

ENGL 4200: Writing Workshop, Prose Nonfiction

3.0 credit hours

Spring Semester 2014

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Dr. Amy Wright

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Hours: 1-2:30 p.m. MW & by appt.

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(Email is the quickest way to reach me.)

I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means. What I want and what I fear. ~ Joan Didion

Catalog Description: An opportunity to develop skills learned and projects begun in 3200. The student is guided individually and as a member of a group through rigorous analysis and criticism of his/her work.

Course Objectives: This course will focus on prose nonfiction—the genre that employs narrative and lyric literary devices to organize and relay information. We will read essays that use characterization, metaphor, plot development, etc. to connect readers with the exposition’s emotional effects. We will consider how brevity affects attempted revelation. We will remain open to the genre’s promise, considering the word “essay” originates in Montaigne’s French term *essais*, meaning an attempt or foray. We will also answer, as writers, to Strayed’s criteria for choosing the best of the *Best American Essays* by their ability to conclude, “As if nothing would ever be the same again.”

REQUIRED TEXTS: *Rose Metal Guide to Flash Nonfiction*, Edited by Dinty W. Moore
Best American Essays 2013, Edited by Cheryl Strayed

GRADING STRUCTURE:	Diagnostic Essay (2 pages)	Mandatory
	Discussion & Discussion Leading Essay (3-4 pages)	30%
	In-class writing exercises	10%
	Essay 1 (6-7 pages of a 3-4 flash essays)	25%
	Essay 2 (7-8 pages)	20%
	Portfolio and Final Essay	15%

Diagnostic Essay: The diagnostic essay is a short mandatory essay assigned at the beginning of term. You will not receive a grade on this essay, but I will collect and file it to compare with your final essay and measure your progress throughout the semester. I will also use it to find target areas to review during class discussions.

Discussion: Our course objective depends upon your ability to interact and communicate with the assigned essays. Therefore, you will receive credit for contributing to this conversation and effort to inquire productively together. Peer review will also fall under discussion points, so your comments and feedback on each other’s essays will be included in your discussion grade.

We will work together to generate an environment of trust that helps everyone feel comfortable speaking up. Remember that any good conversation comes from mutual interest and contribution, so please assume responsibility for the success of our group dynamic.

Discussion Leading & Discussion Leading Essay: You and a partner will sign up for a day to formally lead the class discussion. On this day, you will be asked to hand in a 3-4 page essay, which will be an analytical response to the missed reading. I’ll expect this response to take the form of a comparison/contrast essay, focusing around a main argument that focuses your observations from juxtaposing these two texts. **Include a minimum of five quotations** and your specific reflections on them. The originality of your ideas, along with the demonstration of thought and effort (and creativity!) in the essay as well as your presentation of them to the class will determine your grade. Your discussion leading responsibility should also include **ten questions** to prompt the conversation for the day. These questions should demonstrate critical thinking, and should point to four or more specific passages for close reading opportunities as a group.

Essays: I will provide essay assignments in detail before each essay is due, but the general objective for each essay follows. The first essay will be inspired by Judith Kitchen's anthologies and will take the form of a collection of 3-4 short essays from in-class essay assignments. Its page length will come from a group of separate flash pieces that are gathered together by a staple. They do not have to be linked by content, etc.

The second essay will be a traditional essay in the style of those published in the *Best American Essays* anthology. We will also have in-class writing assignments to prepare you for this longer exploration of a subject, and I will provide you with an assignment before the essay is due.

Final Portfolio: The final portfolio consists of the original drafts of your essays **AND** revisions of each for comparison purposes. I prefer you turn in as your original the copy that I return to you with my comments. You may give me a copy of this essay if you would like to keep the comments for your own reference. If you do not have my copy, you may turn in another original as long as it is clearly marked.

