

Creative Nonfiction - ENG 223



English Department Mission Statement:

The mission of the English department is to prepare students to use language-based critical thinking skills as a powerful tool in their public lives (career and world citizenship) as well as in personal enrichment (aesthetic, interpersonal and spiritual concerns). Students develop and practice these skills by reading, analyzing, and critiquing, in both oral and written formats, a wide variety of texts: literature; literary criticism and theory; and business and technical documents.

Course Title and Description:

ENG 223 - Creative Nonfiction (H) (3 credits)

Students will read and write creative nonfiction from a number of sub-genres, including nature writing, personal essay/memoir, profiles, and reportage, considering possibilities for publication. They will explore the literature of reality from the power of true stories, to the fascination of odd facts, to the revelation of insight

Student Learning Objectives

The specific learning objectives for this course are:

1. To interpret the complex themes, including those of gender, sexuality, race, family relationships, illness, and the environment, in various forms of creative nonfiction
2. To identify types of genres in creative nonfiction appropriate to audience and context
3. To develop analytic and evaluative skills of effective writing
4. To demonstrate effective narrative, stylistic, and research strategies that enhance communication
5. To practice listening and collaboration through constructive feedback on peers' writing and integrating feedback from instructor and peers in the revision process
6. To identify and frame problems in settings that transcend disciplinary boundaries and to utilize storytelling for systemic change in service to self and to others

This course also meets the following specific English Department Goals:

- A. Students will demonstrate knowledge of literary terms, rhetorical terms, and discipline-based vocabulary.
- B. Students will demonstrate their ability to analyze and interpret literature in various genres.
- C. Students will communicate effectively in appropriate genres to solve rhetorical problems.
- D. Students will identify, locate, evaluate, use, and attribute information using discipline-specific tools in the field of English studies.

This course fulfills the following College of Arts and Sciences Goals:

- I. Demonstrated ability to engage in critical thinking appropriate to the discipline.
- II. Demonstrated ability to use information literacy skills, including research skills, appropriate to the major.
- III. Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively in the discipline.
- IV. Demonstrated awareness of key concepts, theories, and/or knowledge in the discipline (content knowledge).
- V. Professional: Able to integrate and apply key principles and concepts in the major field.

Required Texts (provided)

-Miller, Brenda and Suzane Paola, *Tell It Slant: Creating, Refining, and Publishing Creative Nonfiction* (TIS), 3rd edition. McGraw Hill. ISBN 9780071781770 -Additional Required Readings on **Schoology or Teams**

Required Materials:

Journal (Provided)

Writing utensil (pen or pencil) Highlighters

Laptop (the classroom has a set, but you will need one to be able to complete readings and assignments from home so if you do not have a personal laptop, please be sure to borrow one from the school!)

Assessment

Student Learning Objective	Method of Assessment	Department and A&S Goals
To interpret the complex themes, including those of gender, sexuality, race, family relationships, illness, and the environment, in various forms of creative nonfiction	Reading as a Writer Analyses Peer Review	B, I
To identify types of genres in creative nonfiction appropriate to audience and context	All written essays	C, IV
To develop analytic and evaluative skills of effective writing	Reading as a Writer Analyses Peer Review	A, B, I, III
To demonstrate effective narrative, stylistic, and research strategies that enhance communication	All written essays	C, D, II, III
To practice listening and collaboration through constructive feedback on peers' writing and integrating feedback from instructor and peers in the revision process	Peer Review	A, C, III, V
To identify and frame problems in settings that transcend disciplinary boundaries and to utilize storytelling for systemic change in service to self and to others	Seal of Civic Readiness Essay	C, D, II, V

Outline of Course

Lee Gutkind, the founder of the magazine *Creative Nonfiction*, succinctly defines the genre as, “True Stories, Well Told”—that is, actual events experienced by actual people but conveyed through narrative and poetic techniques – those elements that make writing dramatic and vivid and therefore engaging to read. Creative nonfiction can come in many forms: the personal essay, the memoir, travelogue, nature essay, lyric essay, meditative essay, literary journalism and the like. But creative nonfiction is also more than type. As its seemingly contradictory name suggests, it symbolizes paradox. Creative nonfiction is that mode of writing particularly suited to sustain *multiple* truths—factual, intellectual, moral, spiritual, emotional. It is a mode of writing that draws self-conscious attention to the how, what, and why of the stories we tell about who we are individually and collectively—what we remember, what we perceive, and what we value. In this course, we read creative nonfiction as writers, learning to use storytelling for personal and public change.

