

Visiting Professor Heidi Czerwiec

Pronouns: She/Her

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Lind Hall 258

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 and by appointment

ENGW5106 GRADUATE NONFICTION WRITING WORKSHOP – FALL 2019

with enormous thanks to Kate Nuernberger for this syllabus template – credit where credit is due

Course Overview:

Hybrids are the opposite of pure, and this course will be a celebration in praise of the impure. Hybrid nonfiction, with its blend of styles and genres, can be a happy meeting place for writers of many backgrounds to experiment. We'll read examples and imitate a number of short hybrid forms, borrowing from verse, haibun, hermit crab essays, and others. Then, we'll see how these short forms can be strung together, braided, or built up to create longer-form essays and even full manuscripts, and attempt this with our own work. Because graduate creative writing programs ideally professionalize students beyond their imaginative work, we will also engage in arts citizenship, as well as craft writing which, while it will help prepare you for your Master's craft essays, will also hone editorial, critical, and pedagogical skills and will introduce you to some important online resources.

Course Goals:

A major goal of this graduate level creative writing workshop is that you will generate new work and revise works in progress with an eye towards creating essays of publishable quality. But there are other goals in this graduate workshop that are related to long-term development of individuals as writers within a vibrant and supportive creative community:

- Continue learning to give individualized feedback to peers that supports their development as writers and members of your literary community;
- Continue learning to articulate your own aesthetic within contemporary and historical literary conversations;
- Continue reading and thinking beyond your existing aesthetic, with the aim of better understanding the writing of others in your literary community and expanding your own horizons.
- Support your literary community and your own intellectual development as a writer by attending and/or participating in readings and other literary events (especially those sponsored by the UMN Creative Writing program).

Texts:

Nicole Walker, *Micrograms*

Lee Ann Roripaugh, *Dandarians*

Ross Gay, *The Book of Delights*

Jehanne Dubrow, *throughsmoke*

& handouts with readings including work by Rivka Galchen, Camille Dungy, Elissa Washuta, Paisley Rekdal and others, and selections from *The Shell Game* and other recent anthologies.

Major Assignments (and University Statement on Expected Student Academic Work per Credit)

The University prescribes the quantity of work needed to earn a credit as three hours per credit per week or 42-45 hours per semester. A student should therefore expect to spend about nine hours per week, including class time, on a 3-credit course. Workload expectations are an estimate of the amount of work needed for an average student to earn an average grade. Course grades are based on the quality of the work submitted, not on hours of effort. For more information, see the policy on Expected Student Academic Work per Credit: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/studentwork>

Creative Writing

Micro-Essays & Other Generative Exercises 30% -- During the first part of the course we will be reading lyric essays and micro-memoirs. These will provide great opportunities to engage in some generative writing exercises and to conduct a series of rapid-fire workshops that allow for focused discussion of key nonfiction skills that will serve you well as you turn your attention to longer pieces of writing later in the course.

A Longer-Form Essay 30% -- A feature length essay on the subject of your choice. This will be an assignment that builds on one or more of your shorter essays, and will involve bringing together reportage, research, and personal writing, based on Nicole Walker's "The Braided Essay as Social Justice Action." This grade will be an average of the draft of the essay you submit for workshop and the revised version due before finals week conferences.

Craft Writing

Student Presentation 10% – select an *Assay* or *Essay Daily* article (available online) on some craft element and briefly (10min) present it to the class. (A selection of *Assay* articles available here: <https://www.assayjournal.com/the-assay-curriculum.html>, but also check archives for articles in each issue; *Essay Daily*'s blog archive is listed and linked starting about 1/3 down the right-hand side of their homepage: <https://www.essaydaily.org>)

Craft Paper 10% -- as a warm-up for your eventual required craft essay for your MFA, select a short online essay from *Brevity* or *River Teeth*'s "Beautiful Things" feature and write an 8pp. paper analyzing what makes the essay "work" or stand out. See Karen Babine's "Practical Notes: Writing a Craft Paper" from *Assay* for pointers: <https://assayjournal.wordpress.com/2019/01/21/practical-notes-writing-a-craft-paper-karen-babine/>

Arts Citizenship 20% -- One half of this grade will be based on your workshop participation (particularly your written comments on classmates' essays in the final half of the course). You should write a letter of feedback to your classmates about their long form essays that address the following questions:

