

Writing 240: Intro to Creative Nonfiction

CRN 21393, Fall 2019

Instructor: **Will Fleming**
Class Hours: **Tues/Thurs 11:30 - 12:50 p.m.** Room: **NSH/106**
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Office Hours: **Mon-Thurs 10:00-11:00 a.m. & by appt.**

***No required textbook; all course materials posted on Moodle**

WR240 Introduction to Creative Nonfiction explores ways that writers use creative writing techniques (plot, characterization, setting, metaphor, point of view, voice, etc.) in nonfiction (truthful) writing, such as essays, memoirs, and literary journalism. Writing 240 also emphasizes the creative process: personal reflective writing, creative drafting strategies, writing workshops, and revision. We will read and discuss various examples of creative nonfiction, and we will write our own examples drawing on our own experiences.

***Note:** May be repeated for up to six credits.

Recommended Prerequisite: WR 121 (English Composition)

Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to: 1.) Demonstrate the skills of creative nonfiction writing (dialogue, setting, character, theme, message, reflection, research, etc.) through learning and practicing the craft of creative nonfiction writing in a workshop environment; 2.) write and speak effectively about the craft of creative nonfiction writing; 3.) interpret creative nonfiction through critical evaluation. 4.) write creative nonfiction that addresses elements of the human condition; and 5.) participate in activities that encourage personal awareness, growth, and/or creativity through creative nonfiction writing.

What is creative nonfiction? – The late writer and teacher David Foster Wallace lists the following writing forms as types of creative nonfiction: “... personal essays and memoirs, profiles, nature and travel writing, narrative essays, observational or descriptive essays, general-interest technical writing, argumentative or idea-based essays, general-interest criticism, literary journalism, and so on.”

Additionally, Wallace says, “As nonfiction, the works are connected to actual states of affairs in the world, are ‘true’ to some reliable extent. If, for example, a certain event is alleged to have occurred, it must really have occurred.”

The creative aspect of creative nonfiction—what this class entails—lies in **how you present the experience or information**. ‘Creative’ does not mean you embellish, exaggerate, or bend what’s true. Wallace states: “The reader will feel about you, your subject, and your essay only what your written words themselves induce her to feel.”

As a writer of creative nonfiction, it is your job to make your subject matter interesting; simply sharing experiences or expressing feelings will not cut it. This class asks that you plumb the depths of your memories, thoughts, and feelings for subject matter, and that you find ways of translating that subject matter into writing that speaks to a wider audience. Natalie Goldberg states: “Write what disturbs you, what you fear, what you have not been willing to speak about. Be willing to be split open.”

COURSE POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

Attendance & Lateness:

Attendance – Consistent attendance is crucial to your success in this course. Class participation is an integral part of the structure of this class; therefore, your attendance and involvement are necessary.

Lateness – Lateness is distracting and inconsiderate. Please make every effort to arrive on time.

Participation & Preparation: Class participation is an important part of this course. I expect students to have completed their readings and any necessary assignments prior to class, and to be prepared to participate in classroom discussions about the work. I also expect students to be prepared for peer review workshops (see calendar). NOTE: Though this is a 'creative' class, this does not mean that

Class participation counts for 5% of the final grade.

Late Assignments: Assignments are due at the start of class on the date specified in the class calendar. Students who foresee a problem turning in an assignment on time should contact me immediately. With the exception of excused absences, any work not turned in by the following class will not be accepted.

Revision: Revision is a necessary aspect of writing. No writers ever write perfect first drafts. I will allow an opportunity to resubmit one assignment demonstrating significant revisions. Please note, however, that the assignment can only be revised and resubmitted if the original grade was a C or lower.

Plagiarism: All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented.

Class Cancellation: If for any reason I need to cancel class, I will notify you via email and post a cancellation notice outside the classroom.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

LBCC Writing Center: The LBCC Writing Center can help you take your writing to the next level. Drop in during regular hours or make an appointment. In addition to your draft, please bring your assignment. You may also submit your writing online at lbcc.writingcenteronline.net where you will receive a response within 1-2 business days. For more information, visit the Writing Center online at <http://www.linnbenton.edu/go/learning-center/writing-help>.

CFAR: LBCC is committed to inclusiveness and equal access to higher education. If you have approved accommodations through the Center for Accessibility Rights (CFAR) and would like to use your accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss your needs. If you think you may be eligible for accommodations but are not yet registered with CFAR, please visit the [CFAR website](#) for steps on how to apply for services. Online course accommodations may be different than those for on-campus courses, so it is important that you make contact with CFAR as soon as possible.

Roadrunner Resource Center: Get connected to resources that can help with: childcare, food, emergency housing, healthcare, taxes, utilities, textbooks and school supplies, transportation, and more. Contact Student Resource Navigator Amanda Stanley at stanlea@linnbenton.edu, at (541) 917-4877, or in Takena/112. Please also feel free to talk about these issues with me if you are comfortable doing so.

LBCC Non-Discrimination Policy: Everyone is welcome at LBCC, regardless of whether they are black, white, Latino, native, gay, straight, Christian, Muslim, Jewish, male, female, transgender, married, disabled, a veteran, a non-English speaker, an immigrant, or any number of other categories not listed here. What is more, LBCC sees our differences as a source of strength and an important part of education.

