

**COURSE TITLE:** OVERCOMING ADVERSITY: Lessons in Life & Teaching

**WA CLOCK HRS:** 60

**NO. OF CREDITS:** 6 QUARTER CREDITS  
[semester equivalent = 4.00 credits]

**OREGON PDUs:** 60

**PENNSYLVANIA ACT 48:** 60

**INSTRUCTOR:** Brenda McKinney  
bbbrain@comcast.net

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The great wisdom traditions of the world as well as our own life stories point to the virtue in adversity. The obstacles and difficulties in our lives can test and bring forth our greatest potential, leading to self-knowledge, courage and great achievement. Educators in this course will view two movies, several TED Talks, and read two books about overcoming adversity from an Amazon and Goodreads list or list selected by your instructor. You'll use the reading/film/Ted Talks list to reflect on the trials and successes of your own life, and will explore how the themes discussed in the course might be brought into your professional situation. You will be inspired, motivated, and find healing in the journey. This course is appropriate for all K-12 educators.

Price for used novel choices on Amazon depends on selections.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Upon completion of this course, participants will have:

1. Understood and explored how your personal experiences have empowered and changed you.
2. Defined and allowed you to take an honest look at the challenges, the vulnerabilities you experienced and the strength you have developed.
3. Read and experienced stories of transformation that allowed you to rethink your own stories or life lessons you might have missed.
4. Discovered rich resources and a plan to draw upon that exemplified for you what is needed for your own personal journey to overcome adversity.
5. Maximized and focused on how to build cognitive capacity and emotional stability in balancing and honoring your own unique experience and journey.
6. Realize that the need to take this journey of discovery is innate in all of us and seeking a collective transformation is a part of change.
7. Explored how to bring very specific everyday positive experiences that allowed your brain to change and create new neural networks.
8. Woven positive brain changes into your own habits and thinking embracing the belief that every minute counts.
9. Discovered ways to assess your own abilities in the areas of coping, finding inner success, and creating a wellness package for yourself.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Completion of all specified assignments is required for issuance of hours or credit. The Heritage Institute does not award partial credit.

The use of artificial intelligence is not permitted. Assignment responses found to be generated by AI will not be accepted.

---

### **HOURS EARNED:**

Completing the basic assignments (Section A. Information Acquisition) for this course automatically earns participants their choice of CEUs (Continuing Education Units), Washington State Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, or Pennsylvania ACT 48 Hours. The Heritage Institute offers CEUs and is an approved provider of Washington State Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, and Pennsylvania ACT 48 Hours.

---

---

---

### **UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT INFORMATION**

## REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

Continuing Education Quarter credits are awarded by Antioch University Seattle (AUS). AUS requires 75% or better for credit at the 400 level and 85% or better to issue credit at the 500 level. These criteria refer both to the amount and quality of work submitted.

1. Completion of Information Acquisition assignments 30%
  2. Completion of Learning Application assignments 40%
  3. Completion of Integration Paper assignment 30%
- 
- 
- 

## CREDIT/NO CREDIT (No Letter Grades or Numeric Equivalents on Transcripts)

Antioch University Seattle (AUS) Continuing Education Quarter credit is offered on a Credit/No Credit basis; neither letter grades nor numeric equivalents are on a transcript. 400 level credit is equal to a "C" or better, 500 level credit is equal to a "B" or better. This information is on the back of the transcript.

AUS Continuing Education quarter credits may or may not be accepted into degree programs. Prior to registering, determine with your district personnel, department head, or state education office the acceptability of these credits for your purpose.

## ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION

### REQUIRED TEXT

Dependent on personal choice.

- Choose two (2) books drawn from books on Brenda's list (see bibliography) OR search online using the phrase "books on overcoming adversity" then review the links from Google, Goodreads and Amazon.
- Choose two (2) movies from movie choices, or search "movies on overcoming adversity." See bibliography. Film viewing can be done via Netflix or Amazon streaming video.
- Review several Ted Talks videos, which can be chosen from Brenda's list found in the bibliography section of this syllabus.
- All search engines are listed in the bibliography. Please carefully note the requirements in your assignments before you make your selections.

