

UW 1020: Historical Creative Nonfiction

Fall Semester 2017

Course Policies

Sect. MV8, AMES B112 (MW 8:30-9:45 AM +50 mins/week)
Sect. M80, ACAD 101 (MW 10:00-11:15 AM+50 mins/week)

Instructor: *Robbie Maakestad*

Office: *Ames 216*

Office Hours: *MW 11:30 AM-12:30 PM*

Partner Librarian: *Dorinne Banks*

Librarian Appointment Calendar: <https://gwu.mywconline.net/>

E-Mail: maakestad@gwu.edu

English Office: *Ames 207*

English Dept. Phone: *202-242-5327*

Librarian Email: dbanks@gwu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In historical creative nonfiction, writers research the past in order to inform the present. By reexamining and retelling history within the genre of creative nonfiction, writers inhabit the space between past and present, tying the two together by thinking critically on the page. Through consideration of the greater context of historical events and persons, the reader juxtaposes the past with their own life and better understands how to create meaning in the present.

In this class we will read essays by Elizabeth Kolbert, John McPhee, John Jeremiah Sullivan, Joan Didion, Gay Talese, and many other writers. These readings will focus on historical events and persons and allow for discussion of the way the past informs the present. By reading researched, argument-driven historical essays and discussing them in the classroom, students will learn the rhetorical situation and see how writers use argument in historical creative nonfiction writing. Students will then apply the rhetorical situation and their own research to three historical creative nonfiction writing projects throughout the semester: a profile essay, and two researched narratives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

In order to prepare students for rigorous academic writing projects across the range of disciplines offered at GW, the course strives to develop or extend the following skills:

- Capacity for critical reading and for analytic thinking that examines assumptions and evidence, in both scholarly texts and informed public commentary.
- Ability to explore information resources – through both the traditional library and emerging technological sources – to use them effectively, and to acknowledge them correctly.

- A functional grasp of rhetorical principles: the purpose or genre of each piece of writing, the expectations of various audiences, and the use of formats, evidence, tones, lengths, and levels of formality appropriate to a range of contexts.
- Practice in the writing tasks of framing sound questions or hypotheses, analyzing and synthesizing information that can be brought to bear on the chosen question, preparing and repeatedly revising drafts to achieve clarity and coherence of argument, and citing others' work with integrity.
- The habit and discipline of careful editing and proofreading to ensure that final drafts are essentially free of errors in grammar, syntax, usage, paragraphing, punctuation, and spelling.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Each of you will be responsible for preliminary drafts of writing assignments, written workshop critiques of classmates' work, various reading and writing exercises that will aid our understanding of the discipline and craft of historical creative nonfiction, and three major writing projects. Class time will be divided accordingly: lecture and discussion, small group discussion, in-class writing, and workshop.

Major Essay Assignments (totaling 25-30 finished double-spaced pages):

- **Researched Historical Narrative 1**: 7-10 pages; 150 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 200 total
 - **Historical Profile Essay**: 7-10 pages; 150 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 200 total
 - **Researched Historical Narrative 2**: 10 pages; 300 points + 50 points Critical Analysis = 350 total
 - **Weekly Writing**: 100 points
 - **Workshop Participation/Peer Critiques**: 50 points
 - **Engagement/Participation**: 100 points
- TOTAL = 1000 points**

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

- There are no required texts to purchase for this class. All readings will be posted on Blackboard. However, you will need to print copies of each reading and bring them to class on the assigned day.
- One three-ring binder to file essays/readings.

RESEARCH COMPONENT

Each section of UW1020 is assigned a librarian from the Gelman Library System and throughout the semester, librarians will help you develop core information literacy skills, improve your ability to locate, evaluate, and use information as an independent, life-long learner. The librarian conducts in-class sessions on various aspects of research, such as topic formulation, search strategy, and the evaluation of sources. In addition, the librarian may meet regularly with students in one-on-one and small group settings, to provide guidance as students work through their research projects.

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

RESPECT

Respect for other students and your instructor in our classroom is essential to a healthy classroom dynamic. We may discuss ideas and concepts that challenge your current thinking, so we all must respect one another and be open to new ideas. In addition, private conversations during class discussion or lecture times are inappropriate. Show common courtesy to other students and your instructor.

