

## English 5380: Creative Nonfiction

This course is an advanced study of creative nonfiction and will investigate the manner in which the actuality of a lived experience can be articulated by employing the rhetorical and figurative tools of fiction and poetry. The course will also focus on the expressive and ontological aspects of creative nonfiction, the concepts that undergird creative nonfiction, and the methods and manners of textual production. In addition to presenting ways to read creative nonfiction more closely and critically, the course will also provide opportunities to craft various kinds of creative nonfiction texts: memoirs, personal essays, and lyrical essays. This course is excellent preparation for teachers seeking dual credit certification in English; it can also be used in the MAT degree program in English.

### Texts:

*Tell It Slant: Writing and Shaping Creative Nonfiction* by Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola (McGraw-Hill, 2004)

*The Art of Description* by Mark Doty (Graywolf Press, 2010)

*In Short: A Collection of Brief Creative Nonfiction* edited by Judith Kitchen and Mary Paumier Jones (Norton, 1996)

*The Rose Metal Press Field Guide to Writing Flash Nonfiction* edited by Dinty W. Moore (Rose Metal Press, 2012)

Radio Essays: TED Radio Hour

Pod Casts: Malcolm Gladwell

### Purpose

This course is designed to help you:

- become an independent and critical thinker, writer, and learner;
- gain a working knowledge of the various manners and modes of creative nonfiction;
- learn to read and comprehend creative nonfiction on an “anagogical” level;
- become acquainted with the various dynamics — aesthetic, psychological, social — that contribute to the shaping of nonfiction;
- discover ways to craft your own creative nonfictional texts;
- learn to incorporate devices from fiction and poetry in the construction of creative nonfictional texts.

## **Response to Reading**

The required texts will serve as the foci of the course, since you will be reading them carefully, thoughtfully, and analytically; in addition, you will be responding to each text in two ways:

- 1) submit a summary of what you have read for the week; the summary should present the thesis for each section of the text you are summarizing and a list of bulleted items that convey the essential content of each section,
- 2) **and** a 3 page response essay (replete with a clear, thesis statement); the response should be a mini-essay that enables you to articulate what you discovered in your reading, what associations you made while and after reading, what questions you have about the reading, what issues the reading brought up for you, what you agreed with (and why), what you disagreed with (and why), what delighted you (or surprised, or perplexed, or confused, or piqued your curiosity, etc.) and why.

## **Assignments**

- Text summary/responses worth 50 points each
- Creative Nonfiction writing activities worth 75 points each (NB: writing activity directions, examples, and assessment forms will be distributed throughout the semester.)
- A final project: Creative Nonfiction portfolio and reflective/explanatory essay worth 300 points

## **Poetry Portfolio Assignment**

Create a portfolio by including the rough drafts, revisions, and final drafts of the creative nonfiction you have written this semester.

Clearly label the phase of each poem: eg., “rough draft,” “revision,” “final draft”. Place them, stapled together in this order: final draft on top, revisions beneath the final draft, and rough draft beneath the revisions. Include the assessment form for each poem.

## **Reflective Essay**

Write a 10 page essay in which you discuss the creative nonfiction portfolio. Consider discussing: the processes by which you created the texts; what you

discovered about yourself as a writer; what you discovered about the nature and manners of creative nonfiction; how your thoughts about creative nonfiction have changed (and what precipitated the changes). In your essay, be sure to make ample references to the texts we have read this semester. [More details will be given once we meet.]

### **Meeting: Independent Study**

We will meet once every three weeks, unless for instructional reasons we need to meet more often, eg., once every two weeks.