English 10: Nonfiction Writing
Draft Syllabus

Reading List:
J-J Rousseau, Confessions, Books One to Six

Each week, students will be asked to write two short papers. One, due the first class of the week, will be on a topic, more or less personal, that varies from week to week, starting with an autobiographical essay. In some cases, I have made suggestions down below. These can be changed, if desired. The second paper, due the last class of the week, will be about The Confessions.

Students will be responsible for one book a week of The Confessions. I’ll give specific assignments for many of the Confessions papers.

Very approximate syllabus: as the summer progresses, I will introduce some assignments different from these as options.

Week One:
Students will write an autobiographical essay, that may be about themselves. Or, if they prefer, they can write about first impressions of Talloires: of the place, family, or whatever they feel is most important. These, I imagine will prove interesting six weeks later when the students write a more comprehensive paper on their nearly completed experience.

Week Two:
Students will read Book One of the Confessions and write three pages on an especially effective or thought-provoking passage. Or if they prefer, write some other kind of response. For the second class, students should read Book Two. There will be an upcoming assignment for Book Two, a piece with some extended description.

Discussion of that paper, a look at some Rousseau descriptions. Read Book Three of Confessions. One of the problems writers have is that of making a personal experience significant to others. Rousseau is a master at this. For the next paper, students will pick a generalization he makes about life, human nature, etc., and show he supports his observation with anecdotes.

Week Three:
Students will write a first profile, based on an interview, preferably of a member of the host family, and definitely of a French person.

Students will read Book Four and write a paper on Rousseau’s initial description of any significant figure in the Confessions, such as Mme. De Warens. There will be an alternative assignment.
**Week Four:**
Students will write a paper on a topic of their choice - perhaps a piece on their experience in Talloires. During this week, I hope that many students will meet individually with the teacher to discuss the student’s writing.

Students will read Book Five. By now we see major themes in Rousseau’s writing, and the way he uses anecdotes, incidents and descriptions to support his ideas. Sometimes he also uses them subtly to complicate his story, as I shall demonstrate in class. Students will pick two anecdotes that comment on the same general theme as a subject and compare them.

**Week Five:**
Students will write a second profile. Alternately they can write a piece on their experience in France. Students will read Book Six of Confessions and write a summary of this complicated chapter.

Discussion of that writing, and of final papers.

**LAST CLASS:** Slightly longer paper (6-7 pages) probably on some aspect of the Talloires experience, if they have not done so already. Book Six of Confessions: topic to be discussed.

**Grading:** The grades will be based primarily on the writing, and on participation in class.