TECHNOLOGY

You will be expected to refrain from using cell phones or other communication devices in the classroom. Use of iPads and laptops should be limited to times when I ask you to pull out your computers for in class use and in-class writing. Breaking this policy will affect your “Engagement/Participation” Grade as I expect you to be an engaged member of the class.

WORKSHOP

Workshop participation and attendance is mandatory (dates 09/25, 10/25, 11/27, 11/29, 12/04, and 12/06). You will turn in a typed copy of your critique to me, as well as to the member of your group who is being workshopped (this will affect your workshop participation grade). Workshop is not a time to disparage or rudely comment on the work of others. Written critiques balance positive and critical comments, though criticism should certainly be constructive and focused on the writing, not on the writer or the writer’s ability. If there are problems with feedback you receive, do not hesitate to contact me. Workshop should be a safe space where we work together to better one another’s writing; thus, the amount of effort you put into commenting on the work of others should be just as much as you put into producing your own work.

SUBJECT MATTER

This course will ask you to write whichever historical events or persons you want to write about, but do recognize that there is a line between what is appropriate and not appropriate in a classroom setting, especially with regard to what is being shared with your classmates, who may not share your values. I respect your privacy and truly believe that this class should allow you creative freedom, so all I will ask is that you use common sense with regard to what is/is not appropriate to write in an academic setting. If you are unsure/nervous or have a hunch that something might be questionable, please discuss your ideas with me in advance of bringing them to workshop.

LETTER GRADE GUIDELINES

		930 - 1000 points	A	900 - 929 points	A-
880 - 899 points	B+	820 - 879 points	B	800 - 819 points	B-
780 - 799 points	C+	720 - 779 points	C	700 - 719 points	C-
680 - 699 points	D+	620 - 679 points	D	600 - 619 points	D-

A grade of C- or above in UW1020 indicates that the student is prepared to write solid academic essays in later upper-division, writing-intensive courses. Students must pass UW1020 with a grade of C- or above in order to receive credit for the course. Students who do not complete the course materials, who are consistently absent from class, or who violate other expectations of academic behavior, will be awarded an F.

THE “R” GRADE

Students must pass UW1020 with a grade of C- or above in order to receive credit for the course. A grade of C- or above in UW1020 indicates that the student is prepared to write in upper-division, writing-intensive courses. If a UW1020 student is not prepared for the next level of university writing, the instructor will assign the student a grade of R (for Repeat.) The R grade is reserved for students who work hard in the course, complete the main course assignments, but will still benefit from additional UW1020 writing instruction. The student will not receive credit for the course; however, the R will not factor into the student’s GPA.

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCES

The Program-wide policy on attendance is as follows: “Class attendance is required, with limited excused absences; class participation is essential to performance and affects the final grade.” *See detailed explanation below in ENGAGEMENT/PARTICIPATION section. ***For this class, attendance is mandatory on workshop days, the library day, and the final class period.

CREDIT HOUR POLICY

Per federal and university guidelines, over 14 weeks, students will spend 3 credit hours per week in class (150 minutes), with an additional 1 credit hour (50 minutes) spent either in class or with a hybrid equivalent (online or other guided instruction): 56 hours for the semester. Homework and other out-of-class work is estimated at an average of 400 minutes per week (112 hours over the course of the semester).

SUBMITTING CLASS WORK

All assignments must be uploaded to Blackboard on or before the deadline, as well as turned in hard copy to the professor on or before the deadline. **All essays must be submitted to Blackboard as .doc or .docx files.** Backup your work on Dropbox, Google Drive, or a flash drive since you’re responsible for turning work in on the due dates.

DUE DATES

Assigned work will have a due date and you will be expected to meet this requirement. Missed in-class work and weekly writing may not be made up unless you have an excused absence (see below). For each calendar day that a major assignment is late, the grade will decrease by a third of a letter grade (A → A-). Please note: weekends are counted by calendar day. The major projects will NOT be accepted after a week past the due date and at that point you will receive a score of 0. You must turn in all three major projects to pass this course. Failure to do so will result in a grade of F.