None. All reading is online.

### MATERIALS FEE

Dependent on personal choice.

## ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED FOR HOURS OR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

### A. INFORMATION ACQUISITION

Assignments done in a course forum will show responses from all educators who have or are taking the course independently. Feel free to read and respond to others' comments.

Group participants can only view and respond to their group members in the Forum.

### Assignment #1: Introduction

For those participating in Group Collaboration, you must read and follow the instructions outlined in the Group Collaboration Guidelines. Click on the link for Guidelines. <https://www.hol.edu/about/group-collaboration>

- Assignment #1, each participant must complete this assignment independently.
- There should be a minimum of (4) four group meetings during which the course content is discussed.
- Teleconferences or live meetings are acceptable. A good videoconference option is Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>).
- Each participant must attend at least 75% of the group meetings (a minimum of 3 of 4 meetings).

You must complete your introduction before moving on to other assignments.

Introduce yourself by identifying your grade level, background, and professional situation, the challenges you've had that led you to this course.

- What do you hope to gain once you've completed the coursework?
- Describe what is currently most challenging for you and what lesson it is that you are needing to learn in this situation.

### **Assignment #2: Personal Choice Reading**

- Review the descriptions and reader commentaries for at least ten (10) books on Brenda's book list (or others of your own choice from links in the bibliography) and decide on which two books you want to read.
- Read the **first** book and in 500-750 words:
  - a. Provide a brief summary of the narrative.
  - b. Identify any part of the story that personally connects to your own experience discussing any similarities to your own life.
  - c. Explain what inspired or moved you most in the story/novel/memoir.

### **Assignment #3: Personal Challenges**

- Describe your most difficult challenges from the time you were born up to graduation from college. Then discuss:
  - a. What was it that allowed you to meet these challenges?
  - b. In what way are you a better person as a result?
  - c. How do you feel you developed a new self, one that is better able to step outside the old paradigms?

### **Assignment #4: Personal Choice Viewing**

- Preview at least five (5) films on overcoming and choose two (2) to see all the way through. Then:
  - a. Provide a two (2) paragraph summary of the plot line for **each** film.
  - b. Explain how the film(s) detail parts of your story line or the plot line that you have lived or are living?
  - c. What script do you see that you have consciously or unconsciously adopted?
  - d. Explain the parallels in 250-500 word essay.

### **Assignment #5: Living Your Journey**

- Many people feel a sense of incompleteness in their lives and will often imagine a "bucket list" of things they want to do or aspects and talents in themselves they want to grow. Think about the journey that is ahead of you and then respond to the following:
  - a. If you had a chance to set goals and achieve them, if you had the chance to set your own agenda and not someone else's, what dreams would you want to accomplish within one (1) year?
  - b. If you only had a (1) year to live and the freedom to do what you want, explain in 500+ words what you would do, how and why.

Answer also how you imagine you would be different in thought, your personal life, and your decisions.

### **Assignment #6: Personal Choice Reading**

- Read your second book of choice from Brenda's Personal Book List or use the links provided in the bibliography. Then:
  - a. Provide a 250 words summary of the book.
  - b. Discuss any parts of the story that ring true for you and how it helped you see opportunities for building your inner strength.
  - c. Referring back to Assignment #5, describe the steps you might take now to set in motion the change you achieved in your one imaginary year before death and how you can override your brain's default programming.

### Assignment #7: Making It Personal

Preview at least (5 )Ted Talks from Brenda's Personal Ted Talk list and then watch two (2) of them. Then:

- Provide a two paragraph summary of each talk including the following:
  - a. What did you learn that will enhance your own well-being or that will help you interrupt and change those negatives in your own life?
  - b. Knowing that you can change your brain for the better, how will the Ted Talks help you activate those positive mental states?
  - c. How can you incorporate self-compassion, enthusiasm, relaxation, pleasure, feeling like a worthy person, and love to create that foundation for inner strength and everyday struggles?

