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CRWR 212A.01: Introduction to Nonfiction Workshop

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Fall 2021
Creative Nonfiction
72603 - CRWR 212A - 01
University of Montana, Liberal Arts 102
Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 am - 12:20 pm

Instructor: Mirela Musić
Office: LA 228 — Office Hours by appt.
Email: mirela.music@umconnect.umt.edu

CRWR 212 is a workshop course in creative nonfiction, a slippery term which suggests a broad category of prose writing—personal essays and memoirs, profiles, travel writing, narrative essays, criticism, literary journalism, and more. The course will emphasize craft, looking at style, structure, and storytelling strategies. We can't possibly cover everything, but we'll do our best to explore several genres and styles, from traditional to newer forms. Depending on enrollment, there should be room in our workshop schedule for everyone to have three workshop slots.

Be aware that the syllabus is subject to change both in terms of readings/writing exercises and modality. Should it become necessary, be ready to move online in the form of ZOOM and Moodle. You are expected to have ready access to computers or other electronic devices that allow you to meet and communicate online.

Course Texts

Course materials will be available on Moodle, our online platform. Please download/print these materials and bring them with you to class on the days of discussion.

COURSEWORK AND GRADING OVERVIEW

- **Workshop Ready Writing, Short Writing Exercises, and Revisions 60%**
 - ▶ Keep a **personal notebook** throughout the semester. In it you will include in-class writing exercises as well as observations, ideas and writings you do on your own or in preparation for class assignments.
 - ▶ Complete all **writing assignments**— You'll be expected to write three pieces of creative nonfiction of 800 to 500 words each, depending on the assignment, and revising one piece for a final portfolio. We'll also write several in-class and out of class exercises. Assignments will have broad parameters, so you can make as many choices as possible about your writing. The final assignment will consist of a significant revision of one essay. All out-of-class writing must be typed.
- **Workshop Response Letters 20%**

- ▶ Write thorough and thoughtful **responses** to your peers' writing. During workshops, you will be expected to respond to your fellow classmates in writing, offering 250-350 words to each essay you read. You will print two copies, one for the author and one for me.
- **Quality and Quantity of Participation 20%**
 - ▶ **Complete all assigned readings**—Each week you will be assigned to read 2-4 essays. I consider the reading load for this course relatively light in regards to the total number of pages. Many of the essays are difficult and complex. It will be necessary to read each essay several times. **If you are having trouble with an essay, it will not be acceptable to say, “I didn’t understand it.”** You will need to identify passages you had trouble with and write down questions you had while reading. You will only come to understand the essays by actively grappling with them.
 - ▶ **Present in pairs** on readings—Two people will be asked to present on each of our assigned readings. They will research information about the author(s) and they will facilitate the class discussion around the author’s writing.
 - ▶ **Professionalism and courtesy are expected.** The student conduct code asks students to “respect the rights, privileges, and dignity of others” — inability to do so will result in failure. This class is, and must be, a safe critical space to explore forms and ideas. We’ll be creating work that is necessarily personal, which means it will not only be inextricably bound with our own conceptions of identity, but will also demand at times that we are vulnerable. We need to treat each other with respect and compassion, which means recognizing each other’s time, voices, and thoughts, and to treat each peer’s essay-drafts as confidential. Please don’t share them with anyone — not roommates, not mutual friends, not distant cousins.

GRADING SCALE

A= 100 - 90% B=89 - 80% C=79 - 70% D=69 - 60% F=59 - 0%

Format for Typed Work

All written work should be typed, double-spaced, and stapled, using 12- point Times New Roman font and 1” margins. Essay headers need to include name, date, and class; page numbers need to be in the top right hand corner with last name. If possible, print your work double-sided.

Missing/late work

I do not accept late work. Moreover, you cannot revise late work. If you ever have a problem with an assignment, talk to me in advance of the deadline and you may be able to negotiate a special arrangement. *Deadlines are not negotiable after you’ve missed them.*

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code: (http://www.umd.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).

