

3. Apply professional writing techniques, including targeted research, as a strategy to increase reader interest.
4. Craft essays using descriptive and evocative language, scenes, dialogue and other advanced writing conventions.
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 best reach our chosen audiences via 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 the way that essays bleed over into the following fields/topics: literature, art, history, culture, sports, film, medicine, and cooking.
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.
7. Practice presenting our work to an audience of readers and of listeners.

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 four finished writing projects: three nonfiction submissions and one revision/expansion project. Class time will be divided accordingly: lecture and discussion, small group discussion, in-class writing, and workshop.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Literature and Writing Essay Submission – 150 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 200 total (to be kept only if your final project is NOT a revision of this one)
- True Crime/Sports/Art Essay Submission – 150 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 200 total (to be kept only if your final project is NOT a revision of this one)
- Medicine/History/Science and Ecology/Place and History/Film/Food/Music Essay Submission – 150 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 200 total

- General Participation – 20 points
- Workshop Participation and Peer Critiques (30 points per workshop day) – 180 points
- Essay 1 or 2 Revision/Expansion Project – 150 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 200 total (plus another 200 points as this grade replaces one provisional grade for one of the first 3 Submissions as noted above)

TOTAL = 1000 points

REQUIRED TEXTS

All course readings will be posted to Canvas—you will need to print these out and bring them with you to class the day they are assigned so that you can access the documents in class during discussion. You are expected to annotate the printed readings before coming to class because reading and annotating is the primary way to improve your own writing.

If you print double-sided, and more than one .pdf page per printed page, this will lower the printing cost for you this semester. I would recommend getting a 3-ring binder to organize your printed essays.

Please bring a notebook and writing utensil to each class to take notes, as well as the assigned essays that will be discussed for that class period.

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 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

You will be expected to refrain from using cell phones or other communication devices in the classroom. Use of iPads, phones, and laptops should be limited to times when I ask you to pull out your computers for in class use and in-class writing. Even if it seems that it isn't "bothering anyone," checking your e-mail, social media, or surfing the web during class is rude to your instructor and fellow classmates and will count against your participation grade. I expect you to be an engaged member of the class.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Attendance is expected, though I believe it's your responsibility to take ownership for investing in your own education and development as a writer, so I won't be keeping attendance. If you miss a class, you should obtain assignments or any updated schedule/assignment information from a classmate in order to be prepared for the next meeting. **I do, however, require attendance for workshops and presentation days. Absences on such days will hurt your workshop participation grade.** Missed in-class work may not be made up. In order to learn most affectively and get as much as you can out of this course, in addition to your participation grade, I'd recommend regular attendance. Let me know if you do have to miss a class, and we can work something out. It is also your responsibility to get workshop drafts to and from those in your group.

For the 20 points of your participation grade, you'll earn a 15 if you're doing the basics of engaging with the class and participating in discussion; you'll earn a 15+ if I see you regularly leaping in and making strong contributions; you'll earn a 14 or lower if you are frequently late, unprepared, inattentive, disruptive, or do not regularly participate in discussion.

WORKSHOP

Workshop participation and attendance is mandatory. Throughout the semester we will be reading and critiquing one another's essays in small groups and 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.

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS

All **major assignments** must be printed out and turned in hard-copy during the class period on the day they are due.

SUBJECT MATTER

This course will ask you to write whatever you want to write about, but do recognize that there is a line between what is appropriate and not appropriate in a classroom setting, especially with regard to what is being shared with your classmates, who may not share your values. I respect your privacy and truly believe that this class should allow you creative freedom, so all I will ask is that you use common sense with regard to what is/is not appropriate to write in an academic setting. If you are unsure/nervous or have a hunch that something might be questionable, PLEASE discuss your ideas with me in advance of bringing them to workshop.

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 written 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 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.

DUE DATES

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.

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. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

For this course, the final will be an in-class reading from your final project during the final exam. Our scheduled final exam time is **Tuesday, December 17, 1:30-4:00 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

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

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.

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.

PLNU ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact PLNU's Disability Resource Center (DRC) to demonstrate need and to register for accommodation by phone at 619-849-2486 or by e-mail at DRC@pointloma.edu. See [Disability Resource Center](#) for additional information.

