

# WRI 3023 Creative Writing: Creative Nonfiction Spring 2020 Course Policies

Section 1 (T/R 9:30-10:45AM,  
BAC 151)  
3 Units / LJWL Department

**Professor:** *Robbie Maakestad*

**Office:** *Bond Academic Center, 119*

**Office Hours:** *[M,T,R,F 2:40-4:00PM,  
T/R 8-9:20AM and 11AM-12PM or by appointment]*

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## 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 CATALOG ENTRY

Comprehensive instruction and guided workshop in creative nonfiction writing, including personal essays and memoirs. Attention is also given to methodology in teaching nonfiction writing and to finding publication. May be repeated once for major credit with instructor's consent. Prerequisite: College Composition.

## 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, a literary journal presentation/report, 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

- Personal Essay – 150 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 200 total (to be kept only if your final project is NOT a revision of this one)
- Travel/Place/Against/Argument-Driven Essay – 150 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 200 total (to be kept only if your final project is NOT a revision of this one)
- Researched Essay – 150 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 200 total
- Literary Journal Report/Presentation/Submissions – 50 points
- General Participation – 50 points
- Workshop Participation and Peer Critiques – 100 points (25 points for each workshop)
- Essay 1 or 2 Revision/Expansion – 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**

## LITERARY JOURNAL REPORT/PRESENTATION/SUBMISSIONS

Each student will research two literary journals that publish nonfiction, compose a written report of each journal, present the journals in class to their classmates, and submit their own creative nonfiction to both journals.

## 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.

## WRITER'S SYMPOSIUM

Each spring PLNU hosts the Writers Symposium By the Sea which brings premiere writers to campus. This semester, we will be reading essays by Pico Iyer and Alice Walker in class, so you will be required to attend the following four afternoon/evening events for this class (each ticket costs \$5 at the student rate):

—(Free) **Writer's Symposium: Wed. Feb. 26, Pico Iyer @ 3-4:30PM, Fermanian Conference Center**

—(\$5) **Writer's Symposium: Wed. Feb. 26, Pico Iyer @ 7PM, Crill Performance Hall**

—(Free) **Writer's Symposium: Thurs. Feb. 27, Alice Walker @ 3-4:30PM, Fermanian Conference Center**

—(\$5) **Writer's Symposium: Thurs. Feb. 27, Alice Walker @ 7PM, Brown Chapel**

**\*\*\*Order WRITER'S SYMPOSIUM TICKETS ASAP** in case the events sell out.

Think of the tickets as a textbook expense.

<https://www.pointloma.edu/events/25th-annual-writers-symposium-sea>

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If you cannot attend any of the above required events due to work or class, contact Prof. Maakestad with an excused absence from a professor/boss, and attend one/two of the following so that you attend two Writer's Symposium events total:

—(\$32) **Writer's Symposium: Tues. Jan. 31, Isabel Allende @ 7PM, Brown Chapel**

—(Free) Writer’s Symposium: Tues. Feb. 25, Sonia Nozario @ 3PM, Fermanian Conference Center

—(\$5) Writer’s Symposium: Tues. Feb. 25, Sonia Nozario @ 7PM, Crill Performance Hall

## 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](mailto: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.

### ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES

Attendance is expected, though I believe it’s your responsibility to take ownership for investing in your own 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, presentations, and the Final. Absences on such days will hurt your 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 general participation grade, I'd recommend regular attendance. Let me know if you do have to miss a class ahead of your absence. It is also your responsibility to get workshop drafts to and from those in your group.

## **PARTICIPATION**

Regular participation in class activities and discussion is expected. Regular tardiness, unsanctioned use of technology, and lack of attention or preparation with regard to the course readings will result in a lower participation grade.

## **WORKSHOP**

Workshop participation and attendance is mandatory. Failure to attend and/or participate in a workshop will result in a grade of zero for that workshop. 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 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.

## 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- |

## 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 a letter grade for each class period it is late (A → B as maximum grade). The major projects will NOT be accepted after a week past the due date and you 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 on finals day. Our scheduled final exam time is **Tuesday, April 29, 7:30 am-10:30 am**. Since the final is a class activity, it cannot be rescheduled, so make sure that you will be able to attend.

