

**The University of Western Ontario**  
**Writing 2214F – Memoir, Memories, & Disclosure**  
**Section: # .650**  
**Fall 2020**

**Instructor:** Claudia B. Manley

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**Office hours:** scheduled via email;  
please allow 24 hours for response

**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.

## Land Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek (Ah-nish-in-a-bek), Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-no-show-nee), Lūnaapéewak (Len-ahpay-wuk) and Attawandaron (Add-a-won-da-run) peoples, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum.

With this, I respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (e.g. First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research and community service.

## Diversity & Inclusion Statement

It is my intention that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

Important note: Given the sensitive and challenging nature of the material discussed in class, it is imperative that there be an atmosphere of trust and safety in the classroom. I will attempt to foster an environment in which each class member is able to hear and respect each other. **It is critical that each class member show respect for all worldviews expressed in class. The use of racist or any language that works against the values of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will not be tolerated.**

It is expected that some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions; please be respectful of others' emotions and be mindful of your own. Please let me know if something said or done in the classroom, by either myself or other students, is particularly troubling or causes discomfort or offense. While our intention may not be to cause discomfort or offense, the impact of what happens throughout the course is not to be ignored and is something that I consider to be very important and deserving of attention. If and when this occurs, there are several ways to alleviate some of the discomfort or hurt you may experience:

1. Discuss the situation privately with me. I am always open to listening to students' experiences, and want to work with students to find acceptable ways to process and address the issue.

2. Discuss the situation with the class. Chances are there is at least one other student in the class who had a similar response to the material. Discussion enhances the ability for all class participants to have a fuller understanding of context and impact of course material and class discussions.
3. Notify me of the issue through another source such as your academic advisor, a trusted faculty member, or a peer. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable discussing the issue directly with me, I encourage you to seek out another, more comfortable avenue to address the issue.

### **Submitting Assignments**

Assignments are due online 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.

Keep copies of all assignments submitted.

**When submitting assignments on Owl, 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 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](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.*

### **Accommodation Policy**

**Note: the official Western Accommodation Policy appears below. This is in effect, but may be modified temporarily by the university during the academic year as conditions change.**

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

### **Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors by email within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)

- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

**Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.**

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

### **Additional Resources**

Registrarial Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

## **Assignment Breakdown:**

### **Workshop/Forum Participation (15%) – First response to be completed by mid-week (Wednesday); Follow-up response to be completed by end of week (Friday)**

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 asked 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%)**

**Draft uploaded – by 10:30 am Monday, September 28**

**Workshop – Week 4: September 28 – October 2**

**Due – last day/Friday of Week 5: October 9**

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%)**

**Draft uploaded – by 11:55 pm Friday, October 30**

**Workshop: Week 9: November 9 - 13**

**\*Note: Fall reading week is from November 2-6\***

**Final essay due: Last day/Friday of Week 10: November 20**

Students have been assigned to (almost) full-class workshop groups. **Drafts of essays are to be uploaded to Owl by Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>.** 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 11: November 23 - 27**

**Pair Workshop: Week 12: November 30 – December 4**

**Final Hybrid Project due: Week 13 – December 9**

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 12: December 4**

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>Week</b>	<b>Readings/Podcasts/Videos</b>	<b>Forums/Assignments</b>
Week 1: Getting Started Sept. 9 - 11	Welcome Video Lee Gutkind podcast Introduction What is Creative Nonfiction?	Post introduction
Week 2 Sept. 14 - 18	Listen to Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche TED talk & This American Life Podcast	This American Life forum Writing Prompt
Week 3 Sept. 21-25	The Use of Digression lecture "The Essayist Is Sorry for Your Loss" - Sara Levine (280 – 290) "Upspeak" – Durga Chew Bose (pdf online)	Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 4 Sept. 28- Oct. 2	Essay 1 workshop	<b>Draft of Essay 1 uploaded to workshop forum</b>
Week 5 Oct. 5 - 9	Writing About Family Lecture "Bloodlines and Bitter Syrup" – Will Bridges ( <a href="http://www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/bloodlines-and-bitter-syrup">www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/bloodlines-and-bitter-syrup</a> )	<b>Essay 1 due</b> Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 6 (Thanksgiving Oct. 12) Oct. 13 - 16	On Memory lecture "Black Swans" – Lauren Slater (484 – 499) "If You Knew Then..." – Ryan Van Meter (520 – 525)	Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 7 Oct. 19 - 23	Elizabeth Gilbert on genius – TED talk "A Small Place" - Jamaica Kincaid (257 – 264) "This Is Not Who We Are" – Naomi Shihab Nye (402-403)	Gilbert forum posting Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 8 Oct. 26 - 30	"Mother Tongue" – Amy Tan (514 - 519) "Embalming Mom" – Janet Burroway (76 – 88)	<b>Upload draft of Essay 2 to workshop group</b> Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
<b>Nov. 2 - 6</b>	<b>Fall Reading Break</b>	<b>Take a break!</b>
Week 9 Nov. 9 - 13	Essay 2 workshop	<b>Workshop forum postings</b>
Week 10 Nov. 16 - 20	"The Pain Scale" – Eula Biss (28 – 42) "Hello, 911?" – Samantha Irby ( <a href="http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/02/03/hello-911">www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/02/03/hello-911</a> )	<b>Essay 2 due</b> Reading forum postings Writing Prompt
Week 11	"Blur" – David Shields (online) Hybrid concept workshop	Reading forum posting Workshop forum postings

Nov. 23 - 27		Writing Prompt
Week 12 Nov. 30 - Dec. 4	Multimedia Hybrid Nonfiction Examples (on Owl) Hybrid pair workshop	<b>Exercise Revision due</b> Forum Postings
Week 13 Dec. 7 - 9	Last class wrap-up Mary Gannon podcast	<b>Hybrid Project due</b> Post to last class forum