

COURSE: WRI 323, Creative Writing: Creative Non-Fiction, Fall 2015
Dr. Dean Nelson deannelson@pointloma.edu (you must use my whole name) 619-849-2592. Office Hours: MW most mornings

TEXTS:

Writing Creative Nonfiction, by Forche and Gerard
To Tell the Truth, by Connie Griffin

OUTCOMES:

The course is designed to provide students with the chance to write from their own experience, observation and research, using techniques typically used in fiction writing (creating believable characters, detail, settings, making a point). It's a course in storytelling, with students' lives providing the majority of what the stories are about.

ACTIVITIES:

We will read a lot of essays written by others, analyze them, and try to apply the writers' techniques into our own. We will also write a lot, with the semester culminating in a portfolio of your finished works. About halfway through the semester we will conduct workshops with each other's writing.

GRADING:

Getting a good grade in this class will not depend on whether I like the essay or whether I think the subject matter is appropriate or inappropriate. (I can't think of anything that would be inappropriate in this class.) It will depend on whether you do the work, pay attention in class, participate, apply the techniques we learn – in other words, if you meet the deadlines and try your hardest. Slackers and those cutting corners will get the grades they deserve. So will those who are giving it their best.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Every Monday a minimum of two pages (typed, double spaced) of your writing is due. It can be longer (but not a lot!) It can be pages of a work in progress, or it can be a complete story. What it cannot be is a first draft, or something you cranked out during lunch before this class, just to fulfill a requirement. I want thoughtful effort put into this assignment. It's the only way I know to help you become a better writer. Later in the semester it can be a rewrite of something you're trying to refine. There will also be reading responses due on most days, based on pages from the texts (see schedule). These can be 1-2 pages long, typed, double spaced, addressing these two questions: What were the main points of the readings, and What did the readings make you think about? Regarding that second question, I'm mostly interested in how you can apply the information to your own writing. Each writing and reading assignment will get a score of 1 (the minimum), 2 or 3 (the maximum).

Each student will turn in a portfolio of his or her writing at the end of the semester, due at the final exam. The portfolio will consist of four parts:

- 1). An essay
- 2). A story from your experience where you are the main character

- 3). A story about someone else
- 4). A story in the voice of someone else

If you have health or other issues that will affect your performance in this class, please see me within the first day or two of the semester. The university has a welcoming policy toward those who need help with fulfilling the requirements. I can explain it and so can the Student Services office. We don't have a welcoming policy toward plagiarism or fabrication. For those, I will fail you for this class and send your name to the provost, who will possibly de-enroll you from the university and keep the information in your permanent record. Tell the truth. Always.

The LJML's goal is that students who complete the PLNU writing program will be able to apply creative and advanced skills in various forms and genres of writing in at least the following manner:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and terminology of creative and advanced writing within literary and non-literary texts.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of major literary-theoretical perspectives and terminology.
3. Develop connections between the literature and language studied and the contemporary world.
4. Engage writing and editorial processes through campus publications and external internships.