

WRI 3023 Creative Writing: Creative Nonfiction Fall 2023 Course Policies

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**Section 1 (T/R 9:30-10:45AM,
BAC 156) / 3 Units / LJWL Department**

Professor: *Robbie Maakestad*
Office: *Bond Academic Center, 119*
Office Hours: *[MWF 9:45-11:45am and
TR 10:45-11:45am by appointment]*

LJWL Office: *Bond Academic Center*
Phone: *619-849-2437*
E-Mail: rmaakest@pointloma.edu

PLNU MISSION

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course you will learn, develop, and practice the skills needed to read and write creative nonfiction. Writing well is not an innate gifting, but something that can be practiced and improved. This course will expose you to various writing styles, nonfiction subgenres, and essayistic forms via both the course readings and in-class writing exercises. The major essay assignments will allow you an opportunity to develop these writing exercises further into completed essay drafts through expansion, workshop, and revision. You will also learn about literary journals that publish creative nonfiction and submit your work for publication at the end of the semester. This class will cause you to question your assumptions about creative nonfiction, and will prepare you to write and publish compelling essays on your own in the future.

WRI 3023 LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who complete WRI 3023 will be able to:

1. identify aspects of theory, style, and structure in works of creative nonfiction;
2. analyze creative nonfiction written by professionals and peers to determine authors' writing techniques in relationship to target audiences;
3. employ research techniques as necessary to meet the demands of creative nonfiction craft and content;
4. craft creative nonfiction using techniques specific to genre to create descriptive and

- evocative language;
5. apply workshop techniques for constructive criticism of peers and in turn take criticism and use it to improve their own work;
 6. format texts in a genre-appropriate and professional manner for submission to workshop and publication;
 7. present written work to live audiences, demonstrating strategies for audience engagement and oral communication.

DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

In order to create an introduction to the craft, terminology, and techniques of creative nonfiction, we will pursue these learning goals:

1. Further our knowledge of both the craft and art of writing creative nonfiction.
2. Gain an understanding of how to apply nonfiction craft elements such as “Eye vs. I,” major dramatic questions, and lyricism.
3. Further an understanding of and ability to utilize general writing craft elements such as point of view, voice, story arc, dialogue, description, and scene/summary.
4. Grow in our knowledge of creative nonfiction subgenres: personal essay, researched historical profile, researched historical narrative, reportage/narrative journalism, creative analysis, flash essay, and experimental essay.
5. Endeavor to explain how creative nonfiction works as both readers and writers. By studying literature as a writer—considering it as a craft as well as an art—we will come to a better understanding of what goes into creation of that literature.
6. Work together in small-group workshops, and individually after those workshops, in order to explore and practice the discipline of revision.

Together, these learning goals allow us to see writing as a process of art, craft, and discipline, which will benefit not just our ability to write creatively in this course, but also our ability to meet the creative and critical demands required of us in the future.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Each of you will be responsible for preliminary drafts of writing assignments, written critiques of classmates’ work, various reading and writing exercises that will aid our understanding of the discipline and craft of creative nonfiction, and three finished writing projects: three nonfiction submissions. Class time will be divided accordingly: lecture and discussion, small group discussion, in-class writing, and workshop.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Personal Essay – 100 points + 100 points Critical Analysis = 200 total
- Travel/Place/Against/Argument-Driven Essay – 100 points + 100 points Critical Analysis = 200 total
- Researched Essay – 100 points + 100 points Critical Analysis = 200 total
- Craft Moves – 180 points
- Workshop Participation and Peer Critiques (25 points per workshop day) = 150 total
- Literary Journal Report/Presentation – 35 points for presentation + 35 points for report = 70 points total

TOTAL = 1000 points

LITERARY JOURNAL REPORT/PRESENTATION

Each student will research a literary journal that publishes nonfiction, compose a written report on the journal, present the journal in class to their classmates, and are encouraged to then submit their own creative nonfiction to the journal.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Robert Atwan and Hilton Al's *The Best American Essays 2018*. ISBN-13: 978-0544817340
All essays uploaded on Canvas as course readings must be printed out, read, annotated, and brought to class on the day that they're due.

