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Spring 2-1-2019

### CRWR 412.01: Advanced Creative Writing - Nonfiction

Bryan R. Disalvatore

*University of Montana, Missoula*

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CRWR 412

# Advanced Nonfiction Workshop

Spring 2019

Tuesdays and Thursdays 5:00-6:20pm

## Instructor Information

Instructor: Bryan Di Salvatore

Office: LA 121

Email: [bryan.disalvatore@mso.umt.edu](mailto:bryan.disalvatore@mso.umt.edu)

Office hours: Mondays 10-1 and by appointment

## Course Description/Learning Outcomes

Our subject is the craft of nonfiction. We will read it, discuss it, and write it. Lots of it. If you listen closely, read openly, imagine boundlessly, take chances constantly and write and rewrite your fingers to the bone, you will leave this class a better writer of nonfiction than you were at its onset. You will also recognize and avoid, for the most part, those technical and tactical mistakes that uninformed, ill-read, amateur writers make. You will become a more astute and more informed reader. You will never again see the world in exactly the same way as you did January 10<sup>th</sup>.

## Required Textbooks

None. Most of the term's readings are on Moodle, others I will hand out in class. Generally, we will discuss Moodle readings in class. Bring the readings to class in hard copy. Don't bring it on a computer. Don't not bring it in.

## How It's Going to Work

**YOU** will write a half-dozen or so long pieces; their lengths will, generally, increase as the semester goes on. The longest of these might be 2000 words. I will assign the category, you will come up with the specific subject. Much of our classroom time will be spent reading other writers' pertinent works and being inspired by them or disgusted—spurred in some ways is the point. Take a quick look at Moodle for "Topics" we will cover. Occasionally I will ask an individual to rewrite a paper.

**YOU** will also write 20 or so "postcards." These range in length from 50-100 words.

**YOU** will keep all your work—including your margin-marked hard copy of assigned readings (see above)—in a packet to be turned in to me at the end of the semester (and turned back to you). These packets will refresh my memory of your work as well as track the progress of your writing and the diligence of your reading.

**Regularly**, I will type up a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph of various students' work and present it anonymously in class for discussion. (See "Student Samplers" in Moodle.)

I do not accept electronic assignments. I do not accept electronic assignments. I do not . . . etc.  
**ALL** assignments must be typewritten.

**ALL** assignments will be turned in on time. If you are absent, you must still, somehow, get your assignment to me on time. If you can't physically turn in your assignment, find some way for someone else to do so. I do not read late assignments. They will be marked **0**. A single **0** can maul your final grade.

**STUDENTS** exist who have earned an A grade in my classes. An A means you have done excellent, or extraordinary, perhaps even memorable work. A B means that you have not done excellent or extraordinary work, merely very good work. A C means that you have done average, forgettable work. Improvement counts. People have earned Ds in my classes.

**MY** grade scale is this:

60-69=D

70-79=C

80-89=B

90-99=A

(Within these brackets, 1-4 is a "minus"; 6-9 is a "plus")

**THE** longer papers count for about 60% of your grade. The postcards count for about 30% of your grade. Class participation, preparation, progress/stasis make up the rest.

**ALL** the above sternness, the rigidity, I present reluctantly. The class rules have evolved over time. They mean to displace misunderstandings on both our parts, to illuminate, as brightly as possible, the playing field. They are not made to run counter to what is finally, a highly subjective discipline. Deadlines and restrictions are part of the writing craft. Trust me on that.

**THAT SAID**, I think you will find plenty of room—in many cases far more than you will find comfortable—to stretch your writing wings in this class; to find the best word, the most powerful or felicitous or arresting phrase, and to make discoveries about where to begin a piece, where to end a piece, what to include and what to omit. Missteps, misdirection, naïve choices, are inevitable. I expect them. I welcome them and embrace them. This is how we learn, stumbling our way to leaping.

And **THAT** said, what I do not welcome or embrace, what I, in fact, abhor, what I find hateful and ugly beyond redemption, are *chronic* errors, born of carelessness and ignorance: misspellings; grammar manglings; syntactical mutilations, and word misuse (as opposed to misfitting, classing patterns and words used merely not-quite-perfectly).

**THIS** is a university-level class. I have no intention of "correcting" your mechanics but I will point out lapses for the first paper or so. Then, things are in your hands. I reserve the right to "split a grade" i.e.

half for mechanics and half for content or dock points. It is shameful that I even have to bring this up. But, believe me, I do.

**YOU** will know what we're going to be up to one or two or even three weeks in advance. The absence of an initial week-by-week schedule is intentional. I know the places we will visit but, at this point, am unfamiliar with the members of this tour group, unable to judge our pace. Therefore, I reserve the right to change our route, the length of our various sojourns.

**When** I talk, and I tend to, I ask that you listen carefully and take notes.

**When** I talk, and I tend to, I beg you, **interrupt and ask questions, demand clarifications.** Be polite but insistent if I'm not making myself clear or if you disagree.

## Legally Required Stuff

### Course withdrawal:

Make sure **you** know the last day you can drop the course with a refund and no "W" on your transcript, because I sure as hell don't.

### Student Conduct Code:

Please familiarize yourself with the [Student Conduct Code website](#).

### Disability Modifications:

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors and [Disabilities Services for Students](#). If you think that you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance and you have **not** already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in the Lommasson Center 154 (406-243-2243). I will work with you and your Disabilities Services contact to provide appropriate modification.