Absences/Attendance

As with any T/Th class at UM, you may miss two classes over the course of the semester. On the third absence, your grade will drop by one letter, on the fourth it will drop by another. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. **This means if you miss more than four classes for any reason you cannot pass this class!**

Office hours

Please don't hesitate to approach me with questions or concerns this semester, especially if you are confused about an assignment or if you will miss a class. During the school week, I do check my e-mail daily, but I can only guarantee that I will respond within 48 hours of receiving an e-mail. Do not wait until the last minute to ask me to clarify an assignment. Start early so that you can be sure you understand the requirements, and **be sure to utilize your peers as resources—exchange e-mails and phone numbers!**

Support

Resources beyond the Writing Classroom [The Mansfield Library](#) and the [Writing Center](#) are both excellent sites for writers to get additional support. The library provides [important tools](#) for learning and research. The Writing Center provides online tutorials, so meeting face to face is not necessary for distance learning students; for a tutorial, send an email to: onlinetutoring@umontana.edu.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult: <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.

Fall 2011 Creative Nonfiction Schedule

It is important that you keep up with the syllabus, even if you are absent. Please ask questions if you have them. If school is cancelled for any reason, please keep up with the syllabus. You will receive a more detailed workshop schedule midway through the semester. Please check with me if you have a question in advance about future assignments.

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS	READING DUE	WRITING DUE

1	8/31	Introductions Syllabus What is CNF? Spectrum *Assign presentations *Quiz	“How to Read Like a Writer” by Mike Bunn “Why Creative Nonfiction?” By Perl & Schwartz	<i>Writing Your Name- In Four Parts</i> assignment from “Why Creative Nonfiction?” [page 15]
	9/2	<u>Truth,</u> <u>memory,</u> <u>accuracy</u>	“To Fashion a Text” by Annie Dillard “On Pandering” by Claire Vaye Watkins	
2	9/7	<u>Voice &</u> <u>Diction</u>	“Total Eclipse” by Annie Dillard “Sight Into Insight” by Annie Dillard “Slouching Towards Bethlehem” by Joan Didion	
	9/9	<u>Detail &</u> <u>language</u>	“Speak, Body” by Fátima Policarpo “When to Tell Someone You Went to Prison” by Marco Verdoni	
3	9/14	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	9/16	<u>Narrative</u> <u>Distance</u>	“Meet Justin Bieber” by Zadie Smith Jamaica Kincaid’s “Small Place”	Same scene, first in present, then in past
	9/21	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter

4	9/23	<u>Summary vs. Scene</u>	<p>“Fighting Fire” by Judy Blunt</p> <p>“The Landscape of Creative Nonfiction” by Jocelyn Bartkevicius</p>	Listen in on dialogue & transcribe
5	9/28	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	9/30	<u>Point of View</u>	<p>“Silent Dancing” by Judith Ortiz Cofer</p> <p>“My Favorite Teacher” by Robert Kurson</p>	
6	10/5	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	10/7	<u>Tone</u>	<p>“The Pony Problem” by Sloane Crosley</p> <p>“Black Swans” by Lauren Slater</p>	
7	10/12	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	10/14	<u>The Personal</u>	<p>“Repeat after me” and “Me Talk pretty One Day” by David Sedaris</p> <p>“The Love of My Life” by Cheryl Strayed</p>	Students will list the elements of the essay or creative nonfiction to be added in their writing- citing three layers of “about” in the process.
8	10/19	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	10/21	<u>Profile/characterization</u>	“Frank Sinatra has a Cold” by Gay Talese	Mini profile (300 words)
	10/26	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter

9	10/28	<u>Research& Reflection</u>	“Kissing” by Farrington “Flight” by Barry Lopez	250 word news imitation
10	11/2	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	11/4	<u>Research& Reflection</u>	“The Trash Heap Has Spoken” by Carmen Maria Machado	Students will demonstrate deep research by submitting an annotated bibliography of three sources on the topic: How does each source deepen or expand the student’s personal exploration?
11	11/9	Discuss: Which kind of revisionist are you?	Read and reflect upon: “How to Revise” “The Craft of Revision: The Great Gatsby” by Kenneth Eble	Pulled Pages: Students will revise examples and explain their choices.
	11/11	No Classes — Veterans Day Observed	—	—
12	11/16	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	11/18	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
13	11/23	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	11/25	No Classes — Thanksgiving holiday	—	—
14	11/30	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	12/2	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
15	12/7	Workshop	Workshop Reading	Workshop Letter
	12/9	<u>Class Readings</u>		Final Revision