Classroom Rules

1. **Respect others.**

This classroom will be a safe environment where all members are valued. We will treat others with kindness, respect and not use offensive language of any kind.

2. **Come on time and prepared to learn.**

Please bring all materials and assignments needed for class each day and have them readily available.

3. Always behave in an honorable fashion: no cheating.

Copying from another student, using online sources without citing them, sharing your work, plagiarism etc., will not be tolerated and will result in an immediate 0% on your assignment. **4. Put your phone away (This will help with rule #5)**

5. Follow directions when given.

Please give your attention when it is asked for, listen and follow directions the first time they are given and if you were not paying attention, refer to the assignment directions in Teams or on Schoology, or ask a classmate before coming to me for directions. I do not teach things twice!

Course Requirements

GOOD CITIZENSHIP – Part of being in a creative writing class is *learning how to be a responsible and effective member of a writing community*, to be aware of your audience and of the purposes of different types of writing.

James Baldwin wrote, “We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.”

Please be aware that as a class we will *not tolerate work that is intentionally offensive*, that denies anyone else’s humanity. This is not the place to express gratuitous violence or graphic sexual content, nor will we tolerate hate speech toward any group of people. Some work we read may be personally difficult. If the essays provoke unsettling memories or emotions, please contact your counselor:

NFHS Student Support 2022-2023				
Cheryl Vilardo, Principal - 286-7950, cwvilardo@nfschools.net				
Counselors				
Contact for questions about credits, assessments, courses, medical needs, academic support				
Last Name	Name	Phone Number	Email	Room
A - B	Nicole Gall	286-7931	ngall@nfschools.net	120
C - Den	Julianna Jacoby-Patronski	286-7911	jjacoby-patronski@nfschools.net	120
Deo - G	Ethan Duncan	286-7975	eduncan@nfschools.net	120
H - Ji	Adam Bianco	286-7932	abianco@nfschools.net	120
Jo - Marte	Tiffany Bradberry	286-4297	tbradberry@nfschools.net	140
Martin - O	Tammy Novak	286-0748	tnovak@nfschools.net	140
P - R	Rachel Rotella	286-7930	rrotella@nfschools.net	140
S - Ta	Carleen Krysa	286-7906	ckrysa@nfschools.net	140
Te - Z	Terrell Rodgers	286-7933	trodders@nfschools.net	140
Deans				
Contact for questions about discipline issues, bullying, harrassment, peer conflicts				
Last Name	Name	Phone Number	Email	Room
A - G	Mia Bianco	278-8507	mbianco@nfschools.net	220

H - O	Don Bass	286-7010	dbass@nfschools.net	220
P - Z	Ricco Slaiman	286-7914	rslainman@nfschools.net	220
TIER 2	Fredia Cowart	286-7904	fcowart@nfschools.net	220
TIER 2	Cori Cuddahee	286-7920	ccuddahee@nfschools.net	312
TIER 3	Marc Catanzaro	286-7919	mcatanzaro@nfschools.net	220
Social Workers				
Contact for questions/community resources, housing, food, mental health, crisis intervention				
Last Name	Name	Phone Number	Email	Room
All	Jamaal Hackett	286-7942	jhackett@nfschools.net	209
All	Ka-Shara Jordon	286-7013	kjordon@nfschools.net	209
All	Emily Sacco	286-7978	esacco@nfschools.net	209

WRITER’S JOURNAL – In addition to **daily in-class writing**, you should make a **habit of writing outside class** by using the “Try It” prompts at the end of the *Tell It Slant (TIS)* chapters as well as **recording daily observations, memories, images, and other ideas** for writing projects. Because good writing is physical—engaging the five senses—the practice of journal-keeping, putting hand to pen and pen to paper, engages writers with the world around them. These journals will not be collected but I will be checking them for use and completeness. They will also provide much of the material for your formal writing assignments.

FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK – Most major assignments, with the exception of the Writer’s Journal, are to be submitted through Schoology or Teams. **In-text citations and Works Cited** should be provided **when citing or referencing any text not your own**.

PREPARATION – Reading: Students are required to **come to class having read all assigned texts** and be prepared to participate in related class discussion. **To receive feedback on your essay drafts, you must submit by the due date for PEER REVIEW.**

Major assignments

Peer Reviews

Sharing drafts with other readers is an important part of the writing and revision process. Several times this school year, you will share a draft of the essay you are working on. This draft **MUST** be **submitted by the date assigned**. As a reader, you must offer constructive feedback throughout the semester **using pgs. 210-211** in “The Power of Writing Communities” in *Tell It Slant* and the peer review graphic organizer provided for the assignment.

Essays

Types of Essays you will be working on:

MICRO ESSAY (150-250 words **max.**)

We will be drawing on entries from your Writer’s Journal, to write a micro essays that capture a memory or experience. See pp. 123-124 in *TIS* and read a few examples on the print journal *Creative Nonfiction*’s website at <https://creativenonfiction.org/news/wanted-instagram-micro-essays>.

*Note: Revision is an important part of the learning process in the development of effective writing skills. 0 pts. – Fails to turn in on the due date or plagiarizes;
1-2 pts. – Minimally meets requirements; contains grammatical errors and typos;

3-5 pts. – Fulfills requirements; attends to generic conventions; develops stylistic choices.

FLASH NONFICTION ESSAY (250-500 words **max.**)

Drawing on entries from your Writer's Journal, you will write a (or several) pieces of flash nonfiction in one of the following genres: memoir, sketch or portrait, travel essay, or nature essay. See pp. 121-123 and 101-147 in *TIS* and read a few examples in *Brevity: A Journal of Concise Literary Nonfiction*, an on-line magazine at <http://brevitymag.com/>.

*Note: Revision is an important part of the learning process in the development of effective writing skills.

0 pts. – Fails to turn in on the due date or plagiarizes.

1-3 pts. – Minimally meets requirements; contains grammatical errors and typos.

4-7 pts. – Fulfills requirements; attends to generic conventions; develops stylistic choices.

8-10 pts. – Writing is polished with a clear style and “voice”; the content of the piece is enhanced through its generic form.

OP-ED (opinion writing) (750-800 words)

The op-ed is an editorial that presents the writer's opinion or thoughts about an issue. They are usually written by people who are experts in a subject matter or have a unique perspective on an issue. They can be used to raise awareness about a topic or aim to persuade others to side with your opinion. Op-eds are focused, and personal (in voice and content) and poignant for the reader.

*Note: Revision is an important part of the learning process in the development of effective writing skills.

0 pts. – Fails to turn in on the due date or plagiarizes.

1-3 pts. – Minimally meets requirements; contains grammatical errors and typos.

4-7 pts. – Fulfills requirements; attends to generic conventions; develops stylistic choices.

8-10 pts. – Writing is polished with a clear style and “voice”; the content of the piece is enhanced through its generic form.

LONG FORM ESSAY (850-1250 words)

We will be working on a longer work of creative nonfiction that explores an issue or topic you find compelling, drawing on our previous reading and writing assignments. You may choose a genre in which you haven't yet written, including any of the following genres: lyric essay, meditative essay, “hermit crab” essay, object essay, literary journalism, memoir, biography, or another genre in which you have not previously written.

In addition to your own relevant experience and background knowledge, the issue or topic you explore in this essay should be contextualized with relevant scholarly research (using library databases, newspapers, etc.); personal experience; and/or interviews with those with first-hand experience concerning your issue or topic.

*Note: Revision is an important part of the learning process in the development of effective writing skills.

0 pts. – Fails to turn in on the due date or plagiarizes.

1-8 pts. – Minimally meets requirements; contains grammatical errors and typos.

9-15 pts. – Fulfills requirements of the assignments; attends to generic conventions but does not sustain this ‘architecture’ throughout the piece; attempts to develop stylistic choices, though these are not consistent.