1. What aesthetic/thematic goals do you see the writer attempting to achieve in this work? (Don't hesitate to point out similarities to other writers or ways the essay is positioning itself in relation to ongoing conversations about creative nonfiction. Sometimes writers are making these connections intuitively in early drafts and it is helpful to have someone point out how smart you are being in order to do more of that on purpose in revisions.)
2. What areas were most exciting and interesting to you in terms of content and/or craft? (It is so easy to accidentally destroy an essay in revision when you don't realize the moments that are the real pleasures to readers. It is also easier to know what to make of suggestions for

revision if you have a sense of whether a reader gets and appreciates your endeavor overall. Pointing out what works is a way of helping the writer triangulate their goals with your experience of reading the essay so that they can ultimately make the most effective use of your feedback going forward.)

3. What kinds of experimentation or revision you might try if this were an essay you were working on? (This is a place to be bold. After all, if your suggestion doesn't work out, a writer can always discard that draft. But it is also a place to be humble. None of us should presume too much authority over someone else's experiences or voice. In opposition to everything your 7th grade teacher probably taught you about writing: using 'I statements,' embracing the word "maybe," and learning to love the question mark are great approaches to critical feedback in these kinds of circumstances.)

For the other half of your citizenship grade, please plan to attend at least 3 of the UMN Creative Writing Program or other writing events – I've posted some on here, but don't feel limited to these. If you're unsure whether a reading counts, ask ahead of time. Just show up and say hi to Heidi to receive credit. (Or send a selfie of yourself at the event if you can't find Heidi.)

Grades:

The University uses plus and minus grading on a 4.000 cumulative grade point scale in accordance with the following:

- A (4.000) - Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- A- (3.667)
- B+ (3.333)
- B (3.000) - Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B- (2.667)
- C+ (2.333)
- C (2.000) - Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect
- C- (1.667)
- D+ (1.333)
- D (1.000) - Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements
- S - Represents achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better

For additional information, please refer to the University policy on Grading and Transcripts: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/gradingtranscripts>

Grades in this class are weighted and your scores on individual assignments, as well as your overall grade for the class can be monitored via the Gradebook functions on Canvas. Letter grades will be assigned based on the following percentages:

A >= 93%
A- >= 90%
B+ >= 87%
B >= 83%
B- >= 80%
C+ >= 77%

C >= 73%
C- >= 70%
D+ >= 67%
D >= 60%
F < 60%

Attendance

Students are responsible for all information disseminated in class and all course requirements, including deadlines and examinations. Per English Department policy, students should attend every class meeting, on time and prepared, and should remain in class for the duration of the class period. If a student misses the equivalent of one week of class with unexcused absences, his or her grade will be lowered. Once a student misses the equivalent of three weeks with unexcused absences, he or she will fail the course. Students are responsible for all material and assignments missed because of absence or lateness.

Because I understand that unforeseen circumstances do arise, students may miss class 2 times for any reason. Additional absences beyond that point will result in a deduction of a letter grade for each additional absence. More than 6 unexcused absences will result in failing this course. If your absences are for reasons the university has sanctioned as excused, please provide documentation of those circumstances to ensure you are not penalized. It would also be wise to touch base with the professor if you know you will be absent or to make arrangements to catch up on missed work after an absence.

Mandatory Attendance at First Class Session and Consequences for Absence

Students must attend the first class meeting of every course in which they are registered unless (1) they obtain approval from the instructor before the first meeting or (2) they provide notice to the instructor they must miss class because of a recognized religious holiday. Otherwise, they may lose their places in class to other students.

For more information, see the policy on Mandatory Attendance at First Class Session and Consequences for Absence: <https://policy.umn.edu/education/mandatoryfirstclass>

Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences

University policy recognizes that there are a variety of legitimate circumstances in which students will miss coursework, and that accommodations for makeup work will be made. Such circumstances include illness, physical or mental, of you or your dependent; medical conditions related to pregnancy; participation in intercollegiate athletic events; subpoenas; jury duty; military service; bereavement, including travel related to bereavement; religious observances; participation in formal University system governance, including the University Senate, Student Senate, and Board of Regents meetings, by students selected as representatives to those bodies; and activities sponsored by the University if identified by the senior academic officer for the campus or the officer's designee as the basis for excused absences. Such circumstances do not include voting in regional, state, or national elections.

