COURSE DESCRIPTION

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

From the onset of language, the art of storytelling has been foundational in the development of human culture. It has allowed us to learn, retain knowledge, entertain friends, and empathize deeply with others. With the advancement of so many digital mediums, there are now more ways to tell stories than ever. In this Creative Expressions course we will be exploring the art of storytelling in the digital age. We will be reading and writing in a variety of genres, workshopping our own personal projects, and considering a wide range of narrative approaches.

Assignments will range from reading Denis Johnson’s story collection, “Jesus’ Son,” to looking at short films and photographic essays, to listening to music albums and digital podcasts, and practicing oral stories in class. We will be watching films like “Birdman” and “La Jetée,” going on campus-wide field trips, and frequently meeting outdoors to tell stories around a fire. Anyone with a sense of adventure is welcome!
REQUIREMENTS

Attend every class
Complete assignments on time
1 story/project for workshop (6-10 pg)
3 stories at the fire workshops
Attend 3 readings outside of class
Complete take-home journal assignments on time
Written response to every workshopped piece
Journal response to 1 artist per week (from assigned readings)
1 revision or additional project to be handed in at the end of the quarter

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/storyteller 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 or add. project / 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 workshopped. Failure to do so may result in a failure of the class.

TEXTS

Jesus’ Son—Denis Johnson
Course Packet (from Copy America)
Blank Journal

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).
**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.

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**TIMELINE**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 25</td>
<td><strong>The Fire Within</strong>: Why We Tell Stories</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 27</td>
<td><strong>Storytime</strong> <em>(bring snacks)</em></td>
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| Oct 2  | **Pick Your Poison**: Approaching Different Mediums  

*from* Song of Myself—Walt Whitman  
Shitty First Drafts—Anne Lamott  
How to Become a Writer—Lorrie Moore  
La Jetée—Chris Marker (film)

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<tr>
<th>Oct 4</th>
<th><strong>Style and Voice</strong>: Hearing the Muse, Trusting the Gut</th>
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<td>Lady Lazarus—Sylvia Plath</td>
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<td>Slow Dance—Matthew Dickman</td>
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<td>Bullet in the Brain—Tobias Wolf</td>
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<td>Writing the Australian Crawl—William Stafford (essay)</td>
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Oct 9  
**No Matter How Small:** Description and Detail

Fiesta 1980—Junot Diaz  
The Colonel—Carolyn Forche  
Alec Soth—Niagara (photos)  
Talking Forks: The Inner Life of Objects—Charles Baxter (essay)

Oct 11  
**FIRE**

Oct 16  
**Cave of Forgotten Dreams:** Point of Telling

The Cremation of Sam McGee—Robert Service  
Total Eclipse—Annie Dillard  
Water Liars—Barry Hannah  
Cave of Forgotten Dreams—Werner Herzog (film)  
MOCK WORKSHOP

Oct 18  
**Just Call Me Mr. Butterfingers:** Making Characters Vulnerable

Jesus’ Son—Denis Johnson (book 1st half)  
WORKSHOP

Oct 23  
**Double Rainbows:** Symbolism and Subtext

Jesus’ Son—Denis Johnson (book 2nd half)  
WORKSHOP

Oct 25  
**Choice and Consequence:** Actions

Driving Through the Dark—William Stafford  
Daniel Arnold (photos)  
Rhyming Action—Charles Baxter (essay)  
Birdman—Alejandro G. Iñárritu (film)  
WORKSHOP

Oct 30  
**Beauty in the Breakdown:** Narrative Defeat

Married—Jack Gilbert  
Laundry and Cigarettes—Dorianne Laux  
Diving Into the Wreck—Adrienne Rich  
The Swimmer—John Cheever  
WORKSHOP

Nov 1  
**FIRE**

Nov 6  
**Come Gather Round People:** Imagining Audience

Kenyon Commencement Speech—David Foster Wallace  
Louder Than a Bomb—Jon Siskel and Greg Jacobs (film)  
WORKSHOP
Nov 8  **It Goes Without Saying:** Dialogue

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love—Raymond Carver
In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried—Amy Hempel
WORKSHOP

Nov 13  **Page Turning:** Finding Plot

Ottessa Moshfegh—The Weirdos
Cathedral of the Pines—Gregory Crewdson (photos)
This American Life #47—Christmas and Commerce (podcast)
WORKSHOP

Nov 15  **FIRE**

Nov 20-22  **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Nov 27  **Soul Talk:** Bringing Out the Realness

Otherwise—Jane Kenyon
The Laughing Heart—Charles Bukowski
Hills Like White Elephants—Ernest Hemingway
The Things They Carried—Tim O’Brien
WORKSHOP

Nov 29  **Kill Your Darlings:** Revision

*from* Although of Course You End Up Becoming Yourself—David Lipsky
The End of the Tour—James Ponsoldt (film)
WORKSHOP

Dec 4  **Revision Continued**

Cathedral—Raymond Carver
JOURNALS DUE
MAKE-UP WORK DUE

Dec 6  **Pizza Party**

FINAL REVISIONS DUE