Also, please purchase tickets to attend Poetry Day and the two evening Writer's Symposium Events this fall:

https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite_admin%2Fdefault.aspx

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

RESPECT

Respect for other students and your instructor in our classroom is essential to a healthy classroom dynamic. We may discuss ideas and concepts that challenge your current thinking, so we all must respect one another and be open to new ideas. Show courtesy to other students and your instructor.

CANVAS

Throughout this course, students will be required to utilize Canvas to post homework responses, receive course grades, and access any changes to the *Course Schedule* throughout the semester. If the *Course Schedule* is updated, students will be notified well in advance, but will need to download the updated schedule, which the instructor will post on Canvas.

CANVAS SUPPORT

If you have questions about the content you find in my Canvas course or need clarification on assignment instructions please let me know. If you are unsure how to use any given feature in Canvas you will find the [Canvas Guides](#) to be a very helpful resource. If you cannot access something in my Canvas course or it appears that some part of the course is not working properly, please contact the Office of Instructional Technology for support at oit@pointloma.edu. Include specific information in the request (course ID, section, assignment or module name, etc.) to expedite the troubleshooting process. Screenshots are super helpful!

PLNU EMAIL

Students must regularly check their PLNU email account for updates on assignments and scheduling.

TECHNOLOGY

Refrain from using technology during class time unless a classroom activity calls for it to be used. This means cell phones, laptops, iPads, and other electronic devices. Taking notes by hand has been shown to aid long-term comprehension much more so than typing notes, so by all means, *please take handwritten notes* in class. Unauthorized use of technology during class will result in lost participation points.

ATTENDANCE & CRAFT MOVES

In order to learn most effectively and get as much as you can out of this course, I expect regular attendance. Let me know if you do have to miss a class, and we can work something out. **Attendance is required for workshops and presentation days. Absences on such days will hurt your workshop grade.** Missed in-class work may not be made up. It is also your responsibility to get workshop drafts to and from those in your group.

Craft moves are worth 180 points total (10 points per class period with assigned readings – up to two skips), and should be written down on paper and turned in each class period when readings have been assigned. For every class period, each student will be responsible for writing up, turning in, and sharing 3-5 craft moves (at least one per reading) that they noted from that class period's readings (at least one per essay that we read throughout the semester, and a minimum of three turned in per class period). A craft move is any writing decision that the writer has made within their essay that we can learn from or analyze. Students should regularly share these craft moves during discussions in order to get the points allotted for that class period. Missed craft moves due to an absence cannot be made up.

PLNU ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an "F" grade.

WORKSHOP

Workshop participation, feedback, and attendance is mandatory and graded. Throughout the semester we will be reading and critiquing one another's essays as a whole class. You will turn in a typed copy of your critique to me, as well as to the member of your group who is being workshopped (this will affect your participation/workshop grades). Workshop is not a time to disparage or rudely comment on the work of others. Written critiques balance positive and critical comments, though criticism should certainly be constructive and focused on the writing, not on the writer or the writer's ability. If there are problems with feedback you receive, do not hesitate to contact me. Workshop should be a safe space where we work together to better one another's writing; thus, the amount of effort you put into commenting on the work of others should be just as much as you put into producing your own work.

SUBJECT MATTER

This course will ask you to write whatever you want to write about, but keep in mind that you'll be sharing your writing with your professor and classmates. I respect your privacy and truly believe that this class should allow you creative freedom, so all I will ask is that if you are unsure/nervous or have a hunch that something might be questionable, discuss your ideas with me in advance of bringing them to workshop.

CONTENT WARNING

Each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences which contribute to the way you perceive various types of information. In WRI 4000, all class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, I encourage you to talk to me about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

[ONLY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJORS]

At least one of your creative projects this semester needs to connect topically to environmental concerns.

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS AND DUE DATES

All **major assignments** must be turned in on Canvas on the day they are due in addition to being printed and turned in hard-copy at class. Assigned work will have a due date and you will be expected to meet this requirement. Missed in-class work may not be made up unless you have an excused absence. I will accept the major projects one class period late, but your paper will be penalized one letter grade (A → B as maximum grade). Major projects turned in after that point will receive a score of 0. You must turn in all four major projects to pass this course. Failure to do so will result in a grade of F.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POLICY

If it is part of your creative process, you are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g, ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot, Botowski, etc.) in this course, but before you turn in your draft, please speak to me about how you plan to use this tool in your work.

