

“The line of words is a miner’s pick, a woodcarver’s gouge, a surgeon’s probe. You wield it, and it digs a path you follow. Soon you find yourself deep in new territory. Is it a dead end, or have you located the real subject? You will know tomorrow, or this time next year.”

-Annie Dillard. *The Writing Life*. New York: HarperCollins, 1989

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## **ENW 306 A: Creative Nonfiction II, Fall 2017**

CRN 72793 \* Sonya Huber, Associate Professor, Fairfield University

Mondays and Thursdays, 11-12:15

Email: shuber@fairfield.edu  
Office: 122 Donnarumma Hall  
Office Hours: Monday, 12:30-2; Thursday 12:30-2  
(This varies, so please email me to make an appointment if you want to be sure to catch me).  
Last Day to Withdraw: Oct. 19  
Portfolios Due: Last Day of Class

Our class calendar (also linked from inside Blackboard):

<https://sonyahuberteaching.wordpress.com/creative-nonfiction-ii-fall-2017/>

### **What You’ll Need**

- Robin Hemley, *A Field Guide for Immersion Writing*
- Adriana Páramo, *Looking for Esperanza*
- Access to Blackboard online course site and ability to check email daily for course updates
- A stapler
- A composition notebook

### **Course Goals**

This course builds upon the exploratory and craft techniques learned in Creative Nonfiction. Moving from the survey of writing choices presented within the umbrella of Creative Nonfiction, we will focus specifically on the techniques of immersion and experimental memoir to learn and practice advanced options for portraying the self and others in nonfiction.

We will discuss techniques, ethical choices, and possibilities surrounding the creation of

nonfiction. In addition, you will engage in the full process of producing a creative work from brainstorming to writing to receiving feedback and revising. You will examine your own interests for possible subject matter and conduct research and inquiry into topics less familiar to you. I hope we will develop a community of creative writers who will be able to give respectful and helpful comments on one another's work.

### **Course Outcomes**

- Employ standard workshop practices and other forms of critical response to engage with higher-level craft elements in genre
- Synthesize lessons about technique from writers chosen for their rich contributions to imaginative literature
- Provide sustained written and oral feedback to peers in small and large workshop settings
- Revise your work in a reflective manner, using other work as models and incorporating appropriate feedback; Use creative strategies for risk-taking revisions

## Overview of Assignments

Due dates for these assignments are available on the course calendar online in Blackboard; these may be altered slightly over the course of the semester to meet the needs of a specific class. Each assignment is followed by the percentage of total course grade.

- Participation & Writer's Notebook (20%): Includes sharing in-class and out-of-class writing, attendance, leading discussion as assigned, and participating in online discussions;
- Two Reading Papers (10% total);
- Two shorter essays (30% total);
- Drafts and planning exercises (10%);
- Final Project & Reflection (30%)

## Peer Feedback

After you read another student's writing, you will write comments of reaction and analysis on the manuscript itself as well as writing an entry on your blog (due before class, otherwise will be counted for half credit). During workshop, we will go around and give comments on the work, and each person will summarize their reactions to start a conversation about the work.

Useful feedback includes:

- indicating points in the text that were most or least engaging and why;
- techniques the writer used and how they work;
- suggestions for improving the text, ideas for taking the text in a new direction;
- questions the author might try to answer in the text;
- what you think is the author's goal.

## Grades

Your final grade in this class will be calculated on this basis:

A 93 – 100  
A - 90 – 92  
B+ 87 – 89  
B 83 – 86  
B- 80 – 82

C+ 77 – 79  
C 73 – 66  
C- 70 – 72  
D 60 – 69  
F 0 – 59

- "A" work meets all the demands of the assignment and includes elements of originality, rigor, thought, improvement, and serious effort.
  - "B" work meets most or all the demands of the assignment and includes some elements of originality, rigor, thought, improvement, and serious effort, but exhibits room for improvement.
  - "C" work meets some of the demands of the assignment, exhibits some element of originality and effort, but fails to meet other criteria laid out in the assignment sheet or in class discussions (including deadlines).
  - "D" work misses many of the demands of the assignment (including deadlines).

I am not able to negotiate grades, either during or after the semester. Individual calculation of +/- grades are at the discretion of the instructor; the best way to get an A- in this class is to do all the assignments, as the assignments are designed to improve your writing, which is the goal of this course. An "A" is reserved for work of exceptional quality and/or effort. Waiting until the end of the course to attend to your grade does not work for a process-driven course like writing workshop

(Can you “cram” a semester’s worth of soccer practice into two days?). Your grade is a measure of your effort as well as your production throughout the semester.