WEEKLY WRITING (10% OF FINAL GRADE)

Throughout the semester you will do short writing assignments after reading essays and conducting research. The idea behind these assignments is to begin generating material for later development. These prompts will be linked thematically and/or stylistically to the work of the writers that we are reading. By imitating writers who have come before us, we can learn to develop our own voices and writing styles. These prompts will begin as in-class or out-of-class free writes and later be expanded (*to ~2 pages double spaced, or 500 words*) and submitted on Blackboard. Each weekly writing assignment is worth 10 points. There will be 10 of these assignments altogether.

ENGAGEMENT/PARTICIPATION

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss readings, share your work, and comment on other students' work. Being prepared for each class is vital in creating a classroom that is conducive to learning – take notes on the assigned readings as this allows you to remember the material more fully. However, being engaged in class involves more than just participating in discussion. Students should focus on the quality of their questions and contributions, and address topics both critically and creatively.

Each day's Engagement/Participation score is 4 possible points. If you have done the reading and respond thoughtfully in class, adding to the session's discussion, you will receive full credit. If you attend but do not respond (or are clearly unprepared or distracted), you will receive 0-2 points.

Since the class is scheduled to meet 28 times, you have the possibility of scoring 112/100 and earning 12 extra credit points (if you come prepared to every single class). Another way to look at this is, you have three "free absences" to use throughout the semester. Save them for when you really need them. All other absences, except those resulting from mandated government or military service, result in a zero for those days' Engagement/Participation score. Also, I will take Engagement/Participation points away for excessive/regular tardiness.

*If you are absent, you are still responsible for keeping up.

Throughout the semester I may give short, in-class reading quizzes if I sense that people aren't doing the reading, which will factor into your engagement score. In this case, this category will become a percentage grade out of 100. For example, if you earn 82% on Engagement/Participation + Quizzes, you will receive an 82/100. The highest total you can receive in this grading category is 100 (any Engagement/Participation extra credit earned will be applied elsewhere).

Please check Blackboard and with other students if anything in this course is unclear. You can contact me, but ONLY if you have lingering questions. You are also expected to regularly check your school email for updates to the schedule and assignments.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

We will spend a good amount of time in class discussing how, when, and why to cite sources in your work. If you have questions or are unsure if you should cite something, please ask. The UW1020 Policy:

Academic writing builds on the work of others who have written and created before us. Academic writers use and cite the ideas, words, and images of others in order to document grounds for knowledge, illuminate contexts of argument, acknowledge intellectual influences, distinguish our own analytical voices, and encourage further investigation and inquiry. If, on the other hand, we take others' work as our own using their phrases, images, concepts, or arguments without acknowledgement we not only hamper these goals but also cross the line into academic dishonesty.

GW's Code of Academic Integrity defines academic dishonesty as "cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information."

Code of Academic Integrity: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

UNIVERSITY DEADLINES

Drop/Add Dates:

09/10—Last day to add a course on GWeb.

09/22—Last day to add a course using the RTF-EZ or drop a course using the RTF-EZ without academic penalty.

09/24—Last day to drop a course on GWeb.

Withdrawal Dates:

11/03—Last day to withdraw from a course with a grade of 'W' using the RTF-EZ.

11/05—Last day to withdraw from a course with a grade of 'W' on GWeb.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

Students with documented disabilities are legally entitled to certain accommodations in the classroom. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu>. I will be happy to work with students and the DSS to arrange fair access and support.

ADVISOR CONTACTS

If you are struggling with an individual class, or several classes, your first line of contact is always the professor. Contact the professor to discuss the situation, whether it be a lack of clarity over what's expected, an acknowledgment of an illness or family problem that has kept you from your studies recently, or anything else. Stay in contact with your professor.

If, for whatever reason, you need more assistance than your professor can provide, seek out your academic advisor. Your school or college will have assigned an advisor to you. In cases where serious family or personal emergencies arise that leave you considering withdrawal from one or more classes, your professor or advisor may suggest that you contact your dean's office for help.

