

# WRI 4000: Writing for the Community

## Fall 2021 Course Policies

Section 1 (TR 1:30 PM-2:45 PM, BAC 156)  
3 Units / LJWL Department

**Professor:** *Robbie Maakestad*  
**Office:** *Bond Academic Center, 119*  
**Office Hours:** *[By appointment:  
T/TH 11-12PM and 3-4PM]*

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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 4000 is a course for students interested in writing in the service of the literary community as well as for other communities in which they find themselves interested. As a genre, the essay often operates beyond the traditional bounds of literature, showing up in art, culture, history, sports, food writing, music, film, and so many other fields. The essay is flexible, malleable, and easily able to make such literary intrusions, as well as spanning the breadth of the literary landscape. Poets write essays about poetry; short story writers write essays about fiction; essayists write about anything and everything that interests them. Utilizing research, the essay bridges the gap between literature and other fields, informing the reader while also making an argument.

In this class, we will focus on the primary goal of all advanced writers: to write brilliant, thought-provoking, and memorable essays: the kind that, no matter what the subject, your readers won't be able to stop reading once they start. In doing so, we will write essays in the service of those fields that most interest our individual essayistic aesthetic.

### WRI 4000 LEARNING OUTCOMES

*Students who complete WRI 4000 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 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 – 200 points (100 points are Critical Analysis)
- True Crime/Sports/Art Essay Submission – 200 points (100 points are Critical Analysis)
- Medicine/History/Science and Ecology/Place and History/Film/Food/Music Essay Submission – 200 points (100 points are Critical Analysis)
- Craft Moves – 220 points (10 points per class period)
- Workshop Participation and Peer Critiques (30 points per workshop day) – 180 points

**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](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 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 & CRAFT MOVES**

In order to learn most affectively and get as much as you can out of this course, I expect regular attendance. Let me know if you do have to miss a class, and we can work something out.

**Attendance is required for workshops and presentation days. Absences on such days will hurt your workshop grade.** Missed in-class work may not be made up. It is also your responsibility to get workshop drafts to and from those in your group.

Craft moves are worth 220 points, and should be turned in each class period when readings have been assigned. For every class period, each student will be responsible for writing up, turning in, and sharing 5 craft moves that they noted from that class period's readings (at least one per essay 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 points allotted for that class period. Missed craft moves due to an absence cannot be made up.

## **WORKSHOP**

Workshop participation and attendance is mandatory and graded. Throughout the semester we will be reading and critiquing one another's essays 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 turned in on Canvas on the day they are due in addition to being printed and turned in hard-copy at class.

## **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. 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** 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 **Tuesday, November 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](mailto: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

08/31 – No Class. Monday classes on Tuesday.

#### Essays about Literature and Writing

09/02 – Syllabus, Introduction to the Essay, Art and Craft.

Ander Monson's "Essay as Hack"

Mark Slouka's "Arrow and Wound," and

Darcy Gagnon's "On Cicadas, Silence, and Japanese Poetry"

### Week 2 Essays about Literature and Writing

09/07 – Ryan McDonald's "The Dark All Around Us,"

Bich Minh Nguyen's "What Mr. Miyagi Taught Me About Anti-Asian Racism in America,"

Julien Barnes's excerpt from "Three Simple Stories," and

Katherine D. Morgan's "On Being Seen By Toni Morrison"

09/09 – W.G. Sebald's "Beyle, or Love is a Madness Most Discreet" and

Nathan Goldman's "The Power of W.G. Sebald's Small Silences"

### Week 3 Essays about Sports

09/14 – Claudia Rankine's "The Meaning of Serena Williams: On Tennis and Black Excellence"

Chris Ames's "Father Time Is Undefeated"

09/16 – W. Todd Kaneko's "Order of Elimination: Lessons Learned from the WWF Royal Rumble Match" and

Jon Bois's "All Is Lost" [for video/GIFs, see link on Canvas]

### Week 4 True Crime Essays

09/21 – Joan Didion's "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" and  
Pamela Colloff's "Unholy Act"

**Workshop A Drafts Due Before Class**

09/23 – Josh Dean's "The Great Buenos Aires Bank Heist"