### Assignment #8: Professional Connections

- Discuss in 250-500 words how you could bring the themes and learning from this course into your professional situation.
  - a. Brain building
  - b. Healing children
  - c. Surviving and thriving
  - d. Jewels of living
  - e. Loving and caring about your own inner self
  - f. Rewiring negative thinking

## ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED FOR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

### B. LEARNING APPLICATION

In this section, you will apply your learning to your professional situation. This course assumes that most participants are classroom teachers who have access to students. If you do not have a classroom available to you, please contact the instructor for course modifications. Assignments done in a course forum will show responses from all educators who have or are taking the course independently. ?Feel free to read and respond to others' comments. Group participants can only view and respond to their group members in the Forum.

### Assignment #9: The Heroes' Journey (Required for 400 & 500 Level)

Read this article to learn more about the [hero's journey](https://blog.reedsy.com/guide/story-structure/heros-journey/).  
<https://blog.reedsy.com/guide/story-structure/heros-journey/>

View: Netflix's Myths & Monsters: Joseph Campbell & The Hero's Journey (Heroes & Villians, S1E1)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwnxYXOTy94>

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/DwnxYXOTy94>

Then:

1. Explore the idea of the hero's journey and mentors.
2. Explore the role of the hero as a mentor. Mentors provide heroes with [motivation](#), inspiration, guidance, training, and gifts for the journey. Their gifts often come in the form of information or gadgets that come in handy later. The gift or help given by the mentor should be earned by learning, sacrifice, or commitment. Example: Yoda was a mentor, as is Glinda, the Good Witch,

and Q in the James Bond Series.

(<https://www.thoughtco.com/motivations-create-the-life-you-want-31721>)(<https://www.thoughtco.com/inspirational-quotations-adult-students-no-1-31723>)

3. Using a mind map or some other artistic creation, detail the role of your journey as a hero and mentor to someone else. Along the way, explain how you have been inspired to share and give of yourself.

#### **Assignment #10: (Required for the 400 & 500 Level)**

Complete **one** of the following:

##### **Option A)**

- Describe in detail a lesson or series of activities you would do with students conveying some aspect of what you gained from this course on overcoming adversity. Identify the main themes and the subjects: reading, writing, arts, history, media studies.
- What would you want students to come away with and how would you evaluate your outcomes?

**OR**

##### **Option B)**

- Find five (5 ) YouTube videos that could be shared with kids in the classroom. Each video must address a story of overcoming adversity. Explain how you will include each of the clips into your curriculum and how the life story will help understand how to overcome and deal with their own adversity.
- For ideas go to: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/25/successful-people-obstacles\\_n\\_3964459.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/25/successful-people-obstacles_n_3964459.html)

#### **Assignment #11: (500 Level ONLY)**

In addition to the 400 level assignments, complete ONE of the following:

##### **Option A)**

- Using [123HelpMe](http://www.123helpme.com) or other online sources, search for and read at least three (3) papers or research on overcoming adversity. Based on this reading, your own life experience and what you learned from viewing and text reading, write a 5-7 minutes speech on the benefits of encountering hardships, obstacles that could be given to staff, administrators or parents.  
<http://www.123helpme.com/search.asp?text=overcoming+adversity>  
Note: 123Helpme has a fee of \$2 for two days use.

**OR**

##### **Option B)**

- Create a PowerPoint presentation for your staff based on this course and focused on of helping your school meet the needs of kids who are experiencing adversity. Save it as a PDF. The presentation MUST include graphics, pictures, color, correct font size, and be presentation ready. Check for errors before you submit. It must be at least 15 slides.  
<http://www.wikihow.com/Overcome-Adversity>

**OR**

##### **Option C)**

- Design your own assignment (action plan) with instructor's prior approval (examples include doing a podcast, keeping a gratitude journal for at least 2 weeks, designing a website or blogging about overcoming adversity). This should involve 2 weeks of detailed work.