Advising contacts (along with contact info for the dean's offices at different schools):

CCAS - ccasug@gwu.edu	Phillips Hall, 801 22nd St., 107 Floor; 202.994.6210
GWSB - gwsbadv@gwu.edu	Duques Hall, NW, Suite 456; 202.994.7027
ESIA - advising@gwu.edu	1957 E St., NW, Suite 302; 202.994.3002
SEAS - seasadvising@gwu.edu	Tompkins Hall of Engineering, 725 23rd St., NW, Suite 105; 202.994.6080
SPHHS:	Ross Hall, 2300 Eye St., NW, Suite 202; 202.994.2160

WRITING CENTER

The Writing Center offers free, one-on-one sessions with tutors who can help with a variety of writing tasks, including writing assignments, research papers, and personal statements. This is another resource available to you by virtue of being a member of the GW community take advantage of it! Take responsibility for the quality of your work and get all of you can out of

the learning experience. Appointments are recommended. Visit <http://gwu.edu/~gwriter/> for more information.

COUNSELING CENTER INFORMATION

The University Counseling Center offers a wide array of assistance, from time management workshops to personal counseling and crisis intervention. It has walk-in hours M-F at both locations: Foggy Bottom, Marvin Center Ground Floor, walk-ins 10am-3pm (& appts 9-5). Mount Vernon, Academic Building Room 119, walk-ins 3pm-7pm.
Email: <http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/>
Counselors are available 24/7 at 202-994-5300.

SUBSTANCE USE

If you find yourself struggling with alcohol or other drug use there are resources on campus to assist you. The Center for Alcohol and other Drug Education (CADE) is located at 2129 I Street NW and can be reached at 202-994- 2599 or cade@gwu.edu. More information is available at: <http://prevention.gwu.edu/about>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

- 08/28 – Syllabus Overview, Class Introductions, Free Write; “Arrow and Wound” – Mark Slouka – 15 pgs.
- 08/30 – *Telling True Stories* – Lopate and Brown – 4 pgs.
Prologue to *Rain: A Natural and Cultural History* – Cynthia Barnett – 14 pgs.
“Preface,” “Changs,” “Giuseppe,” “At the Sign of the Hand,” “Wind and Bone,” and “Tigers” – Eliot Weinberger’s *An Elemental Thing* – 29 pgs.
- 09/01 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<

Week 2

- 09/04 – **NO CLASS – LABOR DAY**
- 09/06 – “The Last Americans” – Jared Diamond – 9 pgs.
“Unnamed Caves” – John Jeremiah Sullivan – 18 pgs.
“Rediscovering Central Asia” – S. Frederick Starr – 11 pgs.
- 09/08 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<

Week 3

- 09/11 – “Three Simple Stories” – Julian Barnes – 5 pgs.
“A Different Sort of Sacrifice” – Reza Aslan – 7 pgs.
“Pigs, Sea” – Tim Denevi – 7 pgs. (much longer)
“The Impious Impatience of Job” – Cynthia Ozick – 9 pgs.
- 09/13 – **LIBRARY DAY (MEET IN GELMAN LIBRARY, ROOM 301, BRING LAPTOPS); ***Pre-Library Day Homework Due*****
- 09/15 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<

Week 4

- 09/18 – “The Mastodon’s Molars” – Elizabeth Kolbert – 17 pgs.
“Beyle, or Love is a Madness Most Discreet” – from W.G. Sebald’s *Vertigo* – 28 pgs. (actually much less)

- 09/20 – ***Workshop Drafts for Researched Historical Narrative 1 Due*****
 “La-Hwi-Ne-Ski: Career of an Eccentric Naturalist” – John Jeremiah Sullivan – 14 pgs.
 “The Execution of Tropmann” – Ivan Turgenev – 19 pgs.
 “...and nobody objected” – Paul Metcalf – 10 pgs.
- 09/22 – >>>Critique workshop drafts for your group members<<<**

Week 5

- 09/25 – IN-CLASS WORKSHOP FOR RESEARCHED HISTORICAL NARRATIVE 1**
09/27 – *Researched Historical Narrative 1 Due*****
 “Muhammad” – Eliot Weinberger – 19 pgs.
 “The Rhinoceros” – Eliot Weinberger – 15 pgs.
- 09/29 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<**

