

ENGL1050C: Creative Nonfiction: Practice and Criticism

Fall 2014: M, W, F 1-1:50 pm

Professor: Beth Taylor

Office: 70 Brown St #402, 863-3743

Email: Elizabeth_Taylor@Brown.edu

Office Hours: Wed, Fri, 2-3 pm and by appointment

For the evolving nonfiction writer: What is Creative Nonfiction? It has a long history and recently writers have flocked to it, scholars have questioned it. Is it academic enough? Does it harm the truth? Is it narrative with too much "I" and too little "Eye"? And, if it's so popular, what makes it significant? We will read historical examples and more recent practitioners, along with editors and critics to help us explore these persistent questions about form, point of view, method, ethics, and significance.

Required Texts & Materials:

- 1) Bradway & Hesse, *Creating Nonfiction: A Guide and Anthology*
- 2) Resource Packet of Xeroxed material (X) available at:
Allegra Printing (2nd floor, Thayer & Waterman: 421-5160)
(Supplementary Readings for research and contemporary inspiration online:
McSweeney's, The Believer, Wag's Revue, N+1, Narrative Magazine, Missouri Review, Creative Nonfiction Magazine, River Teeth: Journal of Narrative Nonfiction)
- 3) Easily portable or online writing notebook/journal
- 4) Folder

Course Requirements:

Write constantly in your writer's (handwritten and/or electronic) notebook -- responses to readings and class discussions, brainstorm for essays and stories, transcriptions of dialogue overheard, word sketches of scenes observed, reflections in passing. In other words, practice using your tools daily.

There will be 1-2 page Reading Responses or Imitations due every fourth class; 1 critical essay on author of choice; 1 critical essay on creative nonfiction as genre; one piece of original creative nonfiction. You will have required drafts and peer revision workshops. Conferences are encouraged during the semester and required at the end of semester. All writing must be completed on time.

Regular attendance and active contribution to discussions and revision workshops are required, and will count significantly toward a satisfactory final grade.

Please note: This is a collaborative workshop, which meets three times a week, so your commitment to your own intellectual journey, along with that of your peers, must be 100%. If you miss 3 (three) classes without alerting me of a medical or serious reason, you will earn no credit for the course.

SCHEDULE

Wed. Sept. 3 Introduction: What is Creative Nonfiction?

Fri. Sept. 5 **Definitions:** Read/Prepare Responses to:
Schneider, "As 'Creative Nonfiction' Programs
Proliferate, Their Critics Warn..." (h/o)
Hughes, "Term Limits: The Creative Nonfiction
Debate" (h/o)
Pages 3-33, CN Anthology

City/Place

Mon. Sept. 8 Pre-cursors (in packet):
Li Tsung-Yuan, "Is There a God?"
Ou-Yang Hsiu, "Pleasure Boat Studio"
Francesco Petrararch, "My Journey Up the Mountain"
Discussion Leader: _____

Wed. Sept. 10 Recent Pre-cursors (packet)
E. B. White, "Once More to the Lake"
Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow"
Discussion Leader: _____

Fri. Sept. 12 Contemporary (in anthology):
Emily Hiestand, "Maps," 428
Luis Alberto Urea, from "Across the Wire," 739
Discussion Leader: _____

Mon. Sept. 15 Writing Due: Freewrite of Analysis or Imitation

Critiques, Rants, Reviews

Wed. Sept 17 Precursors (packet):
Ennatum of Akkad, "Dialogue of Pessimism"
Theophrastus of Eressos, "These Are Them"
Discussion Leader: _____

Fri. Sept. 19 Precursors (continued; packet)

Sei Shonegon, "The Pillow Book"

Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal"

Discussion Leader: _____

Mon. Sept. 22 Contemporary (anthology):

Barbara Kingsolver, "Household Words," 471

David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," 755; Interview: 770

Discussion Leader: _____

Wed. Sept. 24 Writing Due: Analysis or Imitation

The Essay

Fri. Sept. 26: Precursors (packet):

Lucius Seneca, "Sick"

Michel De Montaigne, "On Some Verses of Virgil"

