

(WRT 114) Writing Culture: Introduction to Creative Nonfiction

Instructor: Dr. Jessica Corey

Required Texts & Materials:

Sondra Perl & Mimi Schwartz. *Writing True: The Art and Craft of Creative Nonfiction*. 2nd edition. Cengage. 2014

Brenda Miller & Suzanne Paola. *Tell It Slant*. 2nd edition. McGraw-Hill. 2012

Materials posted on Blackboard

A means to back up your work (flashdrive, Dropbox or OneDrive account, etc.)

Access to a printer and stapler

Course Overview:

This course provides an introduction to Creative Nonfiction (CNF), a genre that aims to present the truth (nonfiction) in a literary/creative format; CNF writers borrow techniques of fiction writing—description, anecdote, scene construction, characterization, dialogue, and point of view—in an effort to present the truth in a more dynamic and compelling way. CNF also draws from poetic approaches to writing, including imagery, metaphor, and the musicality and economy of language. In this class, we'll study these building blocks of creative nonfiction and use them strategically in the composition process. We'll analyze a variety of essays and compose our own. You'll have the freedom to explore a wide range of topics and experiment broadly with voice, style, form, and the use of research to enrich your writing. The title of this course, "Writing Culture," refers to writing about oneself and others in the context of a broader culture. How do we negotiate cultural norms, expectations, rituals, and practices? How does culture shape us as individuals? To what degree do we absorb or resist our cultural influences? And how do we, as individual actors and witnesses to our world, shape the culture in which we live? These are just a few of the many questions we'll entertain as we move through this course.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:

- * Students will read and critically engage with creative nonfiction texts representing a diverse range of topics, subgenres, and perspectives.
- * Students will learn about, and put into practice, conventions and characteristics of creative nonfiction.
- * Students will compose a series of creative nonfiction texts, and take them through the processes of composing.
- * Students will explore relationships between research and creative nonfiction, and learn conventions for incorporating research into their texts.
- * Students will develop an awareness of audience, and work to construct an ethos and voice that responds to audience needs and expectations.
- * Students will experiment with voices, styles and forms.
- * Students will reflect on their writing processes.

Assignments & Evaluation:

Flash Nonfiction Portfolio (20%)

Personal Essay (25%)

Final Portfolio (35%)

Quizzes/Reading Responses/In-Class Activities (20%)

A	930-1000 pts.	B+	870-899	C+	770-799	D+	670-699
A-	900-929	B	830-869	C	730-769	D	600-669
		B-	800-829	C-	700-729	F	0-599

* For each assignment, you will receive a detailed assignment sheet.

Schedule (Tentative):Unit 1: Short Shorts/Flash Nonfiction

Week 1

- M 8/28 Course Introduction & In-Class Writing
 W 8/30 WT: “Why Creative Nonfiction” (pp. 3-18); Vivian Gornick, “On the Street”*

Week 2

- M 9/4 NO CLASSES: LABOR DAY
 W 9/6 TIS: The Basics of Writing in Any Good Form” (pp. 163-180); WT: “The Power of the Notebook” (pp. 19-31); Gerry Sharp, “Falling Stars”*

Week 3

- M 9/11 WT: “Taking Shape” (pp. 43-55); Sven Birkerts, “Every Day” (pp. 360-61)
 W 9/13 WT: “The Ethics of Creative Nonfiction” (pp. 149-163); Maureen Stanton, “Water” (pp. 366-69)

Week 4

- M 9/18 WT: “Workshopping a Draft” (pp. 75-92); **Peer Review Workshop**
 W 9/20 WT: “The Craft of Revision” (pp. 93-113); Norma Ella Cantu, “Tino & Papi” (pp. 369-70)

Unit 2: Writing the Personal/Lyric Essay

Week 5

- M 9/25 Workshop; **Flash Nonfiction Portfolio due**
 W 9/27 TIS: “The Tradition of the Personal Essay” (pp. 89-105); Eiseley, “The Gold Wheel”*

Week 6

- M 10/2 WT: “Finding Voice” (pp. 56-70); Lee Martin, “Never Thirteen” (175-185)
 W 10/4 Phillip Lopate, “Writing Personal Essays: On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character”*; WT: Dudley Clendinen, “The Good Short Life” (pp. 239-42)

Week 7

- M 10/9 Conferences
 W 10/11 Conferences

Week 8

- M 10/16 TIS: “Playing with Form: The Lyric Essay and Mixed Media” (pp. 107-126); Charles Simic “Three Fragments”*; “Gretel Ehrlich, “A Match to the Heart”**
 W 10/18 WT: “The Role of Research” (pp. 132); Rebecca McClanahan, “Book Marks” (pp. 242-55)

Week 9

- M 10/23 *NYT* In-Class Activity
 W 10/25 **Peer-Review Workshop**

Unit 3: Literary Journalism

Week 10

- M 10/30 Workshop; **Personal Essay due**
 W 11/1 Jacqui Banaszynski, “Profiles”*; Tomas Alex Tizon, “Every Profile is an Epic Story”**

Week 11

- M 11/6 Isabel Wilkerson, “Interviewing: Accelerated Intimacy”*; “How to Write a Profile Story”**
 W 11/8 In-Class Interview Analysis & Question Generating

Week 12

- M 11/13 Margaret Talbot, “Gone Girl: The Extraordinary Resilience of Elizabeth Smart”**
 W 11/15 WT: “Meet the Shaggs” (pp. 303-13)

Week 13

- M 11/20 NO CLASSES: THANKSGIVING BREAK
 W 11/22 NO CLASSES: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14

- M 11/27 TBA
 W 11/29 **Peer Review Workshop**

Week 15

- M 12/4 Workshop
 W 12/6 **Final Portfolio due**; Wrap-up and course evaluations

Final exams December 11-15

*This material is posted on Blackboard.

**The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus, course schedule, and course documents.