

English 91: Creative Nonfiction

Winter 2017, T/TH, 11:30am-1:20pm

Building TBD, Room TBD

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Office Hours: TBD.

Course Description: English 91 introduces the groundbreaking genre of creative nonfiction. Focusing on the many different forms of the essay, we'll examine works from across time and nationality for craft and technique. Then, we'll experiment with our own writing exercises. We will pay special attention to the diversity of subjects—travel, science, sports, personal memories, memorable encounters, etc.—that have been examined through this democratic and inclusive form. The latter half of the course will be devoted to workshop, in which students will read and respond to each other's longer nonfiction projects. A variety of creative and critical exercises, as well as required readings from the course texts and handouts, will foster your understanding and appreciation of the form. Writers at all levels of experience/comfort with creative nonfiction are welcome. Energetic, committed participation is a must.

Required Texts (will be supplemented with handouts):Philip Lopate, *The Art of the Personal Essay* (Anchor, 1997); ISBN-10: 038542339X.Miller & Paola, *Tell It Slant* (McGraw-Hill, 2012, 2nd Edition); ISBN-10: 0071781773.**Course Requirements:**

Class Participation (30%): A workshop succeeds when its participants are punctual, engaged, thoughtful, and intellectually invested in each other's growth and success. Please arrive to each class on-time, in possession of the course materials, having completed the assigned work, and ready to make regular contributions to the class conversation. I expect you to read each other's work carefully in preparation for workshop. Starting in Week 2, I will partially quantify your class participation in the course by counting the number of times you speak in class. I will also make some brief continuing notes after each class, so as to have a qualitative basis for the evaluation of your participation. Please be thoughtful about sharing the discussion space in the workshop.

Writing Assignments (25%): You should expect to write at the beginning of every class; a notebook or journal might be helpful for organizing this writing. You will develop and present for workshop two (2) short personal essays, one (1) sketch, one (1) mid-term contract/statement of self-reflection, and one (1) longer personal essay. You will write a short critique for each of your colleague's shorter exercises. You will write a longer critique of each of your colleagues' longer essays, turning in a copy to the student and to me. All critiques will include specific recommendations for revision with an emphasis on editing and formal structure, theme and subject matter, as well as personal reaction. These critiques will be a resource for revision. You will be required to prepare materials for conferences related to the development of your longer essay.

Leading A Class Discussion (25%): During the quarter, you will either individually or in pairs lead a class discussion on the assigned texts for the day (See *Calendar*, p.9). You will select passages to emphasize during our discussion, organize your thoughts related to form and theme in the selected essay(s) generally, begin the class discussion on those passages, and distribute a supplemental handout related to your presentation. You do not need to turn in any written work to me for your discussion leading. Comprehensive guidelines are given in the *Course Assignments* portion of this syllabus (see p.5).

End of Term Analysis (10%): You will speak to the class for about a minute regarding an essay from the assigned readings that had a direct impact on your development as a writer during the quarter. No written work is required and you will not turn in anything (see guidelines, p.6-7).

Reading Response (10%): It is departmental policy that you attend three readings during the quarter. The quarterly readings are posted on the departmental website and I will announce them in class. You will write a single response to an aspect of craft that you observed in one of more of the readings you attend. (see guidelines, p.7)

Course Grading: The highest grade that you can earn in this class is an “A.” You are always welcome to check-in with me regarding your grade. As detailed above, your grade breaks down by the following:

Class Participation (30%)
 Writing Assignments (25%)
 Leading a Class Discussion (25%)
 End of Term Analysis (10%)
 Readings Response (10%)

Coursework Formatting: Please type all assignments in plain 12-point Times New Roman font. Double-space your prose. In the header of each document, include your name, assignment title (e.g., “Reading Response #2”), and page number. All work must be titled. When submitting work to the class, bring copies for each member of the class, and a couple of extra copies. Printers are notoriously unreliable machines; anticipate their failure and plan accordingly. Assignments may NOT be submitted via e-mail.

Absences and Missed Work: You are allowed two absences for the duration of the quarter. Thereafter, your grade will drop a full letter with each absence. If you are more than ten minutes late to class, or if you leave early, it will count as an absence. There are no such things as excused absences in this course—you are given two absences in case of unforeseen circumstances, and additional absences will be penalized unless we have made prior accommodation. In coordination with the Office of Accessible Education or a university official, I will work with you to best accommodate long-term illness or injury, medical situations, and university circumstance. If you miss class, for any reason, it is your responsibility to follow-up with a colleague regarding what you missed, to arrange any missed work, and to come prepared to participate fully in the next class. You will receive an automatic grade of ‘C’ for any assignment submitted after the due date, unless we have made other arrangements prior to the assignment’s deadline.

Paperwork: You will receive a lot of paper in this course, including handouts, student work, and critiques from your fellow students. Be prepared to get organized and consider purchasing a file folder or binder. Do not discard any of your work during the quarter.

The Digital Age: As a courtesy to your colleagues, do not use your laptop, phone, PDA, etc., during class. You will not need to use the internet, create electronic documents during this class, or send electronic messages during this class. Please keep your cell phones turned off and stowed away. An exception is made to this policy for the Week 5 Conferences and In-Class Writing Lab.

Email Updates. I will send out via email class summaries following each class, usually within 24 hours of our meeting. I cannot by Stanford policy distribute student emails for any reason. If you are uncomfortable sharing your email address with me, then you may opt out of the email summaries.

Office Hours and Etiquette: I will hold office hours TBD. I will also have some limited time to meet by appointment. Feel free to grab me after class or drop by to talk about your work, creative work in general, your grade, etc. These office hours are for your benefit and use. If you have a question or concern about the course, please see me in office hours before you email me. I only check email once a day (at the most).

Conferences: As noted above, I will meet individually with every student at the mid-point of the quarter. I may request an additional conference with you if I think that it would benefit your work or progress.

Criticism: My primary goal as the instructor of this course is to cultivate an environment in which you feel comfortable managing the many vulnerabilities inherent in writing creative nonfiction and sharing it with strangers, while expanding your knowledge base of craft and form. A secondary goal is to demonstrate a particular creative and critical faculty, as I have developed it. To this end, my feedback during workshops is generally positive and encouraging, while my written feedback can be more critical.

Readings: Readings are selected to emphasize those formal and thematic elements that I think will help you to develop as readers and writers of creative nonfiction. I assign more readings than we can discuss in a given class, with the hope of offering many models for your writing. The student(s) leading the day's discussion chooses the readings we'll spend time with in class.

Departmental Readings, Listserv, and Blog: You will attend three campus readings during the quarter. I will announce them as they come up in class. A list of readings can be found at <http://creativewriting.stanford.edu> & <http://events.stanford.edu>. If you have not already done so, please also sign up for the Creative Writing Events Listserv by going to <http://mailman.stanford.edu> and joining "cw-undergrad".

Academic Advising: Please stop by the department to consult with an academic advisor, to learn more about the Creative Writing Program, and/or to ask questions and make suggestions.

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/oae>).

The 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. That 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.

Emergency Numbers: Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 650-723-3785; The Bridge Peer Counseling: 650-723-3392.

Finally—I will do everything in my power to make this an enjoyable and valuable learning experience for you!

NOTES: