

WRI 3023 Creative Writing: Creative Nonfiction Spring 2021 Course Policies

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

Professor: *Robbie Maakestad*

Office: *Bond Academic Center, 119*

Office Hours: *[MWF 9:35-10:30, TR 10:30-12:00
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's 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 three finished nonfiction writing projects. Class time will be divided accordingly: lecture and discussion, small group discussion, exercises, 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
- Workshop Participation and Peer Critiques – 20 points for each of nine workshops = 180 total ***Note: attendance is mandatory for workshops throughout the semester***
- Zoom Attendance & Participation & Craft Moves – 160 points
- Literary Journal Report/Presentation– 30 points for presentation + 30 points for report = 60 points total

TOTAL = 1000 points

LITERARY JOURNAL REPORT/PRESENTATION

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 attending one free event (see course schedule). If you cannot attend the required event due to work or class, contact Prof. Maakestad with an excused absence from a professor/boss, and attend one other Writers Symposium Event as a substitute.

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

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.

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 160 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. 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. *Note: you can receive up to 180 points for perfect attendance without using your two unexcused absences for the semester.*

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 before 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 **Thursday, June 10, 10:30am-1:00pm**. 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.

WRI 3023 COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE (in bold)
WEEK 1—Origins of the Essay & Personal Essays		
Tuesday, March 02	[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. [<i>Best American Essays</i> = BAE] Robert Atwan’s “Forward” *only the first 7 pages* <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)	
Thursday, March 04	[Canvas] Alexander Heman’s “The Aquarium” – 8 pgs. Rachel Riederer’s “The Patient” – 13 pgs. Jerald Walker’s “Breathe” – 6 pgs.	
WEEK 2—Personal Essays		
Tuesday, March 09	[BAE] Paul Crenshaw’s “Cadence” pgs. 24-36 Clifford Thompson’s “The Moon, the World, the Dream” pgs. 257-263 [Canvas] Mark Slouka’s “Hitler’s Couch” – 13 pgs.	
Thursday, March 11	[BAE] Steven Harvey’s “The Other Steve Harvey” pgs. 43-53 [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. Kate Branca Class Visit	
WEEK 3—Personal Essays		
Tuesday, March 16	[BAE] Edwidge Danticat’s “All the Home You’ve Got” pgs. 37-42 [Canvas] Jill Christman’s “The Avocado” – 9 pgs. Jaya Wagle’s “Marriage of a Different Kind” – 12 pgs.	
Thursday, March 18	[BAE] David Wong Louie’s “Eat, Memory” pgs. 117-126 [Canvas] Anna Gazmarian’s “The (Loud) Soundtrack to My Struggle with Faith” – 7 pgs. Breann Wong’s “Rice Cake Love” – 10 pgs. Anna Gazmarian Class Visit	
***Friday, March 19		Group A Workshop Drafts Due @ Midnight
WEEK 4—Personal Essays		
Tuesday, March 23	[Canvas] Gabrielle Bellot’s “The Year of Breath” – 7 pgs. Matthew Salessas’s “To Grieve Is to Carry Another Time” - 8 pgs. Hanif Abdurraqib’s “Blood Summer, In Three Parts” – 11 pgs.	

Hanif Abdurraqib's "August 9, 2014" – 2 pgs.

Group B Workshop Drafts Due @ Midnight

Thursday, March 25

**Group A Workshop Group A Critique Letters Due After Class
Group C Workshop Drafts Due @ Midnight**

***Attend Writer's Symposium by the Sea Interview with Dean Nelson & Stephen Goforth, 7PM

WEEK 5—Workshop

Tuesday, March 30

Group B Workshop Group B Critique Letters Due After Class

Thursday, April 01

Group C Workshop Group C Critique Letters Due After Class

WEEK 6—Travel/Place Essays

Tuesday, April 06

[BAE] Heidi Julavits's "The Art at the End of the World" pgs. 84-96

[Canvas] Rebecca Solnit's "Arrival Gates" – 7 pgs.

Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah's "A River Runs Through It" – 8 pgs.

Personal Essay Draft Due

Thursday, April 08

[BAE] Jennifer Kabat's "Rain Like Cotton" pgs. 97-109

[Canvas] Lina Maria Ferreira Cabeza-Vanegas's "BOG-MIA-CID" – 5 pgs.

Zadie Smith's "Find Your Beach" – pgs.

Anthony Michael Morena's "In the City that You Can See" – 4 pgs.

WEEK 7—"Against..." Essays

Tuesday, April 13

[Canvas] T Kira Madden's "Against Catharsis: Writing Is Not Therapy" – 6 pgs.

Sei Shonagon's "Hateful Things" – 6 pgs.

Max Beerbohm's "Going Out for a Walk" – 2 pgs.

Michel de Montaigne's "Against Idleness" – 4 pgs.

Kristen Radtke "Against Idleness" – 6 pgs.

—Argument-Driven Essays

Thursday, April 15

[BAE] Noam Chomsky's "Prospects for Survival" pgs. 8-23

Kathryn Schulz's "Losing Streak" pgs. 194-210

*****Friday, April 16**

Group A Workshop Drafts Due @ Midnight

WEEK 8—Reportage

Tuesday, April 20

[Canvas] Rajpreet Heir's "Race at the Race: Being Indian-American at the Indianapolis 500" – 4 pgs.

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.

Group B Workshop Drafts Due @ Midnight

Thursday, April 22

**Group A Workshop Group A Critique Letters Due After Class
Group C Workshop Drafts Due @ Midnight**

**WEEK 9—Workshop
Tuesday, April 27**

Group B Workshop Group B Critique Letters Due After Class

Thursday, April 29

Group C Workshop Group C Critique Letters Due After Class

**WEEK 10—Reportage
Tuesday, May 04**

[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.

Travel/Place/Against/Argument-Driven Essay Draft Due

—Researched Narratives

Thursday, May 06

[Canvas] Elizabeth Kolbert's "Mastadon's Molars" – 17 pgs.
Elena Passarello's "Arabella" – 12 pgs.
Jane Brox's "Influenza 1918" – 8 pgs.

WEEK 11—Researched Narratives and Profiles

Tuesday, May 11

[BAE] Thomas Powers's "The Big Thing on His Mind" pgs. 161-170
[Canvas] Christa Spillson's "What Goes Undelivered" – 5 pgs.
Timothy Denevi's "The Temple" – 7 pgs.

Christa Spillson Class Visit

Thursday, May 13

[Canvas] Gay Talese's "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" – 43 pgs.

WEEK 12—Researched Narratives

Tuesday, May 18

[BAE] Rick Moody's "Notes on Lazarus" pgs. 133-146
Amit Majmudar's "Five Famous Asian War Photographs" pgs. 127-131

[Canvas] Taylor Byas's "Spot the Differences" – 11 pgs.

Taylor Byas class visit

Thursday, May 20

[Canvas] Josh Macivior-Anderson's "Do You Realize What the Conditions Are Out There?" – 11 pgs
Marione Ingram's "Operation Gomorrah" – 14 pgs.

*****Friday, May 21**

Group A Workshop Drafts Due @ Midnight

WEEK 13—Flash Nonfiction Essays and Workshop

Tuesday, May 25

Read Entire Issue 66 of *Brevity Magazine*

Submitting Creative Nonfiction to Literary Journals

Literary Journal Report Due before Class

Researched Essay Due in Class

Group B Workshop Drafts Due @ Midnight

Thursday, May 27

Group A Workshop Group A Critique Letters Due After Class

Group C Workshop Drafts Due @ Midnight

WEEK 14—Workshop

Tuesday, June 01

Group B Workshop Group B Critique Letters Due After Class

Thursday, June 03

Group C Workshop Group C Critique Letters Due After Class

WEEK—FINALS WEEK

Thursday, June 10

10:30AM-1:00PM—READING FROM FINAL PROJECTS

Essay 3 Due Before Final Exam Period