16-20 pts. – Writing is polished with a clear style and “voice”; the content of the piece is enhanced through its generic form.

Seal of Civic Readiness Piece (TBD in conjunction with your government/economics teacher) (800-1000 words max)

Integrating research into storytelling, you will choose to write in one of the following genres: Op Ed, Mixedmedia Essay, or Literary Journalism, to examine a topic of your choice to fulfill your seal of civic readiness essay requirement. Some ideas include, but are not limited to – Healthcare, Voting, and Higher Education. If you have experience with other media, you may, **with permission**, create a podcast, map essay, or video essay (submit both the written form and the digital form of the assignment). See pp. 101-147 in *TIS* for definitions.

Writing for systemic change should use storytelling strategies paired with research to **educate on issues, raise awareness, and foster civic engagement or access to opportunities**. For whichever topic you choose, you will want to reflect deeply on *how and why this project matters, and how people locally are affected by these issues*.

*Note: Revision is an important part of the learning process in the development of effective writing skills.

0 pts. – Fails to turn in on the due date, plagiarizes, or fails to cite sources;

1-10 pts. – Minimally meets requirements; contains grammatical errors and typos; incorporates research of a single type;

11-19 pts. – Attends to generic conventions but does not sustain this ‘architecture’ throughout the piece; attempts to develop stylistic choices, though these are not consistent; incorporates research but it doesn’t feel fully integrated with the narrative style or is not appropriate or specific enough to the context; does not properly reference sources;

20-25 pts. – Writing is polished with a clear style and “voice”; the content of the piece is enhanced through its generic form; genre is appropriate to audience and context for writing; research is effectively integrated and used to illustrate and enhance the purpose and insights of the essay; sources are consistently and properly cited or referenced.

Project for Publishing

Depending on the time it takes to complete the reading and writing assignments, we will be embarking on one, possibly two projects as a class or in small groups with the mindset of getting published. The first project is a cookbook that everyone in the class will contribute to containing recipes that are traditional, or passed down from generation to generation in our families. They may represent our cultural heritage, or maybe just something that your family loves to share and is special in some way. The second project would be to work in pairs or small groups to create an informational children’s book that we can have published and possibly take to the elementary schools to share.

READING AS A WRITER

To be a good writer, you have to be a good reader. Reading widely can help you to identify what makes writing good, which in turn helps you to develop your own writing skills. **You are required to read ALL assigned essays in this course.** We will be reading several essays (op eds and object essays) to **analyze and evaluate** on your own using relevant **questions of your choosing from pgs. 239-241 “Reading as a Writer” in *Tell It Slant*.**

Late Work

All assignments submitted after the due date will receive a **2-point reduction for each day late**. If you must miss class for a previously scheduled event (i.e., sporting, ROTC, etc.), you must submit the work **before** the event.

Attendance

Research indicates that, “class attendance significantly improves academic performance.” (Source: “Spare the Rigor, Spoil the Learning” by Michael Gordon and Oded Palmon, *Academe*, July-August 2010). This class is

highly dependent on student participation in class discussions, writing workshops, and peer review. As such, attendance is important.

Please be mindful not to be absent unless and until you really need to be.

Academic Integrity (as per Niagara University)

Academic honesty – being honest and truthful in academic settings, especially in the communication and presentation of ideas – is required to experience and fulfill the mission of Niagara University. Academic dishonesty – being untruthful, deceptive, or dishonest in academic settings in any way – subverts the university mission, harms faculty and students, damages the reputation of the university, and diminishes public confidence in higher education.

All members of the university community share the responsibility for creating conditions that support academic integrity. Students must abstain from any violations of academic integrity and set examples for each other by assuming full responsibility for their academic and personal development, including informing themselves about and following the university's academic integrity policy.

Violations of academic integrity include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources, alteration or falsification of academic records; academic misconduct; complicity; and copyright violation. This policy applies to all courses, program requirements, and learning contexts in which academic credit is offered, including experiential and service-learning courses, study abroad programs, internships, student teaching and the like.

**You are valuable. You are significant. You are special.
Welcome!**