Academic Integrity: The relationship between a teacher of writing and a student of writing is one of trust. You trust me to help you achieve our course goals and to grade based on the objectives laid out in this syllabus and I trust you to hand in work that is your own, and is well-sourced when it includes the ideas or writing of another. As with traffic law, **ignorance is no excuse** for plagiarism, which is defined as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." **Because plagiarism is a breach of this trust, you will not only fail the plagiarized assignment but also the course** as I cannot thereafter assign any grades to work I cannot trust to be yours.

Plagiarism includes a wide range of behavior. Loosely defined, it means representing others' words, thoughts, or deeds as your own. It includes copying all or part of a paper someone else wrote; downloading ready-made papers from the web; and quoting or paraphrasing without appropriate citations. While the following may not be familiar to you as plagiarizing, they are clearly examples of academic fraud: talking with your roommate about an idea that both of you write about, thereby completing only one real assignment; writing a paper based on someone else's paper because you haven't read the text or are short on time; stringing together arguments from secondary sources without making your own argument; and turning in work you've completed for a different class.

You will be using MLA Style to cite any research you include. **Err on the side of caution and cite all sources you paraphrase or quote.** If you have questions at any point about your citations, the Writing Lab exists to provide you with Academic Support. They are available on a walk-in, appointment and email basis. Be sure to allow enough time to incorporate their feedback before an assignment is due. Hours are online at: www.apsu.edu/academic_support_center/falltime.htm

Attendance and Participation: Your success in this course will be measured against the goals set out for this course; therefore, the importance of being in class to participate cannot be overestimated. **Perfect attendance and contribution to class discussions will earn extra credit.** I do not decide between excused and unexcused absences. Only university-excused absences accompanied with appropriate documentation are excused. The work itself is never excused, so you will be responsible for the assignments/discussion missed. **If you miss more than five classes for any reason, you will be in danger of failing the course. If you miss more than three absences, your grade will suffer by one or more letter grades.**

Makeup Assignments: To make up for a missed discussion, write and turn in a two-page, double-spaced, typed response to the assigned reading **within one week from the missed day.** Responses should be given to me in hard copy, but you may email me an electronic one at the cost of one letter grade. **A maximum of three** make-up responses is allowed. The quality of your response—its organization, clarity, and evidence of thought determine its grade. The goal of the response is to evidence critical thinking process, so I expect it to be a formal presentation of observations you might bring up in discussion, **including at least three quotations from the text.** Email me if you need help formulating questions to investigate.

Late Assignments: Late essay assignments are penalized one letter grade starting ten minutes from the beginning of the class period in which the essay is assigned. Because university-excused absences are known in advance, I expect any missed essay assignments to be handed in ahead of time if possible (in hard copy) or on time via email if not. Quiz-replacing responses are due within one week of the missed quiz, unless prevented by extenuating circumstances discussed with me. There will be a cutoff date three weeks before the end of the semester when I will accept no more makeup quiz responses, so please plan accordingly.

Special Needs: Any student who has a disability that may affect his or her academic performance is encouraged to make an appointment with me to discuss this matter, and/or to contact Disability Services; telephone 221-6230; voice 221-6278.

Policy on Minors or Children in Classroom: Minors (any non-student under the age of 18) accompanying staff, faculty, students, or visitors on campus are not permitted in the classroom.

Academic / Classroom Misconduct: Students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times. Academic and classroom misconduct will not be tolerated. Students must read the “Code of Conduct” in the *Student Handbook* for an understanding of what will be expected of them within the academic setting.

Midterm Grades: A midterm grade is available upon request. Please make an appointment with me to discuss your progress at the midpoint in the term if you would like me to go over this grade with you.

Final Note: Turn your cell phones or other electronic devices off BEFORE entering class NOT AFTER we are interrupted. Do not use your phones or other devices to send text messages AT ANY TIME. If I catch you using any such devices at any time during class, you will receive an F on the day’s assignment and may be asked to withdraw from the course.

Course Schedule (Subject to change)

Readings are to be discussed ON THE DAY LISTED. Be prepared by reading them before class.