Any work that utilizes AI-based tools must be clearly identified as such, including the specific tool(s) used. For example, if you use ChatGPT, you must cite ChatGPT including the

version number, year, month and day of the query and the statement “Generated using OpenAI. <https://chat.openai.com/>.”

Further, you must include with your draft the sequential prompts and methodology that you used to generate the creative piece. Failure to indicate AI as part of the work will be considered plagiarism.

It is important that you protect your colleagues' intellectual property. Critiques of your colleagues' works may not be done with the help of AI. Providing AI with samples of your colleagues' works will result in an F in this course.

PLNU COPYRIGHT POLICY

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

STATE AUTHORIZATION

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

SPIRITUAL CARE

PLNU strives to be a place where students grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith. If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain, or if you have prayer requests, you can contact the [Office of Student Life and Formation](#).

PLNU ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will issue an academic accommodation plan (“AP”) to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not wish to utilize some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC.

PERSONAL NEEDS

Counseling is available in the Wellness Center for undergraduate students at PLNU. They are open Monday through Friday during the academic school year to offer morning, afternoon, and evening appointments. Please call (619) 849-2574 to schedule a counseling appointment.

PREPARATION

You will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss readings, share your work, and comment on other students' work. Being prepared for each class is vital in creating a classroom that is conducive to learning – take notes on the assigned readings as this allows you to remember the material more fully. Back up your work as you're responsible for turning work in on the due dates. You are also expected to regularly check your PLNU email for updates to the schedule and assignments.

GRADING RATIONALE

Creative writing is both an art and a craft. While it is debated by many whether art can be graded, craft can be evaluated. In particular I will look for:

- Adherence to and mastery of Creative Nonfiction (CNF) conventions
- Structure and form as they pertain to CNF subgenre and subject
- Masterful use of narrative voice and point of view
- Engaging employment of language
- Excellence of writing mechanics
- Improvement through revision
- Creativity and innovation within genre conventions

While the above concerns creative work produced in this course, each creative assignment also requires a Critical Analysis component in which you as the artist will critique the decisions that went into your own work, and connect craft decisions you made with those used by the writers of our course readings. These Critical Analyses will be graded not as creative work, but upon the clarity and thoughtfulness of the analysis you craft.

FINAL EXAMINATION POLICY

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

For this course, the final will be a required in-class reading from your favorite final project revision during the final exam. Our scheduled final exam time is **Tuesday, December 12, 10:30-1:00 pm**. Since the final is a class activity, it cannot be rescheduled, so make sure that you will be able to attend.

LETTER GRADE GUIDELINES

880 - 899 points	B+	920 - 1000 points	A	900 - 919 points	A-
780 - 799 points	C+	820 - 879 points	B	800 - 819 points	B-
680 - 699 points	D+	720 - 779 points	C	700 - 719 points	C-
		620 - 679 points	D	600 - 619 points	D-

WRI 3023 COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1—Origins of the Essay & Personal Essays

- 08/29 – [Canvas] John Jeremiah Sullivan’s “The Ill-Defined Plot” – 9 pgs.
Michel de Montaigne’s “Of a Monstrous Child” – 2 pgs.
Bret Lott’s “Of Giving the Lie” – 13 pgs.
[*Best American Essays* = BAE] Robert Atwan’s “Forward” *only the first 7 pages*
Optional Reading: Hilton Als’s “Introduction” pgs. xviii-xxix – 12 pgs. (if interested in what he looks for in an essay, and how he selected the essays in this collection)
- 08/31 – [BAE] Paul Crenshaw’s “Cadence” pgs. 24-36,
Clifford Thompson’s “The Moon, the World, the Dream” pgs. 257-263
[Canvas] Kate Branca’s “True Detective and a Greyhound: On Imagination and Survival” – 6 pgs.
Virginia Woolf’s “The Death of the Moth” – 3 pgs.