#### **C. INTEGRATION PAPER**

Assignment #12: (Required for 400 and 500 Level)

#### **SELF REFLECTION & INTEGRATION PAPER**

**(Please do not write this paper until you've completed all of your other assignments)**

Write a 400-500 word Integration Paper answering these 5 questions:

1. What did you learn vs. what you expected to learn from this course?

2. What aspects of the course were most helpful and why?
  3. What further knowledge and skills in this general area do you feel you need?
  4. How, when and where will you use what you have learned?
  5. How and with what other school or community members might you share what you learned?
- 

#### **INSTRUCTOR COMMENTS ON YOUR WORK:**

Instructors will comment on each assignment. If you do not hear from the instructor within a few days of posting your assignment, please get in touch with them immediately.

#### **QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE:**

Brenda McKinney, CEO of Vancouver, WA based BrainVolution, is a developer and dynamic facilitator of workshops that teach practical thinking and learning tools for raising student achievement with the brain in mind. She has trained educators throughout the Pacific Northwest and is a popular presenter because of her ability to motivate, make things fun, and teach practical techniques for the classroom that can be used immediately. Brenda continues to read hundreds of books and articles on the subject of neuroscience and searches for the answer to success for every student. Her work with at-risk students and those with reading problems have made her a popular speaker at the state, regional and national level.

Brenda is able to synthesize the new research and continues to address the role of how to use the latest findings to create high achievement classroom. She brings 30+ years of experience at the elementary, middle school, high school and university level as a mentor teacher, consultant, motivational speaker, university instructor, and reading specialist. Brenda has her Master's in Education from Washington State University and is nationally certified in Brain Based Learning through the renowned Jensen Corporation, led by Eric Jensen, a noted international spokesperson for neuroscience and education.

Brenda will inspire and motivate you with her energy, enthusiasm and knowledge. Her wisdom, techniques, and brain based approach to education will inspire you and challenge you to meet the demands of this ever changing world.

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

##### **OVERCOMING ADVERSITY: Lessons in Life & Teaching**

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

##### **OVERCOMING ADVERSITY: Lessons in Life & Teaching**

##### **CHOOSE FROM BRENDA'S LIST OR FROM THE LINKS PROVIDED AFTER FICTION BOOKS.**

#### **NON-FICTION LITERARY SOURCES**

Ackerman, Diane. *The Zookeeper's Wife*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2007. Print

Alexie, Sherman. *You Don't Have to Say You Love Me: A Memoir*. New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2017. Print.

Calcaterra, Regina. *Etched in Sand: A True Story of Five Siblings Who Survived an Unspeakable Childhood on Long Island*. New York: William Morrow, 2013. Print.

Coelho, Paul. *The Alchemist*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014. Print.

Frankl, Viktor. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press. 2006. Print.

Freeman, Sally Mott. *The Jersey Brothers: A Missing Naval Officer in the Pacific and His Family's Quest to Bring Him Home*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 2017. Print.

Fuller, Alexandra. *Leaving Before the Rains Come*. New York: Penguin Books. 2015. Print

Gelman, Rita. *Tales of a Female Nomad: Living at Large in the World*. New York: Three Rivers Press. 2001. Print.

Gisleson, Anne. *The Futilitarians: One Year of Thinking, Drinking, Grieving, and Reading*. New York: Little, Brown & Company. 2017. Print.

Hall, Ron, et al. *Same Kind of Different as Me: a Modern-Day Slave, an International Art Dealer, and the Unlikely Woman Who Bound Them Together*. Nashville: W Publishing Group, an Imprint of Thomas Nelson, 2017. Print.

