

English 211: Creative Nonfiction Writing
Spring 2012

Dr. Joel Wingard
Office: Zinzendorf 304
Hours: MW, 1:30-2:30 p.m.
W, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.
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Course description and objectives

This course will explore “the essay” as a genre as well as provide focused study of the developing 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. **improved critical awareness 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, and writers write as their action.

You will **keep a writer’s notebook** all semester in what should become a habit throughout your writing courses and your writing career.¹ Here, you will collect in- and out-of-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. I will check it randomly but not grade it until the end of the semester.²

You will **develop 4 essays** from germinal ideas in your notebook to revised “finished” products. As a culminating project, you will **revise 1** of these to **submit somewhere for publication**. This revision will involve your study of publication markets for creative nonfiction.

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

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| 1. Essays 1-4 | 15% each, 60% altogether |
| 2. Essay 5 w/ query/cover letter | 20% |
| 3. Writer’s notebook (including attendance) | 20% |

¹ For students majoring in English, you may expect a portfolio of your work to be required as part of the Senior Seminar capstone course in the major.

² You may use a laptop or thinkpad for this purpose, as long you save files that may be sent to me for reading.

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

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.

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* will apply in ENGL 211. In addition to complying with College policies, however, students in a writing course such as this must be ethical about their own and others' writing. The writing you do in this course should try to be true, although creative writers do have license in using literal or factual truth. But this license does not extend to representing the language or ideas of another as your own.

Statement on Learning Disabilities

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

The Writing Center is in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If you need the services of the Writing Center, please call 610-861-1392.³

Required texts

Root, Robert L. Jr., and Michael Steinberg, eds., *The Fourth Genre: Contemporary Writers of/on Creative Nonfiction*, 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2012.

Zinsser, William. *On Writing Well*, 30th Anniversary ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2006. (although almost any edition of this book will do)

³ My office is in the same building as the Writing Center, so the same applies to conferences or impromptu meetings there.

Assignment Schedule

Week I M 1/16 - F 1/20	Introductions (ourselves, the course) Forming writing groups <i>Zinsser</i> : chapters 1-7 and 11. <i>Fourth Genre</i> : Introduction: “Creative Nonfiction: The Fourth Genre” (pp. xxiii-xxxvii), Part 1: “Writing Creative Nonfiction” (pp. 1-2), Part 2: “Talking About Creative Nonfiction” (pp. 241-42), and essays from Part 2 by Bartkevicius (pp. 243-49) and Gornick (pp. 261-63) and from Part 1 by Beard (pp. 3-7).
Week II M 1/23 - F 1/27	Working on/in writing groups <i>Zinsser</i> : Chapter 14. <i>Fourth Genre</i> : essays from Part 2 by Blew (pp. 250-53), Hampl (pp. 264-73), Steinberg (pp. 333-36) and Winograd (pp. 342-430 and from Part 1 by Hampl (pp. 91-94), Gornick (pp. 87-90) and Winograd (pp. 237-39).
Week III M 1/30 - F 2/3	Workshopping the personal essay
Week IV M 2/6 - F 2/12	Essay #1 due <i>Writers Market</i> and “‘M’TPCNF” (handouts) <i>Zinsser</i> : Chapter 13. <i>Fourth Genre</i> : Part 2 essays by Klaus (pp. 296-307) and Miller (pp. 308-14) and Part 1 essays by Montgomery-Fate (pp. 147-50), Sanders (pp. 188-93) and Schwartz (pp. 194-201).
Week V M 2/13 - F 2/17	Workshopping the place essay
Week VI M 2/20 - F 2/24 (midterm)	Essay #2 due <i>Zinsser</i> : chapters 8, 9, and 12. <i>Fourth Genre</i> : essays by Caudron (pp. 35-45), Lord (pp. 115-17), and McPhee (pp. 128-36)
Week VII M 2/27 - F 3/2	<i>Zinsser</i> : Chapter 10 <i>Fourth Genre</i> : essay by Morano (pp. 151-61) Planning for researched essay; Conferences
Spring break Sa 3/3 - Su 3/11	

Week VIII M 3/12- F 3/16	Workshopping the researched essay <i>Zinsser</i> : chapters 20-21 Essay #3 due
Week IX M 3/19 - F 3/23	<i>Fourth Genre</i> : Part 2 essay by Root (pp. 318-29); Part 1 essays by Groen Braner (pp. 29-30), Ortiz Cofer (pp. 54-60), and Marquart (pp. 118-19); and Part 3 essays by Pope (pp. 447-52 and 453-60).
Week X M 3/26 - F 3/30	Workshopping the segmented essay
Week XI M 4/2 - R 4/5	Workshopping the segmented essay (continued) Essay #4 due
Week XII T 4/10 - F 4/13	<i>Zinsser</i> : chapters 22-24 Cover/query letters and submitting work for publication
Week XIII M 4/17 - F 4/20	Workshopping a publishable piece of creative nonfiction
Week XIV M 4/23 - F 4/27	Essay #5 and cover/query letter due Course evaluations
Finals Week M 4/30 – F 5/4	In lieu of a final exam, Writer's Notebooks will be due for submission Xday, X May.