### **The Fine Print**

- The Fairfield Attendance Policy States, “All students are expected to regularly attend every class session....Unexcused absences may be reported to the appropriate academic dean.” Attendance is critical to the success of this class and to your development as a writer. Please don't ask me, “What did I miss?” or—worse—“Did I miss anything?” Take responsibility for all assignments given in class and ask a classmate for assignments and notes that you have missed. *From the second absence and on, 5% of your final grade will be deducted for each absence.* All of these policies are up to the discretion of the instructor and you should talk to me about your individual situation. Because this is a turbo, each class is very important. I will deduct fifty points from your final grade for **each** additional absence beyond one. For example, if you earn 940 points but have four missed classes, you will receive -150, which equals a total of 790 points, which is a C+.
- Excused absences will be granted for Fairfield activities in compliance with the Fairfield attendance policy, but please provide me with a schedule and/or documentation if appropriate. I will grant excused absences on a case-by-case basis, but only if you let me know promptly what is going on.
- Being late on a regular basis will result in a lowering of your final grade. In general, I will count two instances of significant lateness as an absence.
- Email by signing your name, writing complete sentences, and using the resources provided to you on Blackboard and the online calendar to ask *informed* questions.
- Be respectful. *Please do not conduct private e-mail, IM, web surfing, or text message conversations in class.* Disruptions such as these affect the entire class, and point deductions from your final grade will result.
- Your participation grade will reflect your in-class participation as well as the completion of in-class group work and feedback in peer groups.
- All work—including drafts of papers—must be handed in on time and during the class period in which it is due. Assignments automatically go down by a final grade of 10% for each day they are late. Extensions without penalty are only given *before* the due date.

### **Academic Integrity**

All members of the community recognize the necessity of being honest with themselves and with others. The integrity of the educational experience is diminished by cheating in class, plagiarizing, lying and employing other modes of deceit. None of these should be used as a strategy to obtain a false sense of success. The need for honest relations among all members of the community is essential. Fairfield University has clear disciplinary consequences for academic dishonesty. Please see the course catalogue for a complete description of academic dishonesty, which we will also discuss in class.

Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. It is a serious academic offence, a terrible habit, the hallmark of a lazy mind--and it has the potential to destroy your career. At no point in the writing process should words or ideas that are not your own be represented as such. *This simply means to give credit to quotes and also ideas that are not your own.* If you plagiarize someone else's work and are caught, there will be serious academic consequences, which may include being reported to the Dean’s Office and failing this course.

## Resources

- The **University Writing Center** on the ground floor of the library provides free, professional writing tutoring and consultation. You may set up an appointment or get more information at [www.fairfield.edu/writingcenter](http://www.fairfield.edu/writingcenter).
- **Academic and Disability Support Services:** If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Academic & Disability Support Services, Aloysius P. Kelley, S. J. Center, ext. 2615. If you are not sure whether you have a disability, this office can help you!
- **Counseling Services** are available at ext. 2146.

### A Note on Workshop...

Artistic expression is inherently personal and couched in subjectivity; for that reason, creative writing teachers understand students' sense of risk and anxiety over sharing material that feels emotionally challenging. The goal in teaching creative writing is the development of craft and text. Once in a while a student may misunderstand workshop goals or assume that writing is inherently better if it is emotionally difficult for the writer. Although creative writing naturally explores reality and its challenges, an education in creative writing will reveal alternate frameworks for understanding expression, revision, distance, perspective, and the creative process. If you are experiencing any kind of difficulty related to workshop, we strongly encourage you to try one of appropriate strategies: 1) write a draft and share it with your professor to get one-on-one feedback; 2) talk to or email the professor ahead of time to sort out artistic strategies for writing about *other* topics besides those that cause you anxiety; 3) discuss with your professor or other trusted persons whether you have enough social support and distance from a difficult subject in order to share it with your peers for the goal of artistic expression and development. We encourage you to contact Counseling on campus should you need additional support.

This is a work in progress, set in pixels and not in stone, so it might change even as you're reading it      Check back often.

Note that your reading responses are due on the day they're listed on the calendar. Be prepared to talk about the essay and to supply a quote about the essay with your comments. You are responsible for having read/done/completed whatever is listed under the date for each upcoming class.

Office hours: Mon. 12:30-2 and Thurs. 12:30-2 and by appt. Sometimes I have to schedule a meeting during this time, in which case I'll leave a note on my door. If you'd like to reserve a time to talk to me either within or outside these hours, please email me and I'd be happy to sit and talk with you.

[Daily Calendar](#)

## **Thurs., Sept. 7**

Welcome and overview of course; books and composition book

What are immersion and experimentation? Why do them?