WEEK 2—Personal Essays

- 09/05 – [Canvas] William Finnegan’s “Off Diamond Head” - 17 pgs.
Hanif Abdurraqib’s “All Our Friends Are Famous” – 5 pgs.
Hanif Abdurraqib’s “‘In the Morning I’ll Be All Right’: Marvin Gaye and the Unlikely Resistance of Patriotism” – 7 pgs.
Hanif Abdurraqib’s “August 9, 2014” – 2 pgs.
- 09/07 – [Canvas] Jill Christman’s “The Avocado” – 9 pgs.
Jaya Wagle’s “Marriage of a Different Kind” – 12 pgs.
Beth Nguyen’s “America Ruined My Name for Me” – 4 pgs.

WEEK 3—“Against” Essays & Personal Essays

- 09/12 – [Canvas] T Kira Madden’s “Against Catharsis: Writing Is Not Therapy” – 6 pgs.
Sei Shonagon’s “Hateful Things” – 6 pgs.
Michel de Montaigne’s “Against Idleness” – 4 pgs.
Kristen Radtke “Against Idleness” – 6 pgs.
Gabrielle Bellot’s “The Year of Breath” – 7 pgs.
- 09/14 – [Canvas] Anthony Doerr’s “Thing with Feathers that Perches on the Soul”
Taylor Byas’s “Spot the Differences” – 11 pgs.
Jerald Walker’s “Breathe” – 6 pgs.
Jason Magabo Perez’s “Crayoning the King: On Discipline” – 8 pgs.
- Group A Workshop Drafts Due**

WEEK 4—Personal Essays & Workshop 1

- 09/19 – ANNA GAZMARIAN CLASS VISIT—Bring Questions

[BAE] David Wong Louie's "Eat, Memory" pgs. 117-126
[Canvas] Anna Gazmarian's "The (Loud) Soundtrack to My Struggle with Faith" – 7 pgs.
Annie Dillard's "Total Eclipse" – 13 pgs.

Group B Workshop Drafts Due

09/21 – **Group A Workshop Presentation 1** **Group A Critique Letters Due In Class**

WEEK 5—Workshop 1 & Poetry Day

09/26 – **Group B Workshop** **Group B Critique Letters Due In Class**

09/28 – **Poetry Day Generative Workshop:** Jason Magabo Perez, Fermanian Conference Center, 3PM
Attend Poetry Day Evening Reading: 25 Poets to Celebrate 25 Years, Crill Performance Hall, 7PM
Buy Free Ticket ASAP:
https://plnu.universitickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite_admin%2Fdefault.aspx

WEEK 6—Travel/Place Essays

10/03 – [Canvas] Lina Maria Ferreira Cabeza-Vanegas's "BOG-MIA-CID" – 5 pgs.
Rebecca Solnit's "Arrival Gates" – 7 pgs.
Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah's "A River Runs Through It" – 8 pgs.
Anthony Michael Morena's "In the City that You Can See" – 4 pgs.
Personal Essay Due in Class and on Canvas

10/05 – **KERRY FOLAN CLASS VISIT—Bring Questions**
[BAE] Heidi Julavits's "The Art at the End of the World" pgs. 84-96,
Jennifer Kabat's "Rain Like Cotton" pgs. 97-109,
[Canvas] Kerry Folan's "Buffalo Bill's Defunct" – 6 pgs.

WEEK 7—Argument-Driven Essays

10/10 – [BAE] Noam Chomsky's "Prospects for Survival" pgs. 8-23
Kathryn Schulz's "Losing Streak" pgs. 194-210
[Canvas] Zadie Smith's "Find Your Beach" – 6 pgs.
Presentation 2

10/12 – [Canvas] Anthony Veasna So's "Baby Yeah" – 14 pgs.
Davon Loeb's "Breakdancing Shaped Who I Am As a Black Man and Father" – 5 pgs.
James Baldwin's "Stranger in the Village" – 7 pgs.
Presentation 3

WEEK 8—Reportage

- 10/17 – [BAE] Leslie Jamison’s “The March on Everywhere” pgs. 54-77
[Canvas] Shemecca Harris’s “The Blacker the Berry, the Quicker They Shoot” – 12 pgs.
Presentation 4