For more information, please see the University policy:
<https://policy.umn.edu/education/makeupwork>

Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as: plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized

collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

To review the University's Student Conduct Code, please

see: http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf

Student Conduct Code

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community. As a student at the University you are expected to adhere to Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities."

To review the University's Student Conduct Code, please see:

http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf

Use of Personal Electronic Devices in the Classroom

Instructors determine if personal electronic devices (such as cell phones and laptops) are allowed in the classroom. Students may be directed to turn off personal electronic devices if the devices are not being used for class purposes. Students are not permitted to record any part of a class/lab/other session unless explicitly granted permission by the instructor. If the student does not comply, the student may be asked to leave the classroom. For complete information, please reference the policy on Student Responsibilities: <http://policy.umn.edu/education/studentresp>

Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials

Taking notes is a means of recording information but more importantly of personally absorbing and integrating the educational experience. However, broadly disseminating class notes beyond the classroom community or accepting compensation for taking and distributing classroom notes undermines instructor interests in their intellectual work product while not substantially furthering instructor and student interests in effective learning. Such actions violate shared norms and standards of the academic community. For additional information, please see the policy on Student Responsibilities: <http://policy.umn.edu/education/studentresp>

Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action

The University provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

http://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.pdf

Sexual Harassment

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature under either of the following conditions: (a) when it is stated or implied that an individual needs to submit to, or participate in, conduct of a sexual nature in order to maintain their employment or educational standing or advance in their employment or education (quid pro quo sexual harassment); (b) when the conduct: (1) is severe, persistent or pervasive; and (2) unreasonably interferes with an individual's employment or educational performance or creates a work or educational environment that the individual finds, and a reasonable person would find, to be intimidating, hostile or offensive (hostile environment sexual harassment). Sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, relationship violence and related retaliation are all prohibited conduct at the University of Minnesota.

For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy:

https://regents.umn.edu/sites/regents.umn.edu/files/policies/Sexual_Harassment_Sexual_Assault_Stalking_Relationship_Violence.pdf

I want to let you know that, in my role as a University employee, I am required to share information that I learn about possible sexual misconduct with the campus Title IX office that addresses these concerns. This allows a Title IX staff member to reach out to those who have experienced sexual misconduct to provide information about the personal support resources and options for investigation that they can choose to access.

You are welcome to talk with me about concerns related to sexual misconduct. You can also or alternately choose to talk with a confidential resource; the University offers victim-advocacy support professionals, health services professionals and counselors that will not share information that they learn about sexual misconduct.

Disability Accommodations

The University of Minnesota views disability as an important aspect of diversity, and is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

- If you have, or you think you have, a disability in any area such as mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the DRC office on your campus (612-626-1333) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.
- Students with short-term disabilities, such as a broken arm, can often work with instructors to minimize classroom barriers. In situations where additional assistance is needed, students should contact the DRC as noted above.
- If you are registered with the DRC and have a disability accommodation letter dated for this semester or this year, please contact your instructor early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in the course.
- If you are registered with the DRC and have questions or concerns about your accommodations please contact your access consultant/disability specialist.

Additional information is available on the DRC website: diversity.umn.edu/disability or e-mail drc@umn.edu with questions.

Names and Pronouns

Please tell me how you would like to be referred to in class. I will happily address you by the name and gender pronoun you use, or by any other form of reference, and I would be glad to inform class members to do the same. Note that class rosters will list your legal name unless you enter a different one through your OneStop account. For more information, see: <https://onestop.umn.edu/how-guides/set-preferred-name-or-degree-name>

Mental Health and Stress Management

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu>

Academic Learning Support Services

The University provides a wide range of resources to support your learning. These include:

