

**The University of Western Ontario  
Writing 2214F – Creative Nonfiction  
Fall 2013**

**Section: # .001**

**Time/Room:** Thursdays 2:30 – 5:20  
UCC-59

**Instructor:** Claudia B. Manley

**Email:** cmanley2@uwo.ca

**Office:** 3270 Lawson Hall

**Office hours:** Wednesdays 3:30 –  
4:30pm, Thursdays 12:30 – 1:30pm, and  
by appointment

**Course Description:**

In this course you will explore the fundamentals and challenges of creative nonfiction in the forms of the essay and memoir. The goal of this practice-based class is two-fold: to acquaint you with the variety of creative nonfiction published and to provide you with the tools to produce creative work of their own. You will share work and provide critical feedback on the work of your peers. Classes will be a mixture of in-class writing, discussion, and workshop.

**Required Text:**

Williford, Lex and Michael Martone, eds. *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction*.

Bechdel, Alison. *Are You My Mother?*

**Grade Breakdown:**

In-class work	20%
Response Papers	15%
500-word essay	15%
1,000-word essay	20%
Hybrid Nonfiction piece	15%
Exercise revision	15%

**Courtesy and Decorum:** Due to the nature of this class, which at times can explore raw, sensitive and highly personal material, all workshop pieces and discussions thereof are to remain confidential.

**Submitting Assignments**

Assignments are due in-class on the date specified on the schedule. **Late essays will be penalized a full letter grade per day** unless your instructor has granted you an extension beforehand. You must apply for extensions ahead of the due date and provide a suitable reason; they are not automatic.

If necessary, please submit essays to the Writing Department Drop Box outside Stevenson-Lawson 3270, making sure you include your instructor's name and your section number.

However, do not

- fax assignments
- e-mail assignments

Keep copies of all assignments submitted.

**When submitting assignments on Sakai, please title your papers thusly: Last Name\_Essay # (for example, Manley\_2).**

### **Communication**

All students are required to have an active UWO e-mail account and to check it regularly between class meetings. It is the primary way that I communicate with you outside of class. There will be no accommodations made for students who miss assignments or important messages because their UWO account is full and not receiving new e-mails. You are also to have a working knowledge of our Sakai website. There will be required online discussions assigned throughout the semester.

Students should also carefully consider how they address me via email as well as the content of said email. While we may engender an informal community in class, email is a mode of professional communication and should be treated that way. Therefore, addressing me as "Yo, Teach!" should be recognized as inappropriate.

Please note that I only check my UWO e-mail Monday through Thursdays (10am – 6pm). I will neither be reading nor responding to e-mail on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays.

### **Attendance policies**

Attendance is required to improve as a writer. If you miss more than six hours of class meetings (the equivalent of two weeks of class meetings), your final grade will be penalized a full letter grade (for example, an earned grade of 80% would be reported as a 70%); if you miss more than nine hours of class meetings, you will not be given a passing grade for the course.

Attendance also extends to tardiness. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will be penalized an hour of attendance. Please make every effort to be on time as late entry can disrupt the flow of discussion in our class.

Early departures from class, which have not been previously arranged with the instructor, will also be counted as an absence. If you leave during the break, you will be docked an hour of attendance.

This policy will only be waived for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have good reasons for waiving an absence of one class meeting, discuss these with your instructor within one week of that absence. If your absence is extended and prolonged (over one week of continuous non-attendance), then you should discuss it with your academic advisor in your home faculty, who may require documentation. That advisor may then contact all of your instructors.

**Note:** a class meeting missed in order to write a test, exam, or other form of 'make-up class' in another course **will** count as non-attendance, and **will** attract penalties as defined above if applicable. Instructors at the University of Western Ontario **shall not require** a student to write a make-up test or similar at times which conflict with that student's other scheduled class times. If you are asked or 'required' to do this, you should immediately contact an academic counsellor in your Dean's office. If you elect to miss a class in order to write such a test, that is **your** choice; your absence will not be excused.

See also: '**Medical Accommodation Policy**' below.

### **Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism**

The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf) .

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

### **Prerequisites**

The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines:

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

*The prerequisite for registration in this course is a) a final grade of 65 or more in one of Writing 2101, 2121, 2111, or 2131, or b) a final grade of 85 or more in Writing 1000F/G, or c) Special Permission of the Program.*

### **Medical Accommodation Policy**

For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

(downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading)

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical or other grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth 10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds cannot be granted by the instructor or the Program in Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication, and the Program requires students in these circumstances to follow the same procedure when seeking academic accommodation on non-medical (i.e. non-medical compassionate or other) grounds.

Students seeking academic accommodation **on medical grounds** for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments **worth less than 10% of their final grade** must also apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Where in these circumstances the accommodation is being sought on **non-medical grounds**, students should consult in the first instance with their instructor, who may elect to make a decision on the request directly, or refer the student to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an 'Attendance' policy in the course). **All** medical documentation **must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**Special Requests: Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, Aegrotat Standing**  
Please refer to the "Information for All Students in a Writing Course" for more detailed information. Briefly, remember that your instructor does not have the discretion to initiate, consider, or grant (or not) such requests; you must go directly to the Dean's office of your home faculty.

## **Assignment Breakdown:**

### **In-class work (20%)**

In-class work is essential to success in this course. This mark is based on your ability to take class concepts and apply those concepts to the feedback you provide to your classmates and to the discussion of class readings. It also includes your in-class writing journal (explained below) and participation in all written work completed during class. Distinct elements are detailed below.

