ENGLISH 91: CREATIVE NONFICTION

FALL QUARTER
MON & WED 1:15 – 3:05 PM

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OFFICE HOURS: MON & WED 11:00-1:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION

“We tell ourselves stories in order to live.”
— Joan Didion

Everyone has stories. No matter who you are, whatever your background, if you are living and breathing and skating around on the earth, you have stories to tell. The question is how do you tell them. How do we craft our private experiences well? How do we use them to heal and guide us, to give us the courage to feel more deeply, to grieve and remember, to shape and make sense of the world in which we live? In this introductory course we will be investigating the art of creative nonfiction. We will be workshopping personal narrative essays, reading in multiple genres, and working to understand issues of style and craft. Anyone with a beating heart is welcome.

REQUIREMENTS

Attend every class
Complete assignments on time
2 essays for workshop (one 1-2 pg, one 5-10 pg)
Attend 3 readings outside of class
Complete take-home journal assignments on time
Written response to every work-shopped piece
Journal response to 1 essay per week (from assigned readings)
1 revision to be handed in at the end of the quarter (with originals and my comments)

GRADES

You will be graded on your attendance, your participation in class, your journal assignments, and your eagerness to improve. I will grade your development as a writer and the extent to which you are engaging with the material. You will receive an unofficial midterm grade and a final grade for the course. Grades will be roughly imagined as follows:

40% homework / 10% revision / 50% participation

ATTENDANCE

Attendance in class is mandatory. You are allowed to miss one day of class without it affecting your grade. I expect you to be on time and to complete the assigned readings. Three or more tardies will result in an unexcused absence. It is imperative that you attend all the days of class in which your work is being work-shopped. Failure to do so may result in a failure of the class.
STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL:http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oe).

HONOR CODE

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:

The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;

2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.

3. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.

4. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

All work must adhere to the University’s policies on academic integrity. Failure to cite work that is not your own constitutes plagiarism.
# TIMELINE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session Title</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 22</td>
<td>Why We Write: Introduction to Nonfiction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>September 24</td>
<td>Storytime (bring snacks)</td>
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| September 29 | Style and Voice: Hearing the Muse, Trusting the Gut | from Song of Myself—Walt Whitman  
Shitty First Drafts—Anne Lamott  |
| October 1   | In Medius Res: Grabbers, Snaggers, and Big Bold Claims | Morning Song—Sylvia Plath  
Old Faithful—David Sedaris  |
| October 6   | Shot to the Heart: First Impressions in the First Paragraph | Small Rooms in Time—Ted Kooser  
MOCK WORKSHOP  |
| October 8   | It's the Little Things: Using Description and Details | How to Become a Writer—Lorrie Moore  
WORKSHOP  |
| October 13  | Born in a Small Town: Writing What You Know | Goodbye to All That—Joan Didion  
The Triggering Town—Richard Hugo  
WORKSHOP  |
The Things They Carried—Tim O’Brien  
WORKSHOP  |
| October 20  | The Hills Have Eyes: Using Landscape     | Mississippi Drift—Matt Powers  
WORKSHOP  |
| October 22  | Come Gather Round People: Imagining Audience | Kenyon Commencement Speech—David Foster Wallace  
WORKSHOP  |
October 27  **Blue Moon Beauty**: Rhythm and Sound

Total Eclipse—Annie Dillard
WORKSHOP
CONFERENCES

Nov 3  **Shaping the Wind**: Forms of Form

Reach—Cheryl Strayed
WORKSHOP
CONFERENCES

Nov 5  **Imagine You’re Building a House**: Structure

Bullet in the Brain—Tobias Wolf
WORKSHOP

Nov 10  **Unlocking the Vault**: Memory

Notes of a Native Son—James Baldwin
WORKSHOP

Nov 12  **What Does It Mean**: Seeing Double Rainbows, Developing Themes

Derivative Sport in Tornado Alley—David Foster Wallace
WORKSHOP

Nov 17  **Flow**: Transitions and Positive Cadence

Speed—Oliver Sacks
WORKSHOP

Nov 19  **Bringing It All Back Home**: Conclusions

Fiesta, 1980—Junot Diaz
WORKSHOP

Nov 24-26  THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 1  **Kill the Mother, Save the Children**: Revision

Emergency—Denis Johnson
JOURNALS DUE

Dec 3  **Pizza Party**

FINAL REVISIONS DUE