Group A & B Workshop Drafts Due

*****Wednesday 10/18 – Attend Writer’s Symposium Workshop:** Eliza Brazier, Fermanian Conference Center, 3PM

Attend Writer’s Symposium Reading: Eliza Brazier, Fermanian Conference Center, 7PM

Buy Ticket ASAP:

https://plnu.universitickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite_admin%2Fdefault.aspx

- 10/19 – **FALL BREAK: NO CLASS**

WEEK 9—Reportage

- 10/24 – [Canvas] George Orwell’s “Shooting an Elephant” – 5 pgs.
Wells Tower’s “Who Wants to Shoot an Elephant?” – 23 pgs.
Presentation 5

- 10/26 – **Group A Workshop** **Group A Critique Letters Due**
Presentation 6

WEEK 10— Workshop & Researched Essays

- 10/31 – **Group B Workshop** **Group B Critique Letters Due**

- 11/02 – [Canvas] Timothy Denevi’s “Election Night in the Heart of the Capital: Proud Boys, Parties, and Protest” – 5 pgs.
Jen Percy’s “Meet the American Vigilantes Who Are Fighting ISIS” – 11 pgs.
Eliot Weinberger’s “Guiseppe” – 5 pgs. and “The Tree of Flowers” – 5 pgs.

WEEK 11—Researched Essays

- 11/07 – [Canvas] Elizabeth Kolbert’s “Mastodon's Molars” – 17 pgs.
Elena Passarello’s “Arabella” – 12 pgs.
Jane Brox’s “Influenza 1918” – 8 pgs.

Travel/Place/Against/Argument-Driven Essay Due in Class and on Canvas

- 11/09 – **Attend Writer’s Symposium Workshop:** Davon Loeb, Fermanian Conference Center, 3PM
Attend Writer’s Symposium Reading: Davon Loeb, Fermanian Conference Center, 7PM

Buy Ticket ASAP:

https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite_admin%2Fdefault.aspx

WEEK 12—Researched Narratives

- 11/14 – **LIESEL HAMILTON GUEST LECTURE—Bring questions**
[BAE] Rick Moody’s “Notes on Lazarus” pgs. 133-146
Thomas Powers’s “The Big Thing on His Mind” pgs. 161-170
[Canvas] Liesel Hamilton’s “On Weeds and Healing” – 7 pgs.
- 11/16 – [Canvas] Darcy Gagnon’s “The American Woman” – 13 pgs.
Rajpreet Heir’s “Race at the Race: Being Indian-American at the Indianapolis 500” – 4 pgs.
Susan Orlean’s “Orchid Fever” – 15 pgs.
Presentation 7

WEEK 13—Researched Narratives

- 11/21 – [Canvas] Christa Spillson’s “What Goes Undelivered” – 5 pgs.
Timothy Denevi’s “The Temple” – 7 pgs.
Mark Slouka’s “Hitler’s Couch” - 13 pgs.
- 11/23 – **THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASS**

WEEK 14—Researched Narratives

- 11/28 – [BAE] Amit Majmudar’s “Five Famous Asian War Photographs” pgs. 127-131
[Canvas] Josh Macivor-Anderson’s “Do You Realize What the Conditions Are Out There?” – 11 pgs
Marione Ingram’s “Operation Gomorrah” – 14 pgs.
Group A & B Workshop Drafts Due
- 11/30 – Gay Talese’s “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold” – 43 pgs.
Presentation 8

Literary Journal Report Due

WEEK 15—Workshop

- 12/05 – **Group A Workshop** **Group A Critique Letters Due**
Presentation 9
- 12/07 – **Group B Workshop** **Group B Critique Letters Due**

WEEK 16— Final: Reading from Favorite Final Revision

- 12/12 – **FINAL EXAM PERIOD: 10:30-1:00 PM: Reading**
Researched Essay 3 Due on Canvas Before Final Exam Period (and hard copy if you want physical feedback)

** This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. I'll let you know with plenty of time if changes are made.

** All reading assignments must be read for the day that they appear on the syllabus.