- SMART Learning Commons: An all-in-one undergraduate academic support center located in the three main libraries—Wilson, Walter, and Magrath. The SMART Learning Commons offers support through peer tutoring (tutoring for over 200 undergraduate courses), peer-assisted learning groups (weekly facilitated study sessions connected to specific courses), peer research consultants (one-on-one assistance in conducting research), and media consultants (individual help with media projects). <https://www.lib.umn.edu/smart>
- Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence: Group and individual tutoring and skill-building workshops where students can take their time to learn, study together, develop support groups, and build lasting friendships. <https://diversity.umn.edu/multicultural/instructionalcenter>
- Student Academic Success Services: One-on-one academic counseling and online self-help materials focusing on academic skills. <http://www.sass.umn.edu>
- Student Technology Peer Tutoring: One-on-one assistance in developing technical skills needed to complete coursework. <https://it.umn.edu/student-technology-peer-tutoring>

Student Writing Support

Student Writing Support (SWS) offers free writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students—graduate and undergraduate—at all stages of the writing process. In face-to-face and online collaborative consultations, SWS consultants from across the disciplines help students develop productive writing habits and revision strategies. Consulting is available by appointment online and in Nicholson Hall, and on a walk-in basis in Appleby Hall. For more information, call 612-625-1893 or go to writing.umn.edu/sws. In addition, SWS offers a number of web-based resources on topics such as avoiding plagiarism, documenting sources, and planning and completing a writing project.

Students for Whom English is a Second Language (Department Policy)

University policy requires that undergraduate students in the same class be held to the same standards of academic performance and accomplishment. Students for whom English is a second language, however, may have difficulty with the readings, lectures, discussions, and writing assignments in a course. The University offers many resources to assist non-native speakers of English, including courses and consultations through the [Minnesota English Language Program](#), the [Center for Writing](#), the [Department of Writing Studies](#), and [International Student and Scholar Services](#). Please speak with your instructor if you would like to learn more about these opportunities.

Academic Freedom and Responsibility

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Within the scope and content of the course as defined by the instructor, it includes the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom. Along with this freedom comes responsibility. Students are encouraged to develop the capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for truth. Students are free to take reasoned exception to the views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Reports of concerns about academic freedom are taken seriously, and there are individuals and offices available for help. Contact the instructor, the Department Chair, your adviser, the associate dean of the college, or the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost.

Offensive Material (Department Policy)

The English Department asks that all instructors share the following policy with students:

“In any course, students may be required to read words or view images that they may consider offensive. The ideas expressed in any given text do not necessarily reflect the views of the instructor, the Department of English, or the University of Minnesota. Course materials have been selected for their literary, cultural, and/or historical value, in order to achieve specific learning objectives and course goals. These materials are meant to be examined in the context of intellectual inquiry and critical analysis, as appropriate for a university-level course. If you are easily shocked and/or offended, please contact your instructor to discuss whether a course is suitable for you.”

In addition to this policy, I would like to acknowledge that many works of literature contain material that could be considered triggering. It is my practice to give students a contextualizing preview of the assigned reading for the next class session. In the course of these previews I also give students a heads up about material that could be considered triggering. If trigger warnings are helpful to you, please be sure in the case of absence or leaving class early that you reach out to me or your classmates for that information.

Since there will be times when you are asked to share work with the class that has not been previewed by me, please be mindful to include a trigger warnings at the top of your writing as a courtesy to everyone in our learning community. While it is impossible to account for all potential triggers, which could include smells or sounds that recall a past trauma, some of the most common triggers include representations of sexual violence, oppressive language, gunshots, and representations of self-harm.

Here is a list of common content warnings provided by the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science, and the Arts in their “Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings”:

Sexual Assault, Abuse, Child abuse/pedophilia/incest, Animal cruelty or animal death, Self-harm and suicide, Eating disorders / body hatred / fat phobia, Violence, Pornographic content, Kidnapping and abduction, Death or dying, Pregnancy/Childbirth, Miscarriages/Abortion, Blood, Mental illness and ableism, Racism and racial slurs, Sexism and misogyny, Classism, Islamophobia, Transphobia and trans misogyny, Homophobia and heterosexism

Daily Schedule:

Week 1, Sept. 4

Intro to the course.

Discussion of craft essay assignment.

Discussion of lyric essay and flash forms.

Generative workshop

Week 2, Sept. 11 – no class – I’ll be in Utah

Week 3, Sept. 18

Discussion of Nicole Walker’s *Micrograms*. (Please read before class).

Workshop of short pieces inspired by poetic forms. (Please bring 16 copies of your piece to class.)

