

### Syllabus

Welcome! My name is Sohum Pal and I’m a student at Yale. I’m really excited to get to know each of you and to work with you on your writing! A few procedural notes:

1. We will be dealing with very personal experiences in this class, so please be extremely respectful of your classmates’ opinions, experiences, and beliefs. Please also recognize that this classroom is a safe and confidential space. Nothing regarding another person’s experiences should ever be disclosed to somebody outside of this classroom.
2. At the same time, challenge each other to think critically and to reflect on each other’s experiences, but be respectful about it.
3. If you have questions about something, raise your hand after the activity/discussion/paper has been explained.
4. If something is upsetting to you, you are free to put in headphones and tune out without explanation—but don’t abuse that privilege, please. I will check in on you afterwards.
5. **Heads Up Policy**—I will do my best to give you a heads up if anything potentially triggering is going to come up (please do the same when you write your papers). You are, as I said above, free to tune out, but the experience of this course will be richer if you can work through it in a safe space like this one.
6. **Paper Policy**—By default, we will all be reading each other’s papers. If, however, you are uncomfortable with that, please let me know. Please write each of the papers—you will not have a fulfilling class experience otherwise.
7. Your work in this class will not be graded, of course. I will, however, do my best to offer commentary. If you have specific concerns about your writing, write those on your paper and I will offer feedback with special attention to those concerns.
8. **If you are a high school senior**, you may submit your college application essays to me **in addition to the papers you write for this class**. Please put the prompt at the top and tell me if there are any word limits. You may, if you would like, include the school(s) you are applying to with that essay.

### Schedule

Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup>—Who is Allowed to Write/Who is Allowed to Be Heard/Who is Read?

- Introductions, syllabus.
- How we write when we write for ourselves
- Discussion—who do we read in school? Why do we read them? Who decides? Who do we read for fun? Why?
- Zora Neale Hurston—What It Means to Be Colored Me & James Baldwin “My Dungeon Shook”
  - Who was Zora Neale Hurston?
  - Who was James Baldwin?
  - What do these pieces about the experience of being Black in America? What expectations govern that experience?
- Paper 1: No length guidelines, except make it substantive. *How do I define myself in relation to the world I live in? Why do I think this? What does it mean about the perspectives I offer to those who hear me? Who will not hear me?*
- Read, for next session, Yiyun Li’s essay and Amy Tan’s.

Saturday, October 8<sup>th</sup>—Workshop

- Discuss—what was it like to write this paper?
- Begin workshop. What did this writer do well? What could they improve on?
- Discuss Yiyun Li’s essay. What rhetorical qualities give it strength?
- Paper 2: *Who am I writing for? What am I telling them? What is my role in the written world?*

- Read, for next session, Sandra Cisneros and Richard Rodriguez.

Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>—Workshop

- Begin workshop.
- Discuss Cisneros and Rodriguez.
- Debrief this course, fill out evaluations.

Remarks

You may, if you want, discuss your writing with me at any time. Please select a partner and stay after class. If you have personal concerns, do the same. I look forward to working with each of you during these sessions.