

The University of Western Ontario
Writing 2214G – Memoir, Memories, & Disclosure
Section: # .650
Winter 2018

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Office hours: Wednesday 12-2pm 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 timed writing, discussion, and workshop.

Course Objectives:

- Identify & understand the elements of creative nonfiction
- Craft an honest and revealing creative nonfiction essay
- Provide classmates with constructive feedback
- Incorporate class feedback and discussion points into essays & revisions

Required Text:

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

Grade Breakdown:

Workshop/Forum Participation	15%
Discussion Leader Responsibilities	10%
Completion of Writing Prompts	10%
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 Owl, please title your papers thusly: Last Name_Essay # (for example, Manley_2).

Communication

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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 Owl 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 read this post on proper email etiquette: medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087#.oaxpj163i](https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087#.oaxpj163i)

Please note that I only check my UWO e-mail Monday through Thursdays (10am – 6pm), and it may take up to 24 hours to receive a response. I will neither be reading nor responding to e-mail on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays.

Attendance policies

Attendance at class is required to improve as a writer. Here is the Writing Studies attendance policy in this class:

- You may miss up to the equivalent of one week of class of class meetings during the term without explanation. That means that the week you miss will be recorded as absences but *excused provided you don't miss any more*.

- However, if you miss a total of three full weeks of class, your final grade will be reduced by 10% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 72).
- If you miss a total of more than three weeks of class meetings, your final grade will be reduced by 15% (e.g. an earned final grade of 80% will be reported as a final grade of 68).

This policy will be waived only for medical or compassionate reasons. If you have good reasons for waiving an absence of one class meeting (e.g. if you've missed three hours, and need or want to miss another class meeting) discuss these reasons 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. See also: '**Medical Accommodation Policy**' below.

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 .

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 70 or more in Writing 1000F/G or Writing 1030F, or c) Special Permission of the department.

Medical Accommodation Policy

For UWO Policy on Accommodation For Medical Illness, see:

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 Writing Studies, and Writing Studies 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:

Workshop/Forum Participation (15%) – To be completed by mid-week (Wednesday)

In-class work via forum participation 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. For each class reading you are required to upload an original response to at least one question and to respond to at least one other classmate's answers to other questions posed in the forum.

Discussion Leader Responsibility (10%): Students will be assigned to lead the discussion on class readings. For each reading, two or more people 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 are required to come up collaboratively with at least four discussion questions for a reading.

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.

Writing Prompt Completion (10%)

Each week you will be provided with a writing prompt. These writing prompts are timed to simulate the in-class experience. You cannot go back and change the timed prompt once it is completed; however, one of these exercises will be the basis of your revision assignment. You will not receive comments on these prompts; do not worry about grammar, misspellings, or other editorial issues while you're completing these. These are essentially exercises to get you writing. You may also find that you use some of the material and/or comments when crafting your essay assignments.

Essay 1 (500 words) (15%)

Workshop – Week 3: January 12 - 16

Due – last day/Friday of Week 4: January 23

This is the first writing assignment that we will workshop in class. Students are required to upload copies of their essay for their workshop group. Students will read all essays in their group and provide constructive feedback for one another. A revised version of your essay is due one week later.

Essay 2 (1,000 words)(20%)

Workshop: Week 8: March 5 - 9

Final essay due: Last day/Friday of Week 9: March 16

Students have been assigned to (almost) full-class workshop groups. **Drafts of essays are to be uploaded to Owl one week before the workshop.** Everyone is expected to read and have comments on ALL pieces in their workshop group. The reading over these few weeks will

be very intensive. Students will read all essays in their group and provide constructive feedback for one another. A revised version of your essay is due one week later.

Hybrid Nonfiction Project (15%)

Concept workshop: Week 10: March 19 - 23

Pair Workshop: Week 11: March 26 - 30

Final Hybrid Project due: Last day/Friday of Week 12

Each student will create a hybrid nonfiction piece. These pieces may include film, photographs, performance, excerpts from other works, and more. Students will workshop ideas first and then a draft version of their project. The final version of the piece is due the end of week 12.

Exercise Revision (1,000 – 1,250 words max) (15%)

Due: Last day/Friday of Week 11: March 30

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

Week	Readings/Podcasts/Videos	Forums/Assignments
Week 1: Getting Started Jan. 8 - 12	Welcome Video Lee Gutkind podcast Introduction What is Creative Nonfiction? Listen to This American Life Podcast	Post introduction This American Life forum Writing Prompt
Week 2 Jan. 15 - 19	The Use of Digression lecture "The Essayist Is Sorry for Your Loss" - Sara Levine (280 – 290) "Living Like Weasels" – Annie Dillard (148 – 152)	Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 3 Jan. 12 - 26	Essay 1 workshop	Draft of Essay 1 uploaded to workshop forum
Week 4 Jan. 29 – Feb. 2	Writing About Family Lecture "Return to Sender" - Mark Doty (152 – 164)	Essay 1 due Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 5 Feb. 5 - 9	On Memory lecture "Black Swans" – Lauren Slater (484 – 499) "If You Knew Then..." – Ryan Van Meter (520 – 525)	Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 6 Feb. 12 - 16	Elizabeth Gilbert on genius – TED talk "Present Tense Africa" – William Harrison (220 – 230) "A Small Place" - Jamaica Kincaid (257 – 264)	Gilbert forum posting Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Feb. 19 – 23	Winter Reading Break	Take a break!
Week 7 Feb. 26 – March 2	"The Unwanted Child" – Mary Clearman Blue (43 – 55) "Embalming Mom" – Janet Burroway (76 – 88)	Upload draft of Essay 2 to workshop group Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 8 March 5 - 9	Essay 2 workshop	Workshop forum postings
Week 9 March 12 - 16	Dinty W. Moore podcast "The Pain Scale" – Eula Biss (28 – 42) "Son of Mr. Green Jeans" – Dinty W. Moore (389 – 396)	Essay 2 due Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 10 March 19 - 23	"Blur" – David Shields (online) Hybrid concept workshop	Reading forum posting Workshop forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 11 March 26 -	Multimedia Hybrid Nonfiction Examples (on Owl)	Exercise Revision due Forum Postings

30	Hybrid pair workshop	
Week 12/13 April 2 - 11	Last class wrap-up Mary Gannon podcast	Hybrid Project due Post to last class forum