

ENGL0180: *Introduction to Creative Nonfiction: Writing the World*

Spring 2014 (Hybrid: Online and In-Class)

Course Instructor: Elizabeth (Beth) Taylor, PhD

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Google Chat

Office Hours: 402 70 Brown Street

Mon 1:30-2:30; Thursday 2:30-3:30; and by Email Appointment

Course Description

Introduction to Creative Nonfiction is for students with a serious interest in writing narrative essays based on fact, research, interviews, and memory. Through assignments and revisions, students will hone their investigative, analytical, and creative skills, inspired by close readings of 20th century nonfiction writers, including Jamaica Kinkaid, Annie Dillard, John McPhee, and David Foster Wallace.

Note: *Introduction to Creative Nonfiction* is a pre-requisite to advanced creative nonfiction writing courses in the Department of English and satisfies the Writing Requirement at Brown University.

Course Learning Objectives

In this course, students will:

1. Learn how to analyze the forms and methods of creative nonfiction.
2. Blend scholarly research with interviews and personal reflection to create three narrative essays, intertwining the forms of academic essay, literary journalism, and memoir.
3. Collaborate as peer reviewers, learning how to effectively edit their own writing as they gain insight through critiquing others' drafts.

Student Evaluation Criteria

Students will earn a Satisfactory grade in this mandatory S/NC class if they:

- 1) Articulate the ways writers have constructed creative nonfiction through written reflections and collaborative discussions.
- 2) Apply the lessons from readings and assignments to their own narrative essays.
- 3) Write three engaging essays, each evolving through required drafts, online peer revision workshops, and conferences.

- 4) Complete all writing assignments on time, including warm-up exercises and drafts.

Note: All drafts must be **Size 12 font, double-spaced, and paginated.**

- 5) Actively participate and contribute to discussions and revision workshops.

Note: If a student misses 3 assignments and/or discussions without proof of medical or serious reason, they will earn **No Credit (NC)** for the course.

Course Reading List

The Problem: Ethics and Challenges when Writing About Others and Self

- Lynn Z. Bloom, “Living to Tell the Tale: The Complicated Ethics of Creative Nonfiction”
- Mark Doty, “Return to Sender”
- Jamaica Kinkaid, “A Small Place”

Personal to Research to Reflection

- Dinty W. Moore, “Son of Mr. Greenjeans”
- Anthony Farrington, “Kissing”
- Sondra Perl, Mimi Schwartz, “The Craft of Revision”

Observation to Research to Reflection

- Annie Dillard, “Sight Into Insight”
- John McPhee, “The Search for Marvin Gardens”

Cultural Analysis: Literary Journalism

- David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”
- “Dangerous Liaisons: Journalists and their Sources,” ed. Martin Gottlieb, Columbia Journalism Review, July/August 1989, p 21-35
- Roy Peter Clark, “The Line Between Fact and Fiction”
<http://www.poynter.org/uncategorized/1500/the-line-between-fact-and-fiction/>

Final Portfolio

- “The Death of the Author,” by Roland Barthes

Course Schedule

Thurs Jan 23: In Class:

What is Creative Nonfiction? Students will Google the term and list key traits. How is Creative Nonfiction like Academic Essay?

Tues Jan 28: In Class: Read and respond to: “Living to Tell the Tale: The Complicated Ethics of Creative Nonfiction,” by Lynn Z. Bloom. Choose three of her statements or examples that inspire or concern you; explain why.

Group Discussion: The Problem: Ethics and Challenges to “The Truth”. Using the concerns of Bloom’s essay as inspiration, analyze how Doty represents the ethics and challenges to “the truth”

- **Analyze:** Mark Doty, “Return to Sender”

Essay One: Personal Experience to Research to Reflection

Thurs Jan 30: In Class:

- **Group Discussion:** Students will analyze the elements of essay and creative nonfiction in: Jamaica Kinkaid's "A Small Place," Dinty W. Moore, "Son of Mr. Greenjeans", and Anthony Farrington, "Kissing" ([H/O](#) and [Link to Reading Protocol](#))

Tuesday Feb 4:

- **Group Discussion Online:** Students will each write a one-paragraph proposal for **Essay One: Personal Essay**, based on personal experience and research. Each student must respond to at least three other students with suggestions.

Thursday Feb 6: In Class:

- Students will demonstrate deep research by submitting an annotated bibliography of three sources on the topic: *How does each source deepen or expand the student's personal exploration?* See [Online Research Sources](#).

Tuesday Feb 11: Online:

- **Submit Draft One of Essay One:** At top of the draft, students will list the elements of the essay or creative nonfiction to be added.
- **Complete (3) peer reviews:** Assess and suggest Elements of an Essay/CN ([Link to Reading Protocol](#))
- **Sign Up for Conference (Online or In Office) with ProfT**

Thursday Feb 13 In Class:

- **Read and reflect upon:** "How to Revise"
- **Discuss:** Which kind of revisionist are you?
- **Pulled Pages Discussion:** Students will revise examples and explain their choices.