WR240 TERM ASSIGNMENTS

SWA#1 (5%) – Describe a **person** you know well—a family member, friend, significant other, coworker, etc. Consider the following questions to help you get started: What is your relationship to them? What is unique about them, and how will you convey this to your audience (you may do some scene work if necessary)? How much physicality versus emotionality should you include? How should you balance showing versus telling?

SWA#2 (5%) – Write about a **physical place** you know well, anything from the inside of a car or a room to an entire town, city, state, or country. Consider the following questions to help you get started: How/why is this place significant to you? What is unique about it, and what will your readers find interesting? What about it might be familiar to readers? What do your readers need to know about this place and what do they need to see? Try to place your readers there with details, but remember that details are not just physical descriptions.

SWA#3 (5%) – Write a **scene with dialogue** (a conversation), either one that you participated in yourself or one that you observed. There should be at least two people talking. Think about the following questions: Why is it important that this scene be written as a scene rather than being summarized? Should every part of the conversation be included in the scene? If not, what will you summarize and why? How does the dialogue help develop the characters?

SWA#4 (10%) – Flash Memoir – write a **short but complete narrative** (750-1,000 words). The narrative should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and something should happen. You might want to consider an emotional (or emotionally-charged) moment in your own life or one you witnessed in someone else's. This moment may be happy or harsh, painful or pleasant, or something that's far more complicated than a single adjective can describe. Sometimes the first thing that comes to mind when you think of this assignment is significant—there's a reason why you thought of that first. Don't be afraid to get personal!

Essays 1 & 2 (25% & 30%) – The only criteria for your two major essays is that they be creative nonfiction (a truthful narrative) and that they fit the assigned page count. You may choose to expand upon one of your SWA writing exercises and turn it into an essay, or you may choose to do something entirely different. I just ask that you keep it creative, keep it nonfiction, and keep it within the word counts. Also, please double-space, carefully proofread, and include a title. Both essays will be workshoped/peer reviewed.

Word count: between 1,200 and 2,500 words (between roughly 5 and 9 double-spaced pages)

Personal Journals (10%) – Throughout the term, you will keep a written journal (an actual journal or an electronic one) in which you will write with some regularity. You may use your journal for whatever you'd like, from reflecting on your day or your feelings, to writing childhood memories, to sketching out scenes, to listing ideas for essays, to trying out different approaches to introductions to your essay ideas. It's not a requirement, but I strongly suggest you try to write in it at least once per day, even if it's only a few sentences or ideas. *Please bring your journals to class—we may have free-write times in class when you may write in your journal.

Reflective Essay (5%) – At the end of the term, you will write a brief summary of your work this term. Where were you as a writer when the term started versus where you are at the end? In what areas were you successful this term? In what areas did you struggle? What areas will you continue to work on? What do you like about your writing this term? *NOTE: This is not a reflection of the course or a critique of my teaching (toward the end of the term you will have an opportunity to share your critiques of the class and/or my teaching in a different venue).

Class Participation (5%) – participating in class discussions and activities, completing readings prior to class, turning in assignments on time, and being prepared for peer review sessions.

FALL 2019 WR240 COURSE CALENDAR (wks 1-5)

Wk 1

- 10/1 (T)** – Introductions/Course Requirements/Expectations/Assignments Format
Assignments: -Log on to Moodle and review the course materials
-Watch “What is Creative About Creative Nonfiction?” (short video)
-Read weekly reading selections on Moodle
- 10/3 (H)** – Discussion: What is creative nonfiction? / Writing about people
Assignments: -Read weekly reading selections on Moodle
-Purchase, find, or set up your Personal Journal and begin writing in it
-Complete **SWA#1 (due 10/8)**

Wk 2

- 10/8 (T)** – **SWA#1 DUE** / Discussion: Writing about people
Assignments: -Read weekly reading selections on Moodle
-Begin **SWA#2 (due 10/15)**
- 10/10 (H)** – Discussion: Narrative approaches / Subject matter / Writing about place
Assignments: -Read weekly reading selections on Moodle
-Watch Susan Orlean’s “How to Find Subjects...” video
-Begin **SWA#2 (due 10/15)**

Wk 3

- 10/15 (T)** – **SWA#2 DUE**
Discussion: Writing about place / Writing dialogue
Assignments: -Read weekly reading selections on Moodle
-Read handouts on writing scenes and dialogue
-Begin **SWA#3 (due 10/22)**
- 10/17 (H)** – Discussion: Writing about place
Assignments: -Read weekly reading selections on Moodle
-Prepare **SWA#3 (due 10/22)**

Wk 4

- 10/22 (T)** – **SWA#3 DUE** / Discussion: Writing scenes and dialogue
Assignments: -Read handouts on flash memoir
-Read weekly reading selections on Moodle
-Begin **SWA#4 (rough drafts due 10/29)**
- 10/24 (H)** – Discussion: Writing flash/micro memoir
Assignments: -Read weekly reading selections on Moodle
-Find **an example of flash memoir** to share with the class (**due 10/29**)
-Prepare **SWA#4 (rough drafts due 10/29)**

Wk 5

- 10/29 (T)** – **SWA#4 ROUGH DRAFTS DUE (*bring 2 copies of your draft to class for review)**
Assignments: -Revise **SWA#4 (final copy due 10/31)**
- 10/31 (H)** – **SWA#4 FINAL COPIES DUE** (including drafts and reviews)
Discussion: Writing the Personal Essay
Assignments: -Read weekly reading selections on Moodle
-**Begin Essay #1 (drafts due 11/7; finals due 11/12)**