Hamilton, Mary. *Trials of the Earth the True Story of a Pioneer Woman*. New York: Back Bay / Little, Brown, 2017. Print.

Hauser, Brooke. *The New Kids: Big Dreams and Brave Journeys at a High School for Immigrant Teens*. Atria Paperback, 2013. Print.

Kim, Eunsun and Sebastien Falleti. *A Thousand Miles to Freedom: My Escape from North Korea*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 2015. Print

King, Martin Luther Jr. *Why We Can-t Wait*. New American Library, 1964. Print.

Levy, Naomi. *Einstein and the Rabbi: Searching for the Soul*. New York: Flatiron Books, 2017. Print

Lewis, Simon. *Rise and Shine: the Extraordinary Story of One Man's Journey from near Death to Full Recovery*. Santa Monica Press, 2010. Print.

Marais, Bianca. *Hum if You Don't Know the Words*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2017. Print

McDowell, Josh. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Illinois, 2012. Print.

Noah, Trevor. *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*. Spiegel & Grau, 2016. Print.

Norman, Elizabeth M. *We Band of Angels: the Untold Story of the American Women Trapped on Bataan*. Random House, 2013. Print.

Pausch, Randy and Jeffrey Zaslow. *The Last Lecture*. New York: Thorndike Press. 2008. Print.

Riggs, Nina. *Bright Hour: a Memoir of Living and Dying*. Simon & Schuster, 2018. Print.

Sandberg, Sheryl and Adam Grant. *Option B*. New York: Knopf, Borzoi Books, 2017. Print

Sedgwick, Annalisa. *Metamorphosis*. Indiana: Balboa Press, 2017. Print.

Shackleton, Ernest Henry, et al. *South: the Endurance Expedition*. Penguin Books, 2015. Print.

Shetterly, Margot Lee. *Hidden Figures: the American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who... Helped Win the Space Race*. William Morrow, 2017. Print.

Smith, Patti. *Just Kids*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010. Print

Vance, J. D. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. New York: HarperCollins. 2016. Print

Walls, Jeanette, *The Glass Castle*. New York, Scribner, A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc. 2005. Print.

Warner, Ruth. *The Sound of Gravel*. New York: Flatiron Books, 2016. Print.

Wendel, Susan Spencer. *Until I Say Goodbye: A Book About Living*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014. Print

Williams, Patricia and Jeannine Amber. *Rabbit: The Autobiography of Ms. Pat*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2017. Print.

Wurmbrand, Richard. *Tortured for Christ*. Nashville, Magdalene Press, 2015. Print.

Yang, Kao Kalia. *The Song Poet: A Memoir of my Father*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2016. Print.

#### **FICTION LITERARY SOURCES**

Brierley, Saroo. *Lion*. New York: Berkley, 2013. Print.

De Rosnay, Tatiana. *Sarah's Key*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 2007. Print.

Hannah, Kristin. *The Nightingale*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 2017. Print.

Jenoff, Pam. *The Orphan's Tale*. Ontario, Canada. Harlequin MIRA, 2017. Print.

Kelly, Martha Hall. *Lilac Girls*. Large Print Press, A Part of Gale, Cengage Learning, 2017. Print.

Monk Kidd, Sue. *The Secret Life of Bees*. New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2002. Print

Schroff, Laura & Tresniowski, Alex. *An Invisible Thread: The True Story of an 11-Year-Old Panhandler, a Busy Sales Executive, and an Unlikely Meeting with Destiny*. New York: Howard Books, 2011. Print.

Stockett, Kathryn. *The Help*. New York: Berkley Books. 2009. Print.

Whitehead, Colson. *The Underground Railroad*. New York: Doubleday, a division of Penguin Random House LLC., 2016. Print.