## 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

\*\*\*Order WRITER'S SYMPOSIUM TICKETS ASAP in case the events sell out.

<https://www.pointloma.edu/events/25th-annual-writers-symposium-sea>

| DATE                               | READINGS  | ASSIGNMENTS DUE (in bold) |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| <b>WEEK 1—Origins of the Essay</b> |   |                           |
| Thursday, Jan. 16                  | [Canvas] John Jeremiah Sullivan's "The Ill-Defined Plot" – 9 pgs.<br>Michel de Montaigne's "Of a Monstrous Child" – 2 pgs.<br>Bret Lott's "Of Giving the Lie" – 13 pgs.<br>[ <i>Best American Essays</i> = BAE] Robert Atwan's "Forward" *only the first 7 pages*<br><i>Optional Reading:</i> 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) |                           |
| <b>WEEK 2—Personal Essays</b>      |   |                           |
| Tuesday, Jan. 21                   | [Canvas] Alexander Heman's "The Aquarium" – 8 pgs.<br>Rachel Riederer's "The Patient" – 13 pgs.<br>Alice Walker's "Beauty—When the Other Dancer Is the Self" – 6 pgs.   |                           |
| Thursday, Jan. 23                  | [BAE] Paul Crenshaw's "Cadence" pgs. 24-36<br>Steven Harvey's "The Other Steve Harvey" pgs. 43-53<br>Clifford Thompson's "The Moon, the World, the Dream" pgs. 257-263  |                           |
| <b>WEEK 3—Personal Essays</b>      |   |                           |
| Tuesday, Jan. 28                   | [Canvas] Virginia Woolf's "The Death of the Moth" – 3 pgs.<br>Mark Slouka's "Hitler's Couch" – 13 pgs.<br>Kelly Sundberg's "It Will Look Like a Sunset" – 8 pgs.  |                           |
| Thursday, Jan. 30                  | [BAE] Edwidge Danticat's "All the Home You've Got" pgs. 37-42<br>[Canvas] Jill Christman's "The Avocado" – 9 pgs.<br>Jaya Wagle's "Marriage of a Different Kind" – 12 pgs.  |                           |
| <b>WEEK 4—Personal Essays</b>      |   |                           |
| Tuesday, Feb. 04                   | [BAE] Marilyn Abildskov's "Notes Toward a Theory of Plot" pgs. 1-7<br>David Wong Louie's "Eat, Memory" pgs. 117-126<br>[Canvas] Anna Gazmarian's "The (Loud) Soundtrack to My Struggle with Faith" – 7 pgs.   |                           |

Thursday, Feb. 06 [Canvas] James Baldwin's "Stranger in the Village" – 7 pgs.  
Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah's "The Weight of James Arthur Baldwin"  
– 13 pgs.  
Kenneth Lee's "Track Changes in English" – 4 pgs.  
**Group A Workshop Drafts Due**

**WEEK 5—Workshop**

Tuesday, Feb. 11 **Group A Workshop** **Group B Workshop Drafts Due**

Thursday, Feb. 13 **Group B Workshop**

**WEEK 6—Travel/Place Essays**

Tuesday, Feb. 18 [BAE] Heidi Julavits's "The Art at the End of the World" pgs. 84-96  
[Canvas] Pico Iyer's "Chapels" – 7 pgs.  
Rebecca Solnit's "Arrival Gates" – 7 pgs.  
**Personal Essay Draft Due**

Thursday, Feb. 20 [Canvas] Francisco Cantu's "Bajadas" – 15 pgs.  
Charles Mann's "1491" – 22 pgs.  
Anthony Michael Morena's "In the City that You Can See" – 4 pgs.

**WEEK 7—"Against..." Essays—WRITER'S SYMPOSIUM BY THE SEA**

Tuesday, Feb. 25 [Canvas] Sei Shonagon's "Hateful Things" – 6 pgs.  
Max Beerbohm's "Going Out for a Walk" – 2 pgs.  
Philip Lopate's "Against Joie de Vivre" – 16 pgs.  
Kristen Radtke "Against Idleness" – 6 pgs.

\*\*\*Wednesday, Feb. 26 \*\*\***Order WRITER'S SYMPOSIUM TICKETS EARLY** in case the events sell out.  
**REQUIRED AFTERNOON EVENT:**  
—Writer's Symposium: Pico Iyer @ 3-4:30PM, Fermanian Conference Center  
**REQUIRED NIGHT EVENT:**  
—Writer's Symposium: Pico Iyer @ 7PM, Crill Performance Hall

—**Argument-Driven Essays—WRITER'S SYMPOSIUM BY THE SEA**  
Thursday, Feb. 27 [BAE] Noam Chomsky's "Prospects for Survival" pgs. 8-23  
Kathryn Schulz's "Losing Streak" pgs. 194-210  
**REQUIRED AFTERNOON EVENT:**  
—Writer's Symposium: Alice Walker @ 3-4:30PM, Fermanian Conference Center  
**REQUIRED NIGHT EVENT:**  
—Writer's Symposium: Alice Walker @ 7PM, Brown Chapel

**WEEK 8—Reportage**

Tuesday, Mar. 03

[BAE] Jennifer Kabat’s “Rain Like Cotton” pgs. 97-109  
 [Canvas] Timothy Denevi’s “Jesus Christ at the Inauguration” – 5 pgs.  
 Elizabeth Kolbert’s “Mastadon’s Molars” – 17 pgs.

**Thursday, Mar. 05**

**NO CLASS—WRITER’S SYMPOSIUM MAKE UP DAY**  
**Group A Workshop Drafts Due**

**WEEK 9**

Mar. 09-Mar. 15

**SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS****WEEK 10—Workshop**

Tuesday, Mar. 17

**Group A Workshop****Group B Workshop Drafts Due****Thursday, Mar. 19****Group B Workshop****WEEK 11—Reportage**

Tuesday, Mar. 24

[BAE] Leslie Jamison’s “The March on Everywhere” pgs. 54-77  
 [Canvas] Jen Percy’s “Meet the American Vigilantes Who Are Fighting ISIS” – 11 pgs.

**Travel/Place/Against/Argument-Driven Essay Draft Due****—Researched Narratives**

Thursday, Mar. 26

[Canvas] Elena Passarello’s “Arabella” – 12 pgs.  
 Alex Wellerstein’s “The First Light of Trinity” – 6 pgs.  
 Jane Brox’s “Influenza 1918” – 8 pgs.

**WEEK 12—Researched Narratives**

Tuesday, Mar. 31

[BAE] Thomas Powers’s “The Big Thing on His Mind” pgs. 161-170  
 Amit Majmudar’s “Five Famous Asian War Photographs” pgs. 127-131  
 [Canvas] Jared Diamond’s “The Last Americans” – 9 pgs.

Thursday, Apr. 02

[BAE] Rick Moody’s “Notes on Lazarus” pgs. 133-146  
 [Canvas] Timothy Denevi’s “The Temple” – 7 pgs.  
 Eliot Weinberger’s “Muhammad” – 19 pgs.

**WEEK 13—Researched Profile**

Tuesday, Apr. 07

[Canvas] Gay Talese’s “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold” – 43 pgs.

**Thursday, Apr. 09****EASTER BREAK—NO CLASS**

**WEEK 14—Researched Narratives**

Tuesday, Apr. 14 [Canvas] Marione Ingram’s “Operation Gomorrah” – 14 pgs.  
Josh Macivor-Anderson’s “Do You Realize What the Conditions  
Are Out There?” – 11 pgs.

**Thursday, Apr. 16 NO CLASS—WRITER’S SYMPOSIUM MAKE UP DAY**

**WEEK 15—Flash Nonfiction and Workshop**

Tuesday, Apr. 21 Read Entire Issue of *Brevity Magazine*  
**Group A Researched Essay Workshop Drafts Due in  
Class**

Thursday, Apr. 23 **WORKSHOP GROUP A**  
**Group B Researched Essay Workshop Drafts Due In  
Class**

**WEEK 16—Workshop**

Tuesday, Apr. 28 **WORKSHOP GROUP B**

Thursday, Apr. 30 **CNF Literary Journal Presentations;** Submitting Creative  
Nonfiction to Literary Journals  
**Literary Journal Report Due in Class**  
**Researched Essay Due in Class**

**FINALS WEEK**

Tuesday, May 5 **10:30AM-1:00PM—READING FROM FINAL PROJECTS**  
**Essay 4 (Revision of Essay 1 or 2) due at final**