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 Introduction to Nonfiction

09/05 – Syllabus, Introduction to the Essay, Art and Craft.
Ander Monson’s “Essay as Hack”
Mark Slouka’s “Arrow and Wound”

Week 2 Essays about Literature and Writing

09/10 – Darcy Gagnon’s “On Cicadas, Silence, and Japanese Poetry,”
Julien Barnes’s excerpt from “Three Simple Stories,” and
Thomas Powers’s “The Big Thing on His Mind”

09/12 – Ryan McDonald’s “The Dark All Around Us,”
Elif Batuman’s “The Murder of Leo Tolstoy,” and
Chelsea Biondolillo’s “On Shells”

Week 3 Essays about Literature and Writing

09/17 – Nathan Goldman’s “The Power of W.G. Sebald’s Small Silences” and
W.G. Sebald’s “Beyle, or Love is a Madness Most Discreet”

True Crime Essays

09/19 – Joan Didion’s “Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream” and
Pamela Colloff’s “Unholy Act”

Week 4 Essays about Sports

09/24 – Jon Bois’s “All Is Lost” [Print; for video/GIFs, see link on Canvas] and
A.J. Liebling’s “Ahab and Nemesis”

09/26 – Andrew Cartwright’s “700 Pounds: Telling Facts and Fictions Around
Wrestlemania III” and
David Foster Wallace’s “Federer as Religious Experience”

Workshop Group A Drafts Due in Class

Week 5 Workshop

10/01 – Workshop Group A;
Peer Critiques Due in Class;
Workshop Group B Drafts Due in Class

10/03 – Workshop Group B;
Peer Critiques Due in Class

Week 6 Essays about Art

10/08 – Kate Branca’s “Confessions of a Lapsed Catholic Dancer” and
Albert Goldbarth’s “Fuller”
Essay 1 Due in Class

10/10 – John D’Agata’s “Collage History of Art, by Henry Darger” and
Kyoko Mori’s “Repetitions”

Week 7 Essays about Art and Medicine

10/15 – Lawrence Weschler’s “Vermeer in Bosnia” and
Ron Rindo’s “Gyromancy”

10/17 – Jo Ann Beard’s “Werner” and
James Marcus’s “Faint Music”

Week 8 Essays about Science and Ecology

10/22 – John McPhee’s “The Curve of Binding Energy”

10/24 – Lawrence Lenhart’s “If the Ferret Crosses the Road” and
Katherine Schulz’s “The Really Big One”

Workshop Group A Drafts Due in Class

Week 9 Workshop

10/29 – Workshop Group A;
Peer Critiques Due in Class;
Workshop Group B Drafts Due in Class

10/31 – Workshop Group B;
Peer Critiques Due in Class

Week 10 Essays about Place and History

11/05 – Anna Gazmarian’s “Armenians in Jerusalem” and
Amy Kolen’s “Fire” – 33 pages

Essay 2 Due in Class

Essays about Film

11/07 – Jacob Cohen’s “Yes, Oswald Killed Kennedy Alone” and
Samuel Ashworth’s “In the Dark All Katz Are Grey”

Week 11 Essays about Food

11/12 – M.F.K. Fisher’s “Foreword,” “How to Be Content with Vegetable Love,”
“How to Lure the Wolf,” and “Love and Death Among the Molluscs”
Alison Hawthorne Deming’s “House Built of Herring”

Essays about Music

11/14 – Elena Passarello’s “Judy, Judy, Judy” and
“Twinkle, Twinkle, Vogel Staar”

Week 12 Essays about Music

11/19 – Leslie Jamison’s “Confessions of an Unredeemed Fan” and
Steven Church’s “Rhymes with Rockin’: On Dokken’s “Dream Warriors”

11/21 – James Gleick’s “Drums that Talk” and
Rick Moody’s “Lazarus”

Week 13 Essays about Music

11/26 – Joan Didion’s “The White Album”

11/28 – **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 14 Essays about Music

12/03 – Steven Church’s “The King’s Last Game” and
Julie Baumgold’s “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Elvis”

12/05 – John Jeremiah Sullivan’s “The Last Wailer” and
Roxane Gay’s “Nicki Minaj, Always in Control”

Workshop Group A Drafts Due in Class

Week 15 Workshop

12/10 – Workshop Group A;
Peer Critiques Due in Class;
Workshop Group B Drafts Due in Class

12/12 – Workshop Group B;
Peer Critiques Due in Class

Week 16 Final: Reading from Final Revision/Expansion Project

Tuesday, December 17, 1:30-4:00 PM

Essay 3 Due; Final Revision/Expansion Project Due

** 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.