**Discussion Leaders:** Students will sign-up to lead the discussion on class readings. For each reading, one or more (depending on final class size) person(s) will be responsible for coming up with discussion points. Please note – you are not asked to lead the entire discussion of the reading but to bring to the class thoughts on and questions about the readings in an effort to prompt a class discussion. You should be able to lead the discussion for at least 15 minutes. If there is more than one leader assigned, leaders should coordinate their discussion questions to avoid duplication. Time for discussion will adjust accordingly (two leaders = 30 minutes, three leaders = 45 minutes, etc.)

These discussion points should attempt to look at how we might use the readings, via their approach, organization, literary devices, voice, etc. in our own writing. It should be neither a rehash of the content of the reading nor its popularity with the class. In other words, a discussion on whether one liked, didn't like, or identified with the reading is irrelevant.

**Workshop Summaries:** Following the first and third workshops each student is to provide a written narrative of the results of their own workshop, effectively summarizing their peers' comments on their work. These are to be handed in with your final draft of the relevant essay.

For the short story workshops you are to have your comments on your peers' stories typed up *before* class and must upload a copy of these comments to the appropriate Sakai thread by the class meeting for that workshop. You are also expected to hand (or email) each person being workshopped your copy of their story with your marks and marginalia on it.

### **Writing Journals**

Each week you will be provided with a writing exercise. These in-class writing prompts should be written in a dedicated notebook. One of these exercises will be the basis of your revision assignment. You may also find that you use some of the material and/or comments when crafting your essay assignments.

### **Response Papers (100 – 250 words) (15%)**

For each reading (excluding peer workshop material), you will write a response paper that you will upload or paste to the "Response Papers" file in the Discussions section of Sakai before the class meeting, e.g. the response paper for Sara Levine is due before the start of class on

September 19<sup>th</sup>. If there are multiple creative writing pieces assigned for a class, there should be a response paper for each. Response papers are generally only a few paragraphs in length (no more than a page, double-spaced) and should reflect not only the content of the readings but your thoughts about and responses to the work. You may opt to skip two response papers without penalty.

No late response papers will be accepted.

**Essay 1 (500 words) (10%)**  
**Workshop – Thursday, September 26**  
**Due – Thursday, October 3**

This is the first writing assignment that we will workshop in class. Students are required to bring copies of their essay for half of the class. Class will be divided into two groups and students will read their essays aloud and will receive constructive feedback from their peers. A revised version of your essay is due one week later.

**Essay 2 (1000 words)(20%)**  
**Workshops October 24, 31, November 14, 21, and 28 (if necessary); Final story due one week following your workshop**

Between October 24<sup>th</sup> and November 28<sup>th</sup> we will workshop your 1,000-word essay with the entire class. **Essays to be workshopped (according to a schedule set up in class) are to be uploaded to Sakai one week before the workshop.** Everyone is expected to read and have comments on ALL pieces each week. Students may opt to print the stories or to access them in class on their computers. The reading over these few weeks will be very intensive. Prepare to have something constructive to say about each story and to provide a written summary of your comments to each author (as detailed above).

**Hybrid Nonfiction Piece (15%) – Idea workshop November 7 & Small group workshop November 28; Due December 5**

Each student will create a hybrid nonfiction piece. These pieces may include film, photographs, performance, excerpts from other works, and more. We will discuss the specific details in class. Students will workshop ideas first and then a draft version of their project on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. The final version of the piece is due November 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Exercise Revision (15%) – due Wednesday, November 28 (1,000 words max)**

Incorporating in-class discussion points as well as feedback received on other stories, craft a complete piece based upon an in-class writing prompt. You are expected to address concerns regarding dialogue, structure, character development, setting, style, tone, voice, and theme. At the top of your essay please write the prompt that was the basis of this piece.

## Weekly Breakdown

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
September 12	Introduction – What is Creative Nonfiction? In-class reading	
September 19	"The Essayist Is Sorry for Your Loss" - Sara Levine (280 – 290) "Living Like Weasels" – Annie Dillard (148 – 152) <b>-Note: online class meeting -</b>	
September 26	Essay 1 workshop "Return to Sender" - Mark Doty (152 – 164)	<b>Draft of Essay 1</b>
October 3	"Repeat After Me" – David Sedaris (443 – 452); "Son of Mr. Green Jeans" – Dinty W. Moore (389 – 396)	<b>Essay 1 due</b>
October 10	"If You Knew Then..." – Ryan Van Meter (520 – 525) "A Small Place" - Jamaica Kincaid (257 – 264)	
October 17	<i>Are You My Mother?</i> – Alison Bechdel	
October 24	Essay 2 workshop; No additional readings (Group A: six students)	
October 31	Essay 2 workshop; No additional readings (Group B: six students)	<b>Group A essays due</b>
November 7	Hybrid Nonfiction discussion & idea workshop	<b>Come to class with ideas for your hybrid assignment</b>
November 14	Essay 2 workshop; No additional readings (Group C: six students)	<b>Group B essays due</b>
November 21	Essay 2 workshop; No additional readings (Group D: six students)	<b>Group C essays due</b>
November 28	Essay 2 workshop; No additional readings (Group E: two students) Small group hybrid workshop	<b>Group D essays due Exercise Revision due</b>
December 5	Hybrid presentations/installations Last day of class	<b>Group E essays due Hybrid assignment due</b>