

WRI 4090: Special Studies in Writing- Journalism: Experimental Nonfiction

Jan. 2021 Course Policies

Section 1SM (MTWR 9:55 AM-12:05 PM)
3 Units / LJWL Department

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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 DESCRIPTION

WRI 4090: Experimental Nonfiction is a course that subverts the bounds of genre. We'll explore writing that takes formal and structural risks to blur the lines between nonfiction, fiction, and poetry, exposing the superficiality of genre. This is a class for anyone interested in hybrid forms, writing that takes big risks, and writing that makes the reader wonder.

WRI 4090 LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who complete WRI 4090 will be able to:

1. Identify aspects of writing theory and craft in the works of professional essayists.
2. Analyze written professional and peer compositions to determine efficacy of writers' craft techniques.
3. Apply professional writing techniques, including lyricism and experimentation as strategies 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,” fragmentation, experimentation, fictionalization, 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 fiction and poetry genres.
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 two finished writing projects. Class time will be divided accordingly: lecture and discussion, small group discussion, in-class writing, presentation, and workshop.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Project 1 Submission – 100 points + 100 points Critical Analysis = 200 total
- Project 2 Submission – 100 points + 100 points Critical Analysis = 200 total
- Presentation – 100 points (Presentation) + 100 points (written report) = 200 total
- Craft Moves & Class Zoom Discussions – 140 points total
- General Engagement and Participation – 60 points total
- Workshop Participation and Peer Critiques (50 points per workshop) – 200 points

TOTAL = 1000 points

REQUIRED TEXTS

[*Love Drones*](#) by Noam Dorr

[*Syzygy, Beauty*](#) by T. Fleischmann

[*Disparates*](#) by Patrick Madden

[*Bluets*](#) by Maggie Nelson

[*The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*](#) by Michael Ondaatje

[*An Elemental Thing*](#) by Eliot Weinberger

[*A Twenty Minute Silence Followed By Applause*](#) by Shawn Wen

All additional course readings will be posted to Canvas.

Please bring a notebook and writing utensil to each class to take notes.

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 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.

CRAFT MOVES & CLASS ZOOM DISCUSSIONS

For every class Zoom discussion, each student will be responsible for attending class and sharing 3-5 craft moves that they have noted from that class period's readings (at least one per text that we read throughout the semester). 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 10 points allotted for each class period. If a student misses a class, they can make up these points (see ATTENDANCE below).

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Attendance and participation is expected and is worth 200 points (see CRAFT MOVES above). If you miss a class, it is possible to make up that class period within the week: to do so you must contact the professor and request the recording for the Zoom class discussion so that you can watch it and participate on the corresponding class discussion board by watching the recording of the class, thoughtfully and extensively posting to the discussion board for that class period concerning content discussed in the class period, and posting your craft moves with a thorough explanation and analysis of each to the discussion board, in addition to obtaining assignments or any updated schedule/assignment information from a classmate in order to be prepared for the next meeting. **I 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 additional 60 points of your participation grade, you'll earn a 50 if you're doing the basics of engaging with the class and participating in discussion; you'll earn a 50+ if I see you regularly leaping in and making strong contributions; you'll earn a 49 or lower if you are frequently late, absent, unprepared, inattentive, disruptive, or do not regularly participate in discussion.

WORKSHOP

Workshop participation, attendance, and critique letters are mandatory and graded. Throughout the semester we will be reading and critiquing one another's essays as a whole class. It is your responsibility to share feedback with your classmates just as they will be sharing feedback on your writing. Before workshop you will write one critique for each classmate up for workshop; you will use this feedback to guide our discussion of the text during class; then, you will turn in a typed copy of each written critique to me, as well as to the member of your group who was workshopped at the end of the workshop period. 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. Workshop critique letter guidelines and expectations will be posted to Canvas.

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS

All **major assignments** must be turned in on Canvas 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.

[ONLY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJORS]

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

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. I recommend using Google Docs for writing, but turning in via Word Doc or .pdf. 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 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** in addition to participating in and attending both class periods of the final reading. 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 **Thursday, February 11, 9:55am-12:05 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.

WRI 4090: EXPERIMENTAL NONFICTION, JAN TERM COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

1/11 – In Class: Syllabus and Experimental Nonfiction

1/12 – In Class: Nelson's *Bluets*

Readings Due:

Maggie Nelson's *Bluets*, #s 1-120 (Pgs. 1-48)

1/13 – In Class: Nelson's *Bluets*

Readings Due:

Maggie Nelson's *Bluets*, #s 121-240 (Pgs. 49-95)

1/14 – In Class: Weinberger's *An Elemental Thing*

Readings Due:

Eliot Weinberger's *An Elemental Thing*, Pgs. 1-75

Week 2

1/18 – In Class: Weinberger's *An Elemental Thing*

Readings Due:

Eliot Weinberger's *An Elemental Thing*, Pgs. 76-189

1/19 – In Class: Wen's *A Twenty Minute Silence...*

Presentation A:

Readings Due:

Shawn Wen's *A Twenty Minute Silence Followed by Applause*, Pgs. 1-70

1/20 – In Class: Wen's *A Twenty Minute Silence...*

Presentation B:

Readings Due:

Shawn Wen's *A Twenty Minute Silence Followed by Applause*, Pgs. 71-131

1/21 – In Class: Dorr's *Love Drones*

Presentation C:

Readings Due: Noam Dorr's *Love Drones*, Pgs. 1-98

Group A Nonfiction Drafts Due Before Class

1/22 – **FRIDAY**

Group B Nonfiction Drafts Due By Midnight

Week 3

1/25 – **Group A Workshop**

Group A Critique Letters Just After Class

1/26 – **Group B Workshop**
Group B Critique Letters Just After Class

1/27 – In Class: Dorr's *Love Drones*
Presentation D:
Readings Due:
Noam Dorr's *Love Drones*, Pgs. 99-200
Project 1 Due

1/28 – In Class: Madden's *Disparates*
Presentation E:
Readings Due:
Patrick Madden's *Disparates*, Pgs. xix-15, 21-22, 33-39, 46-52

Week 4

2/1 – In Class: Madden's *Disparates*
Presentation F:
Readings Due:
Patrick Madden's *Disparates*, Pgs. 55-61, 82-88, 101-115, 126-153

2/2 – In Class: Fleischmann's *Syzygy: Beauty*
Presentation G:
Readings Due:
T. Fleischmann's *Syzygy: Beauty*, Pgs. 3-57

2/3 – In Class: Fleischmann's *Syzygy: Beauty*
Presentation H:
Readings Due:
T. Fleischmann's *Syzygy: Beauty*, Pgs. 58-110

2/4 – In Class: Ondaatje's *The Collected Works...*
Readings Due:
Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, Pgs. 1-51
Group A Fiction Workshop Drafts Due Before Class

2/5 – **FRIDAY**
Group B Fiction Workshop Drafts Due By Midnight

Week 5

2/8 – **Group A Workshop**
Group A Critique Letters Just After Class

2/9 – **Group B Workshop**
Group B Critique Letters Due Just After Class

2/10 – In class: Ondaatje's *The Collected Works...*
Readings Due:
Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, Pgs. 52-107

2/11 – In Class: **FINAL EXAM READING FROM PROJECT 2**
Project 2 Due

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