James D. Walsh's "Dead Wake"

**Workshop B Drafts Due Before Class**

### Week 5 Workshop 1

09/28 – Workshop A;

**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

09/30 – Workshop B;

**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

**Week 6 Essays about Art**

10/05 – Kate Branca’s “Confessions of a Lapsed Catholic Dancer” and Albert Goldbarth’s “Fuller”

**Essay 1 Due in Class and on Canvas**

10/07 – Cassidy Klein’s “Finding Solace in the Pop Art Nun,” and Elvis Bego’s “Ghost Museum”

**Week 7 Essays about Art**

10/12 – Lawrence Weschler’s “Vermeer in Bosnia,” Ross Gay’s “Loitering Is Delightful,” and Kyoko Mori’s “Repetitions”

**Essays about Science, Nature, and Ecology**

10/14 – Zoë Bossiere’s “Necrotizing Fasciitis” and John McPhee’s “The Curve of Binding Energy”

**Attend POETRY DAY afternoon session, 3-4pm, and evening session 7-8pm.**

**Week 8 Essays about Science, Nature, and Ecology**

10/19 – Jen Percy’s “I Have No Choice But to Keep Looking,” and Katherine Schulz’s “The Really Big One”

**Workshop A Drafts Due Before Class**

**Essays about Place and History**

10/21 – Elissa Washuta’s “White City,” Ricardo Frasso Jaramillo’s “Omayra (In Other Words)” and Sayantani Dasgupta’s “Chernobyl”

**Workshop B Drafts Due Before Class**

**Week 9 Workshop 2**

10/26 – Workshop A;

**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

10/28 – Workshop B;

**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

**Week 10 Essays about Place and History**

11/02 – Silas Hansen’s “Fifteen Things I’ve Noticed While Trying to Walk 10,000 Steps Per Day: Muncie, Indiana Edition,” Anna Gazmarian’s “Armenians in Jerusalem,” and Amy Kolen’s “Fire”

**Essay 2 Due Before Class**

**Essays about Film**



11/04 – Zadie Smith’s “Killing Orson Welles at Midnight,”  
Gabrielle Bellot’s “Living in Dread of the Next Name We’ll Chant,” and  
Samuel Ashworth’s “In the Dark All Katz Are Grey”

**Week 11 Essays about Food**

11/09 – M. F. K. Fisher’s “Foreword,” “How to Be Content with Vegetable  
Love,” and “Love and Death Among the Molluscs” and  
Marcia T. Allocco’s “Seaweed Soup (Miyuk Gook 미역국)”

**Essays about Music**

11/11 – Lesley Jenike’s “Sweet Bird” and  
Elena Passarello’s “Twinkle, Twinkle, Vogel Staar”

**Week 12 Essays about Music**

11/16 – Leslie Jamison’s “Confessions of an Unredeemed Fan,”  
Berry Grass’s “Battle Vest,” and  
Clifford Thompson’s “Seventeen Notes on Singing”

11/18 – Hanif Abdurraqib’s “Chance the Rapper’s Golden Year,”  
Andre Perry’s “Americana / Dying of Thirst,” and  
Alysia Li Ying Sawchyn’s “Indie Night at the Goth Club”

**Week 13 Essays about Music**

11/23 – Joan Didion’s “The White Album”

11/25 – **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 14 Profiles**

11/30 – Tressie McMillan Cottom’s “From Puff Daddy to Diddy to Love,”  
Yen Pham’s “Ocean Vuong, Reluctant Optimist,” and  
Ariel Levy’s “Glennon Doyle’s Honesty Gospel”

**Workshop A Drafts Due Before Class**

12/02 – John Jeremiah Sullivan’s “The Last Wailer” and  
Roxane Gay’s “Nicki Minaj, Always in Control”

**Workshop B Drafts Due Before Class**

**Week 15 Profiles**

12/07 – Workshop A;  
**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

12/09 – Workshop B;  
**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

**Week 16 Final: Reading from Favorite Final Revision**

12/14 – **FINAL EXAM PERIOD:** 1:30-4:00 PM: Reading  
**Essay 3 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.