

*Course description and objectives*

This course will explore “the essay” as a genre as well as provide focused study of the burgeoning field of creative nonfiction. Through guided practice in a workshop setting, students will follow up on work in their first-year writing course, producing a number of complete creative nonfiction works. Our goals will be the following:

- 1. regular, scheduled writing (assigned essay drafts and revisions, reflective analysis of your own writing and writing process) and a writer’s notebook (including responses to other students’ work and to published essays; notes on readings; notes toward writing);**
- 2. knowledge of the work of successful nonfiction writers;**
- 3. improved critical and editorial skills;**
- 4. awareness of current markets for nonfiction and work toward a publication-ready essay and actual submission by semester’s end.**

*Assignments and evaluation*

Grades are important, but more so from student and institutional perspectives. While you will receive grades in this course, I encourage you to consider your work more as “writers” than as “students.” To that end, much of this course will be about practice, habits and discipline. Action produces motivation or “inspiration” more often than the other way around.

You will keep a **writer’s notebook** all semester in what should become a habit throughout your writing courses and your writing career. Here, you will collect in-class writing of various kinds; responses to the work of other writers, both students and professionals; notes or other rough “brainstorming” writing toward essay ideas or on observations or from interviews or research. Please devote one notebook to this class alone and always bring it to class with you. I’ll check it randomly but not grade it until the end of the semester.

You will develop **5 essays** from germinal idea or freewriting in your notebook to revised “finished” products. You will **revise 1** of these to submit somewhere for publication. This revision will involve your study of publication markets for creative nonfiction.

How long should your essays be? They should be as long as they need to be for you to say what you are trying to say for your audience and the writing/reading situation. The essays we will read and write will vary in length, formality, and a host of other factors. This may seem a vague answer, but as serious writers you will understand (or come to understand) what this means.

For grades, the weight of assignments will be as follows:

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>1. Essays 1-5</b>                    | <b>12% each, 60% altogether</b> |
| <b>2. Essay 6 w/ query/cover letter</b> | <b>20%</b>                      |
| <b>3. Writer’s notebook</b>             | <b>20%</b>                      |

Keep in mind that your writing process will be a part of your grade at least as important as your written products.

### *Attendance*

This is a workshop-based course, which means that your attendance and active participation are crucial. Please arrive on time and prepared for every class meeting. You may be excused from up to three class meetings for legitimate academic, medical, or emergency reasons only; **more than three unexcused absences will result in a lowering of your grade by 1/3. Missing more than two workshops, excused or unexcused, will result in a lowering of your grade by 1/3.**

### *Academic Honesty*

The Moravian College policy on academic honesty, as represented in the *Student Handbook, 2006-07*, pp. 26-31, will apply in ENGL 211. In addition to complying with College policies, however, students in a writing course such as ENGL 211 must be ethical, as writers, about their own and others' writing. The writing you do in this course should try to be true, although creative writers have a certain license with literal or factual truth. But this license does not extend to representing the language or ideas of another as your own.

### *Required texts*

Root, Robert L. Jr., and Michael Steinberg, eds., *The Fourth Genre: Contemporary Writers of/on Creative Nonfiction*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Longman, 2007.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well*, 30th Anniversary ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

## *Assignment Schedule*

Week I M 1/15 - F 1/19	Introductions (ourselves, the course) Forming writing groups <i>Zinsser</i> : chapters 1-3, 11, 14 <i>Fourth Genre</i> : Introduction (pp. xxiii-xxxiv), essay by Lott (pp. 392-98)
Week II M 1/22 - F 1/26	Brainstorming/freewriting <i>Fourth Genre</i> : essays by Blew (pp. 50-60, 334-37), Schwartz (pp. 269-76, 425-30), and Sanders (pp. 256-61, 416-24)
Week III M 1/29 - F 2/2	<b>Workshopping the personal essay</b> <i>Zinsser</i> : chapters 4-7
Week IV M 2/5 - F 2/9	<b>Essay #1 due</b> <i>Writers Market</i> and “M’TPCNF” <i>Zinsser</i> : Chapter 13 <i>Fourth Genre</i> : essays by Dillard (pp. 95-97) and Hampl (pp. 117-24, 354-63)
Week V M 2/12 - F 2/16	<b>Workshopping the place essay</b>
Week VI M 2/19 - F 2/23 (midterm)	<b>Essay #2 due</b> <i>Zinsser</i> : chapters 8-9, 12 <i>Fourth Genre</i> : essay by McPhee (pp. 186-94) <b>Planning for Essay #3</b>
Week VII M 2/26 - F 3/2	<b>Conferences</b> <i>Zinsser</i> : Chapter 10 <b>Workshopping the researched essay</b>
Spring break Sa 3/3 - Su 3/11	
Week VIII M 3/12 - F 3/16	<b>Workshopping the researched essay</b> (continued) <i>Zinsser</i> : chapters 20-21, 18 <b>Essay #3 due</b>
Week IX	<i>Fourth Genre</i> : essays by Iyer (pp. 133-42), Caudron (pp. 61-71), and Abbey

M 3/19 - F 3/23

(handout)

**Workshopping the critical essay**

Week X

M 3/26 - F 3/30

**Workshopping the critical essay** (continued)

*Fourth Genre*: essays by Root (pp. 404-15) and Toth (pp. 294-96)

**Essay #4 due**

Week XI

M 4/2 - Th 4/5

*Fourth Genre*: essays by Pope (pp. 465-70, 471-78) and Ortiz Cofer (pp. 79-85)

*Zinsser*: Chapter 22

**Workshopping the segmented essay**

Week XII

Tu 4/10 - F 4/13

**Workshopping the segmented essay** (continued)

*Zinsser*: Chapter 23

Week XIII

M 4/16 - F 4/20

**Essay #5 due**

Cover/query letters and submitting work for publication

Week XIV

M 4/23 - F 4/27

**Workshopping a publishable piece of creative nonfiction**

**Essay #6 due**

Course evaluations