Week 4, Sept. 25

Student presentations by _____ & _____.

Discussion of Lee Ann Roripaugh’s *Dandarians*. (Please read before class; CW sexual assault, abuse.)

Workshop of short pieces inspired by Walker’s writing. (Please bring 16 copies of your piece to class.)

Week 5, Oct. 2

Student presentations by _____ & _____.

Discussion of pieces in various hybrid forms. (Please read handout before class.)

Workshop of short pieces inspired by Roripaugh’s writing. (Please bring 16 copies of your piece to class.)

Week 6, Oct. 9

Student presentations by _____ & _____.

Discussion of Ross Gay’s *The Book of Delights*. (Please read before class.)

Workshop of short pieces inspired by hybrid forms readings. (Please bring 16 copies of your piece to class.)

Week 7, Oct. 16 – reschedule this class? I’ll be in Missouri

If we reschedule, workshop of short pieces inspired by Gay’s writing. (Please bring 16 copies of your piece.)

Literary Event, Thursday Oct. 17

Natalie Díaz

7pm, McNamara Alumni Center, Swain Room

Literary Event, Saturday Oct. 19

Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop Annual Student Reading
7pm, Klas Center, Kay Fredericks Room, Hamline University

Literary Event, Tuesday Oct. 22

Rivka Galchen
7pm, venue TBD

Week 8, Oct. 23

Student presentations by _____ & _____.

Introduction to 3-part reportage longer-form assignment.

Discussion of Nicole Walker's "The Braided Essay as Social Justice Action"

<https://www.creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/braided-essay-social-justice-action?fbclid=IwAR1dGhIHwYq0DGBkDkidRMDh8os4lddAEqnhj3XrKD4BiYrS11UY3Vxw0TY>

and examples from Rivka Galchen, Camille Dungy, Elissa Washuta, Paisley Rekdal and others.
(Please read handout & online readings before class.)

For next week: Bring 1 copy of a pitch/outline/vision board or other brainstorming materials for your long form essay with you to class to share with your classmates and turn into Heidi for additional feedback. Make sure to include what place/group/scene you're reporting on, what research and/or interview you plan to do to dig down, and your personal angle on the material.

Literary Event, Saturday Oct. 26

Sheila O'Connor, launch of *Evidence of V*
7pm, Moon Palace Books

Week 9, Oct. 30

Student presentations by _____ & _____.

Discussion of Jehanne Dubrow's *throughsmoke*. (Please read before class; CW some anti-Semitism, misogyny.)

Smell exercise.

In-class feedback on your long form essay projects.

Literary Event, Monday Nov. 4

Danielle Evans
7pm, McNamara Alumni Center, University Hall

Week 10, Nov. 6

Student presentations by _____ & _____.

Workshop of short pieces inspired by Dubrow's writing and/or smell exercise. (Please bring 16 copies of your piece to class.)

Week 11, Nov. 13

Student presentations by _____ & _____.

Craft essays due.

Discussion/report on longer form process. Spot-workshopping of places you're stuck (bring 16 copies of section to be workshopped).

Note: for the next few weeks, students being workshopped must distribute copies of their essay during the class meeting the previous week.

Week 12, Nov. 20

Workshop of long form essays by:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Students being workshopped must distribute copies of their essay during the class meeting the previous week.

Week 13, Nov. 27 (Thanksgiving?)

Workshop of long form essays by:

5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Students being workshopped must distribute copies of their essay during the class meeting the previous week.

Week 14, Dec. 4

Workshop of long form essays by:

9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

Students being workshopped must distribute copies of their essay during the class meeting the previous week.

Week 15, Dec. 11

Revisions of your long form essay in response to workshop feedback are due at this class session.

Goodbye party for the class with brief readings of excerpts from the long form essay or micro-essays that have been revised or were not workshopped previously.

Finals Week

One on one conferences with Heidi about revised long form essays. Location TBA; available times:

Tuesday Dec. 17	Wednesday, Dec. 19
12:30 _____	2:30 _____
1:00 _____	3:00 _____
1:30 _____	3:30 _____
2:00 _____	4:00 _____
2:30 _____	4:30 _____
3:00 _____	5:00 _____
3:30 _____	5:30 _____
4:00 _____	6:00 _____