Week 1

F Jan. 17 Introduction and syllabus.

Week 2

M Jan. 20 No Class MLK Day

W. Jan. 22 “Thank You” by Sejal Shah (<http://brevitymag.com/current-issue/thank-you/>) & “How to Fall in Love for Real” by Kent Shaw (<http://brevitymag.com/current-issue/how-to-fall-in-love-for-real/>)

F Jan. 24 **Diagnostic Essay Due. In-class workshop of Diagnostic Essays.**

Week 3 Mysterious, Ambitious, and Intimate: The Flash Nonfiction Form

M Jan. 27 On Miniatures and Writing into the Flash from Rose Metal Guide (*RMG*) p. 1-14

W Jan. 29 On Carnival Lights, Compression, and Mice (*RMG*) p. 15-21

F Jan. 31 Writing in Place p.22-32 (*RMG*)

Week 4 “No Ideas But in Things”: The Power of Image and Detail

M Feb. 3 Friendship, Intuition and Trust and Memory Triggers and Tropes p. 28-36 (*RMG*)

W Feb. 5 Paper Clips...The Ant in the Water Droplet (*RMG*) p. 37-49

F Feb. 7 The Wound of the Photograph (*RMG*) p. 50-56

Week 5 Speaking to the Reader: On Finding Your Voice

M Feb. 10 Crafting Voice (*RMG*) p. 57-69

W Feb. 12 Writing Through Innocence and Experience (*RMG*) p. 70-75

F Feb. 14 Of Artifacts and MRIs (*RMG*) p. 142-150

Week 6 Words, Wonderful Words

M Feb. 17 The Sounds and Sense of Sentences (*RMG*) p. 76-85

W Feb. 19 Word Hoards (*RMG*) p. 86-92

F Feb. 21 The Question of Where We Begin (*RMG*) p. 134-141

Week 7 Thoughts on Point-of-view

M Feb. 24 Bye-Bye, I (*RMG*) p. 93-99

W Feb. 26 Dinah Lenney (*RMG*) p. 100-104

F Feb. 28 Weaving Past, Present and Future (*RMG*) 105-112

Week 8 Settling on Structure

M Mar. 3 Over the River (*RMG*) 113-117

W Mar. 5 The Art of Digression (*RMG*) p. 118-125

F Mar. 7 Building A Frame (*RMG*) p. 126-133

Week 9

M-F Mar. 9-15 No Class. Spring Break

Week 10 Workshop

M Mar. 17 Group of 6-7 pages of 2-4 flash essays due

W Mar. 19 Workshop

F Mar. 21 Workshop

Week 11 Workshop

M Mar. 24 Workshop

W Mar. 26 Workshop

F Mar. 28 Introduction and “His Last Game” *Best American Essays* (*BEA*) p. xv-xvii, and 202-204

Week 12 Engaging Readers

M Mar. 31 “Keeper of the Flame” (*BEA*) p. 56-65

W Apr. 2 “Night” (*BEA*) p.17-26

F Apr. 4 “Sometimes a Romantic Notion” (*BEA*) p. 27-37

Week 13 Dealing with Intense Emotion

M Apr. 7 “The Highway of Lost Girls” (*BEA*) p. 38-55

W Apr. 9 “I’m Jumping Off the Bridge” (*BEA*) p. 106-112

F Apr. 11 “Triage” (*BEA*) p. 123-131

Week 14 Relating to your Characters

M Apr. 14 “The Girls In My Town” (*BEA*) p. 171-187

W Apr. 16 Workshop

F Apr. 18 No Class. Good Friday.

Week 15 Workshop

M Apr. 21 Workshop

W Apr. 23 Workshop

F Apr. 25 Workshop

Week 16

M Apr. 28 Channel B (*BEA*) p. 250-253

W Apr. 30 Last Day of Classes. Extended Definition Essay, Portfolio and Final Essay Due.