Tuesday Feb 18 : No Class (Long Weekend)

Thursday Feb 20:

- **Individual Conferences (½ class) in Office**

Tuesday Feb 25

Online:

- **Submit Draft Two of Essay One:** At top of draft, students will write a one-paragraph "pitch" summarizing what this essay is about, citing three layers of significance.
- **Complete (2) peer reviews (new group):** Assess and suggest Elements of an Essay/CN ([Link to Reading Protocol](#))

Essay Two: Observation to Research to Reflection

Thurs Feb 27: In Class:

- **Group Discussion:** Students will analyze the elements of essay and creative nonfiction in Annie Dillard, "Sight Into Insight" and John McPhee, "The Search for Marvin Gardens".

Tues March 4: Online:

- **Group Discussion:** Students will post Proposals for Essay Two: Observational Essay, based on observation and research. Each student must respond to at least three other students with suggestions.

Thurs March 6: In Class:

- **Submit Draft One of Essay Two:** At top of draft, students will list the elements of the essay or creative nonfiction they still plan to add.
- **Complete (3) peer reviews (new group):** Assess and suggest Elements of an Essay/CN ([Link to Reading Protocol](#))
- **Sign up for Conference (online of in office)**

Tuesday March 11: In Class:

- **Pulled Pages Discussion:** Students will revise examples and explain their choices

Thursday March 13: In Office

- **Individual Conferences (½ class):**

Tuesday March 18: Online:

- **Submit Draft Two of Essay Two** (radically revised): At the top of the draft, students will write a one-paragraph “pitch” summarizing what this narrative essay is about, and cite three layers of significance.
- **Complete (2) peer reviews (new group):** Read for Elements of an Essay/CN ([Link to Reading Protocol](#))

Essay Three: Cultural Analysis: Literary Journalism

Thursday March 20: In Class:

- **Group Discussion:** Students will analyze the elements of essay and creative nonfiction in David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster” and Gay Talese, “Frank Sinatra Has A Cold”

T, Th March 25, 27: Spring Vacation

Tuesday April 1: Online:

- **Read:** PDF “How To Write Literary Journalism”
- **Group Discussion:** Students will post proposals for Essay Three: Cultural Analysis: Literary Journalism, based on interviews, observation, and research. Each student will respond to at least three other students with suggestions.

Thursday April 3: In Class:

- **Group Discussion:** Students will read and prepare responses to Columbia Journalism Review’s “Dangerous Liaisons”: Select 3 quotes and explain how each inspires or troubles them.
- **Group Discussion:** Students will read and prepare responses to Roy Peter Clark’s “The Line Between Fact and Fiction”: Explain their view of the advice provided about fact vs. fiction.

Tues April 8: Online:

- **Submit Draft One of Essay Three:** At top of draft, students will list the elements of the essay or creative nonfiction yet to be added.
- Complete (3) peer reviews (new group): Assess and suggest Elements of an Essay/CN ([Link to Reading Protocol](#))

Thursday April 10: In Class:

- **Pulled Pages Discussion:** Students will revise examples and explain their choices

Tues April 15: In Office:

- **Individual Conferences (½ class):** Or, Students will sign up for specific time slots for a 15-minute audio-chat over the next few days

Thurs April 17: Online

- **Submit Draft Two of Essay Three** (radically revised): At top of draft, students will write a one-paragraph “pitch” summarizing what this narrative essay is about, and cite three layers of significance at the top of the draft.
- **Complete (2) peer reviews (new group):** Read for Elements of an Essay/CN ([Link to Reading Protocol](#))

Tues April 22: In Class

- **Group Discussion:** Students will read “The Death of the Author,” by Roland Barthes and prepare a response to: *How does Barthes’ argument help a writer understand the goals of a final draft?*

Thurs April 25: Online

- **Submit Draft Three of Essay One: Personal Essay** (revised for publication): At top of the draft, writers will list final questions about their own story; reviewers will address those questions.
- **Complete (2) peer reviews (new group):** Read for Elements of an Essay/CN ([Link to Reading Protocol](#))

Tues April 29: Online:

- **Submit Draft Three of Essay Two: Observation Essay** (revised for publication): At top of the draft, writers will list final questions about their own story; reviewers will address those questions.
- **Complete (2) peer reviews (new group):** Read for Elements of an Essay/CN ([Link to Reading Protocol](#))

Thursday May 1: Online

- **Submit Draft Three of Essay Three: Literary Journalism** (revised for publication): At top of the draft, writers will list final questions about their own story; reviewers will address those questions.
- **Complete (2) peer reviews (new group):** Read for Elements of an Essay/CN ([Link to Reading Protocol](#))

Tuesday May 6: In Class:

- **Final Portfolios Due:** Each student will present three final essays, carefully revised and copy-edited.
- Each student will read excerpts in class. Peers will respond with specific appreciations.
- Each final portfolio will be uploaded for peers to read.

Readings Protocol:

Individual reflection on each reading and peer draft: Analyze how the writer wrote this essay/story.

1. How is this an Essay? Follow Rubric of *Elements of the Essay*:

http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Writing_Center/resources_writers/article_harvey.html

Motive? Varieties of sources and evidence? Explanations? Structure: Journey of the Idea?

Complicating turns in the Idea? Coherence via key terms and transition sentences? Implications? Presence?

2. How is this a Story? Follow Rubric of Elements of Creative Nonfiction:

Keenly observed, revealing Status Life Details? Deeply researched, unpacking layers of significance (science, history)? Well-told Story, unfurling plotline of an idea or of an event? Using vivid scenes with dialogue? Narrated/analyzed from a personal point of view that engages with audience?