#### **CHOOSE YOUR OWN SELECTION:**

Search online using the phrase “books on overcoming adversity”  
USE THE LINKS FROM GOOGLE, GOODREADS, OR AMAZON TO FIND YOUR CHOICE

**TEDxTalks**

ABC News.com. Good Morning America. (2013, February) True Stories of Overcoming Adversity. [Video file]. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=famous+examples+of+overcoming+adversity&&view=detail&mid=A9F78DA7E3CEC966977CA9F78DA7E>

Hanson, Rick. (2013, November) Dr. Rick Hanson: Hardwiring Happiness. [Video File] Retrieved from: <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=rick+hanson+hardwiring+happiness&&view=detail&mid=FDA1B6192CA1E1D2EF37FDA1B6192CA1E1D>

Hanson, Rick (2010, June). Rich Hanson: Buddha Brain. [Video File] Retrieved from:  
<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Brain+Rick+Hanson+buddha+brain&&view=detail&mid=7B7D0EA1E19CC2E0016F7B7D0EA1E19CC2E>

Ingleby, Kim. (2015, December) Embracing Adversity- My Brain and I, Kim Ingleby. [Video file]. Retrieved from: <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=adversity+and+the+brain&&view=detail&mid=17B45B8796D37D6C5D8E17B45B8796D37D6C5D8E&FO>

Kavanagh, Jack. (2014, November) Jack Kavanagh: Fearless like a child – overcoming adversity. [Video File] Retrieved from: <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=overcoming+adversity&&view=detail&mid=E42D075E525AAEA65969E42D075E525AAEA65969&FORM>

Mullins, Aimee. ( 2009, October) Aimee Mullins: The Opportunity of Adversity. [ Video file]. Retrieved from: [https://www.ted.com/talks/aimee\\_mullins\\_the\\_opportunity\\_of\\_adversity#t-376440](https://www.ted.com/talks/aimee_mullins_the_opportunity_of_adversity#t-376440)

Solomon, Andrew. (2014, May) Andrew Solomon: How The Worst Moments In Our Lives Make Us Who We Are. [Video file]. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=adversity+and+the+brain&&view=detail&mid=F4EBA03ECB98789DD86EF4EBA03ECB98789DD86E&&>

Stenberg, Gregg. (2015, August) Dr. Gregg Steinberg: Super – Resilience – How to Fall Up. [Video File] Retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/WKLy71DO6CQ>

Stephenson, Sean. (2014, June) Sean, Stephenson: The prison of your mind. [Video File] Retrieved from: <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=overcoming+adversity&&view=detail&mid=FE928C98778DE6758FC7FE928C98778DE6758FC7&&FORM>

World Science Festival (2014, October) How We Bounce Back. The New Science of Human Resilience. [Video File] Retrieved from: <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=science+of+resilience&&view=detail&mid=F0068D1E5F27409CB6E2F0068D1E5F27409CB6E2&FORM=>

Ziglar, Zig. (2015, April) Zig Ziglar Motivation: "How to Get What You Want". [Video File] Retrieved from: <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Overcoming+Adversity+Zig&view=detail&mid=ED905E1FBC3D30DA0EFAED905E1FBC3D30DA0EFA>

## The Three Secrets of Resilient People.

<https://youtu.be/NWH8N-BvhAw>

15 Inspiring TED Talks on Overcoming Challenges  
<http://www.onlinepsychologydegree.info/15-inspiring-ted-talks-on-overcoming-challenges/>

## MOVIES

The Top 50 Most Inspirational Movies: <http://www.planetofsuccess.com/blog/2016/top-inspirational-movies/>

25 Inspirational Movies: <http://sourcesofinsight.com/25-inspirational-movies/>

14 Movies about Remarkable People Who Defied the Odds: <https://www.moviefone.com/photos/14-amazing-movies-about-remarkable-people-who-defied-the-odds/>

Movies that Lift You Up: <http://www.refinery29.com/2017/01/136295/best-inspirational-movies>

Top 10 Overcoming the Odds Films: <http://www.entertainmentfuse.com/top-10-overcoming-the-odds-films/>