



**The Art of Aging:
Contending with Time in
the Personal Essay**
G221032
Marcia Aldrich

October 8 - 14, 2022

June 23, 2022

Dear Ghost Ranch Writers,

I'm writing to welcome you to the Fall Writing Festival and my class, "The Art of Aging: Contending with Time in the Personal Essay," running from October 8-14. A long time ago I taught more regularly at Ghost Ranch and this fall will be a return for me, a return I'm looking forward to.

In the past there's been an organizational meeting Sunday evening after dinner, and then our classes begin in earnest Monday morning at 9 and run through Friday. Classes will meet from 9:00 to 12:00 each day and you can use your afternoons as work time and/or participating in other arranged activities that will be announced. Evenings are devoted to readings and talks. On Friday night there will be a shared reading of the work participants created during the week. Everyone is invited to participate.

After I designed this course, Sari Botton, a writer and editor, started a new literary magazine called Oldster which has published responses to what she calls the Oldster Magazine Questionnaire. Sari has said she's always been obsessed about "what it means to grow older." She's invited others, of all ages, to take the Questionnaire. I'm attaching it to this letter. I would like each participant to answer the questions in writing before arriving at the Ranch, and to bring their completed questionnaire to our first class. This will introduce us to each other and our topic and constitute your first writing on our subject. Needless to say, you should bring your computer with you to Ghost Ranch so that you can send your writing to the other participants. We will be doing a lot of writing and revision in this intensive week and it will be helpful if we can access the writing on the computer in the form of shared files. In addition it would be helpful to print our your questionnaire with enough copies for all the writers in our class for our first day.

Here is the link to Oldster. Please peruse other responses to the Questionnaire to get your juices going.

It's a great resource for our course.

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In addition, I'd like you to select a photo of yourself of a period in your life you enjoyed. There can be others in the photo—the only requirement is you are in the photo. This is wide open. You can be with someone else or others, you can be in a particular landscape that is meaningful, or doing an activity that again is meaningful. For example, swimming or playing tennis or singing in a choir or weeding. This is about you and what your selection reveals about you. At this time, just select and bring the photo to Ghost Ranch.

At some point when the class list becomes finalized, I'll send links to other writings that will form the basis of our readings and prompts. But for now, this is sufficient. If you have any questions you'd like me to field, please feel free to contact me at aldrich@msu.edu.

Looking forward to our time together,

Marcia Aldrich

Marcia Aldrich: The Art of Aging: Contending with Time in the Personal Essay

Oldster Magazine Questionnaire

Sari Bottom started and curates the Oldster Magazine. She's said she's always been obsessed about what it means to "grow older." And so, she's invited others, of all ages, to take the Oldster Magazine Questionnaire. These can be found online as well as essays about aging. It's a remarkable resource begun in the last year.

I would like you to take the questionnaire in advance of our course, that is to bring your answered questionnaire with you to our first class. I'd like the hard copy and an available online version to share.

1. How old are you?
2. Is there another age you associate with yourself in your mind? If so, what it is? And why, do you think?
3. Do you feel old for your age? Young for your age? Just right? Are you in step with your peers?
4. What do you like about being your age?
5. What is difficult about being your age?
6. What is surprising about being your age, or different from what you expected, based on what you were told?
7. What has aging given to you? Taken away from you?

8. How has getting older affected your sense of yourself, or your identity?

9. What are some age-related milestones you are looking forward to ? Or ones you "missed," and might try to reach later, off-schedule, according to our culture and its expectations?

10. What has been your favorite age so far, and why? Would you go back to this age if you could?

11. Is there someone who is older than you, who makes growing older inspiring to you? Who is your aging idol and why?

12. What aging-related related adjustments have you recently made, style-wise, beauty-wise, health-wise?

13. What an aging-related adjustment you refuse to make, and why?

14. What's your philosophy on celebrating birthdays as an adult? How do you celebrate yours?