Week 6

- 10/02 – “Me, Myself, and I” – Jane Kramer – 6 pgs.**
 “Fuller” – Albert Goldbarth – 28 pgs.
- 10/04 – “Twinkle, Twinkle, Vogel Staar” – Elena Passarello – 11 pgs.**
 “The Anti-Jefferson” – Andrew Levy – 22 pgs.
- 10/06 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<**

Week 7

- 10/09 – NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**
- 10/11 – “Crossing the Rapidan” – Colin Rafferty – very short**
 “The Arctic Hedonist” – Anne Fadiman – 8 pgs.
 “The Curve of Binding Energy” – John McPhee – 26 pgs.
- 10/13 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<**

Week 8

- 10/16 – “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold” – Gay Talese – 43 pgs.**
- 10/18 – “Lower Orbits: Remembering Gherman Titov” – Christine Spillson – 10 pgs.**
 “What Do You Think of Ted Williams Now?” – Richard Ben Cramer – 32 pgs.
- 10/20 – ***Workshop Drafts for Historical Profile Essay Due*****
 >>>Critique workshop drafts for your group members<<<

Week 9

- 10/23 – “Arabella” – Elena Passarello – 12 pgs.**
 “A Rake’s Progress” – Matt Labash – 27 pgs.
- 10/25 – IN-CLASS WORKSHOP FOR HISTORICAL PROFILE ESSAY**
- 10/27 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<**

Week 10

- 10/30 – ***Historical Profile Essay Due*****
 “Gettysburg Regress” – John Summers – 10 pgs.
 “How to Spell the Rebel Yell” – Elena Passarello – 13 pgs.
- 11/01 – “Assembling California” – John McPhee – 32 pgs.**
 “Influenza 1918” – Jane Brox – 9 pgs.
 “The First Light of Trinity” – Alex Wellerstein – 5 pgs.

11/03 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<

Week 11

- 11/06 – “Fire” – Amy Kolen – 22 pgs.
“Hitler’s Couch” – Mark Slouka – 12 pgs.
11/08 – “Operation Gomorrah” – Marione Ingram – 14 pgs.
“Exquisite Corpse” – Ashraf Rushdy – 5 pgs.
11/10 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<

Week 12

- 11/13 – “The White Album” – Joan Didion – 38 pgs.
11/15 – “The Ghosts of Mrs. Ghandi” – Amitav Ghosh – 9 pgs.
“Vermeer in Bosnia” – Lawrence Weschler – 13 pgs.
“Turning Point” – Rudolph Chelminski – 4 pgs.
“Leap” – Brian Doyle – 2 pgs.
11/17 – >>>Weekly Writing Assignment<<<

Week 13

- 11/20 – *****Workshop Drafts Due for Group A*****
“Killing Like They Do in the Movies” – Justin Phillip Reed – 10 pgs.
“I Have No Choice but to Keep Looking” – Jen Percy – 13 pgs.
“The Really Big One” – Kathryn Schulz – 16 pgs.
“Jesus Christ at the Inauguration” – Tim Denevi – 5 pgs.
11/22 – **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**
11/24 – **NO ACTIVITY – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 14

- 11/27 – WORKSHOP GROUP A; *****Workshop Drafts Due for Group B***; Group A
Workshop Critiques Due**
11/29 – WORKSHOP GROUP B; *****Workshop Drafts Due for Group C***; Group B
Workshop Critiques Due**
12/01 – >>>Critique workshop drafts for your group members<<<

Week 15

- 12/04 – WORKSHOP GROUP C; *****Workshop Drafts Due for Group D***; Group C
Workshop Critiques Due**
12/06 – WORKSHOP GROUP D; **Group D Workshop Critiques Due**
12/08 – >>>Work on Researched Historical Narrative 2<<<

Week 16

- 12/11 – **FINAL CLASS PERIOD; IN-CLASS READING; ***Researched Historical
Narrative 2 Due*****

** This schedule is subject to change, for any reason, at my discretion. I'll let you know with plenty of time if changes are made.

** All reading assignments must be read for the day that they appear on the syllabus.