An Unofficial Canon: Recommended Nonfiction Readings

Jean Dominique Bauby – The Diving Bell and the Butterfly (memoir)
Jo Ann Beard – The Boys of My Youth (creative nonfiction)
Katherine Boo – Beyond the Beautiful Forevers (nonfiction)
Bill Buford – Among the Thugs, Heat
Augusten Burroughs – A Wolf at the Table (memoir)
Mary Carr – The Liars’ Club (memoir)
Ta-Nehisi Coates – Between the World and Me (nonfiction)
Frank Conroy – Stop-Time (memoir), Dogs Bark, but the Caravan Rolls On (essays)
Dave Cullen – Columbine (nonfiction)
Charles D’Ambrosio – Loitering (essays)
Andre Dubus – Broken Vessels (essays)
Tony Earley – Somehow Form a Family (essays)
Carrie Fisher – The Best Awful There Is (memoir)
Nick Flynn – Another Bullshit Night in Suck City (memoir)
Emily Fox – Gordon Mockingbird Years (personal essays)
Paula Fox – Borrowed Finery (memoir)
Jonathan Franzen -- How to Be Alone (essays)
Alexander Fuller – Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight (memoir)
Susan Jane Gilman – Undress me in the Temple of Heaven (memoir)
Lucy Grealy – Autobiography of a Face (memoir)
Guerrilla Girls’ – Bitches, Bimbos, and Ballbreakers Illustrated Guide to Female Stereotypes (nonfiction)
Leslie Jamison – The Empathy Exams (essays)
Patricia Hampl – The Florist's Daughter (memoir)
Cathi Hanauer – The Bitch In The House (essays)
Kathryn Harrison – The Kiss (memoir)
Susanna Kaysen – Girl, Interrupted (memoir)
Jon Krakauer – Into Thin Air (nonfiction), Into the Wild (nonfiction), Under the Banner of Heaven (nonfiction)
Erik Larson – The Devil in the White City (history), In the Garden of the Beasts (history)
Kiese Laymon – How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America (essays)
Adrian Nicole LeBlanc – Random Family (nonfiction)
Phillip Lopate – Portrait of My Body (personal essay)
Thomas Lynch – The Undertaking: Life Studies from the Dismal Trade (memoir)
Frank McCourt – Angela's Ashes (memoir)
Tim Miller – Shirts and Skin (memoir)
Anchee Min – The Cooked Seed (memoir)
Eric Newby – Love and War in the Apennines (memoir)
Danielle Ofri – Singular Intimacies: Becoming A Doctor at Bellevue (memoir)
Chris Offutt – The Same River Twice, No Heroes (memoir)
Wendy Ortiz – Excavation (memoir)
Michael Ondaatje – Running in the Family (memoir)

Orhan Pamuk – Istanbul (memoir)
Ann Patchett – Truth and Beauty (memoir)
Claudia Rankine – Citizen (prose poem)
Kirk Read – How I learned to Snap: A Small-Town Coming-of-Age Coming Out Story (memoir)
Katie Roiphe – Uncommon Arrangements, In Praise of Messy Lives
Oliver Sacks – Awakenings (nonfiction), The Anthropologist on Mars (nonfiction)
Laurie Sandell – The Imposter's Daughter (memoir)
Mandy Sayer – Dreamtime Alice (memoir)
David Sedaris – Holidays On Ice, Naked, Me Talk Pretty One Day (humor)
Allen Shawn – Wish I Could Be There (memoir)
Lauren Slater – Lying (memoir)
Andrew Solomon – Far From the Tree (nonfiction)
Susanna Sonnenberg – Her Last Death (memoir)
Deborah Jiang Stein – Prison Baby (memoir)
Darin Strauss – Half a Life (memoir)
Cheryl Strayed – Wild (memoir)
Tony Swofford – Jarhead (memoir)
Robert Vivian – The Least Cricket of Evening (essays)
Jeannette Walls – The Glass Castle (memoir)
Jesmyn Ward – Men We Reaped (memoir)
Tobias Wolf – This Boy's Life (memoir)