

There's something tantalizing about the idea of reading another person's diary or personal correspondence. Of course, most of us would be stopped by our ethics. But what if you had permission? It's no wonder books in the form of diaries, journals, and letters are popular. They allow you to snoop into another's private life and still go to sleep at night with a clear conscience." (Ida Fogle, Columbia Public Library, 12/8/13, *Columbia Daily Tribune*)



When's the last time you got a really special letter?

When did you last write one—a meaningful one to someone important?

Who writes letters? Who reads them? And why?

What makes letters different from other forms of communication?

Have texting, tweeting, and Facebook replaced letter writing?

Does it matter?

If you've wondered about any of these questions or are curious about famous letters and letter writers, both contemporary and in the past, you'll want to check out this new course:

## The Letter as *Genre*

**ENGL 4100H *Genres* / Gen Hon 3210H *Honors Humanities Colloquia***  
**TR 12:30-1:45                      116 Strickland**

This discussion-based writing-intensive course is intended for honors students from any discipline who are seeking a humanities credit and who want to help shape their own curriculum while seeking answers to the questions above and more. We'll look at letters by famous literary figures, politicians, historians, civil war soldiers from Boone County, civil rights activists from the 1960's, musicians, and artists. We'll do a bit of archival work and archive our own work on a wiki. We'll read salacious love letters that weren't intended to see the light of day.

Students will select the authors and subject areas they wish to focus on for short, informal papers and one formal research paper, as well as propose alternative assignments within the spirit of the material we discover—and there's plenty out there to find! Some students may wish to interview family members for an ethnographic study on letter writing in their families. Local disciplinary experts will meet with us to explore the famous letter writers in their fields, and we'll examine the materials that early day letter writers needed to even send their missives: ink, quills, hand made paper. There are no quizzes or traditional exams. One student will be selected to present his or her work at a major national conference with the instructor and graduate TA.

Contact Prof. Marty Townsend, Department of English, for more information:  
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