Discussion Leader: _____

Mon. Sept. 29: Recent Precursors

Natalia Ginzburg, "He and I" (packet)

Cynthia Ozick, "What Helen Keller Saw," (anthology, 623)

Discussion Leader: _____

Wed. Oct. 1 Contemporary (anthology):

Jonathan Rauch, "Caring for Your Introvert," 652

Toure, "What's Inside You, Brother?" 724

Discussion Leader: _____

Fri. Oct. 3 Writing Due: Analysis or Imitation

Literary Journalism

Mon. Oct. 6: Precursors (packet):

Gay Talese, "Frank Sinatra has a Cold"

Tom Wolfe, "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby"

Discussion Leader: _____

Wed. Oct. 8: Recent Precursors (packet)

Joan Didion, "The Exact Mechanism of Terror"

Kamau Brathwaite, "Trench Town Rock"

Discussion Leader: _____

Fri. Oct. 10 Contemporary (anthology):
Laurence Gonzales, "Marion Prison," 403
Demetria Martinez, "Inherit the Earth," "The Things They Carried," 567
Discussion Leaders: _____

Mon. Oct. 13 NO CLASS: FALL WEEKEND

Wed. Oct. 15 Writing Due: Analysis or Imitation

Theory and Criticism (packet)

Fri. Oct 17 Due: Summaries and Applications:
W. Ross Winterowd, The Rhetoric of the Other Literature: "Introduction;
Presentational Literature"
Douglas Hesse, "Stories in Essays, Essays as Stories"
Discussion Leader _____

Mon. Oct. 20 Due: Summaries and Applications:
George L. Dillon, "Fiction in Persuasion"
Peter Elbow, "The Pleasures of Voice in the Literary Essay"
Discussion Leader: _____

Wed. Oct. 22 Due: Summaries and Applications:
David Shields, from Reality Hunger
Debates on John D'Agata's *Lifespan of a Fact*
Discussion Leader: _____

Lyric Essay

Fri. Oct. 24: Precursors (packet)
Li Shang-yin, "Miscellany"
Yoshida Kenko, "In all things I yearn for the past"
Discussion leader _____

Mon. Oct. 27 Precursors continued (packet)
Charles Baudelaire, "Be Drunk"
Arthur Rimbaud, "A Season in Hell"
Discussion Leader: _____

Wed. Oct. 29 Contemporary (anthology):
Sharon Solwitz, "Abracadabra," 671
S.L. Wisenberg, "Holocaust Girls/Lemon," 774
Discussion Leader: _____

Fri. Oct. 31 Writing Due: Analysis or Imitation

Memoir

Mon. Nov. 3: Precursors (packet):
St. Augustine, "Look Into My heart, O God"
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "I Felt Before I Thought"
Discussion Leader: _____

Wed. Nov. 5: Recent Precursors (packet)
Eudora Welty, "The Little Store"
James Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son"
Discussion Leader: _____

Fri. Nov. 7 Contemporary (anthology):
Dave Eggers, from *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* 342
Paul Lisicky, "New World," 509
Discussion Leader: _____

Mon. Nov. 10 Writing Due: Analysis or Imitation

Wed. Nov. 12 **Graphic Works:** (anthology)

Gabrielle Bell, from "Lucky," 206
Joe Sacco, from "Palestine," 656
C. Tyler, "Sub Zero," 732
Discussion Leader: _____

Fri. Nov. 14 Writing Due: Analysis or Imitation

Mon. Nov. 17 CONFERENCES

Wed. Nov. 19 IN-CLASS: Revision/Expansion of Critical Essay on an Author due

Fri. Nov. 21 CONFERENCES

Mon. Nov. 24 IN-CLASS: Revision/Expansion of Critical Essay on a Sub-genre
Family Tree Exercise Due

Wed, Fri. Nov. 26, 28: **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**

Mon. Dec. 1 CONFERENCES

Wed. Dec. 3 IN-CLASS: Revision/Expansion of CN Due

Friday. Dec. 5. IN-CLASS Readings: Original CN

Fri. Dec. 12: Final Portfolio Due by Email