult decision to make or were disappointed; use the memory as a starting point in which you reflect and put it in a larger context.

Weight: 20% of your grade

Length: 4-5 pages double-spaced MLA format

Timeline: Upload Rough Draft to “Memoir” Turnitin link by 11 a.m. on Wednesday 9/30

PeerMark online workshop Wednesday 9/20 from 11:01 a.m. – Sunday 10/4 at 11:59 pm

Final draft with Analysis due via “Memoir Revision” link Wednesday 10/7 by 11:00 a.m.!

ANALYSIS: Marking a section labeled “Analysis,” include two developed, focused paragraphs at the end of your memoir that analyze the writing choices and craft elements you specifically employed; where did you observe/learn them previously, how and why did you implement them, and what function or effect does it bring to this genre and your reader specifically?