Homework for next class:

1. Read Jill Talbot's "[The Professor of Longing](#)"
2. Read David Foster Wallace, "Shipping Out" (handout and also available in Blackboard "Readings" folder)
3. Bring in composition books

## **Mon., Sept. 11**

Composition book check-in and more; discussion of things inside other things

Homework for next class:

1. Read Rahawa Haile, "[Going It Alone](#)" and add a sentence in the notes section of your book
2. 3 pages in your comp book as journals and decorate in some way

## **Thurs., Sept. 14**

Mini Immersion Expedition 1

Homework for next class:

1. Read Adriana Páramo, intro-p. 37 (put quotes in your notebook)
2. 1 "X" page and 1 journal page
3. Read Ch. 1 in *Field Guide for Immersion Writing*

## **Mon., Sept. 18**

Discussion/Brainstorm of Immersion ideas

Homework for next class:

1. Read Adriana Páramo, p. 38-85
2. Bring in 3 Immersion ideas

## **Thurs., Sept. 21**

Failure as detour in immersions; what is at stake for Páramo?

Homework for next class:

1. Read Adriana Páramo, p. 86-109
2. Commit to your immersion idea and write 500 words, bring in 3 copies

## **Mon., Sept. 25**

Small groups for Immersion Discussion

What's at stake in your immersion?

Homework for next class:

1. Adriana Páramo p. 109-140
2. Interpretation paper of Páramo due: Interpretation of *Looking for Esperanza* due. What did you find most meaningful in this book and why? What craft choices did the author make to enhance the effect of the meaning? Include at least 3 quotes from book, with "talkback" to the quotes to demonstrate skill at close reading, and proper punctuation for quotes. At least 2 pages double spaced.

## **Thurs. Sept. 28**

Discussion of Páramo and broadening the view of voice and vision in the essay.

Homework for next class:

1. Jennifer Lunden's "[Evidence, in Track Changes](#)"
2. Chapter 2 in A Field Guide for Immersion Writing
3. 1 "X" page, 1 journal page

## **Monday, Oct. 2**

## Form and Container in the Essay: Expanding the Essay

Homework for next class:

Experimentation & Form

1. Karrie Higgins, "[Strange Flowers](#),"
2. Two one-sentence essays: Vincent Scarpa's "[I Go Back to Berryman's](#)" and Jaquira Díaz's "[Reflections While Sitting in Traffic](#)"
3. Dinty Moore's "[Mr. Plimpton's Revenge](#)"
4. 500 words for your experimental essay

### **Thurs. Oct. 5**

Signup for individual midterm conferences

Discussion of three essays

Small groups to discuss ideas for Experimental Essays

Homework for Next Class: Prep for individual conferences & work on experimental essays

### **Mon. Oct. 9**

No Class: Fall Break

### **Thurs., Oct. 12**

No class: Required Individual Notebook & Essay Meetings

### **Mon. Oct. 16**

No class: Required Individual Notebook & Essay Meetings

**Tuesday, Oct. 17: Literary Event opportunity: MFA alumni bookfair and readings at 7 pm in the Kelley Center!**

**Thurs. Oct. 19**

**Experimental Essay piece Due**

For next class:

1. Danez Smith, "[Days](#) After,"
2. Read two workshop pieces (described below)
3. Write your "letter to the reader" and upload to the file in Quip

**Mon. Oct. 23**

1. Danez Smith, "[Days](#) After," presented by Adriana

Workshop for Experimental Pieces:

1. Read both "Letters to the Reader" in Quip
2. Kaitlyn: text is on Quip, comment in Quip and think about her ice cream container
3. Alex: text is in Blackboard, feel free to either comment in track changes and send to author and me or print out and write your comments (I'll collect)

For Next Time:

1. Sarah Smarsh, "[Dear Daughter, Your Mom](#)"

Workshop for Experimental Pieces:

1. Read both "Letters to the Reader" in Quip
2. Billie: text is hard copy illustrated zine
3. Ryanne: text is in Blackboard, feel free to either comment in track changes and send to author and me or print out and write your comments (I'll collect)

**Tuesday, Oct. 24: Literary Event opportunity: Fairfield English Dept. Faculty member Matt Tullis reads from his new book, *Running with Ghosts*, about the aftermath of childhood cancer. 7 pm at the bookstore downtown!**

**Thurs. Oct. 26**

Frame and Voice



1. Sarah Smarsh, "[Dear Daughter, Your Mom](#)"

Workshop for Experimental Pieces:

1. Read both "Letters to the Reader" in Quip
2. Billie: text is hard copy illustrated zine
3. Ryanne: text is in Blackboard, feel free to either comment in track changes and send to author and me or print out and write your comments (I'll collect)

For Next Time: 2 workshops listed below and "Travels in Georgia" in Blackboard "readings" folder (it's long, so read the first 30 pages for Monday)

### **Mon. Oct. 30**

1. Workshop for Experimental Pieces:
  1. Read both "Letters to the Reader" in Quip
  2. Allison: text is hard copy screenplay format
  3. Carlye: text is in the "Workshop: Experimental Essays" folder in Blackboard

Read first 30 pages of "Travels in Georgia" in Blackboard "Readings & Assignments" folder

*Undergraduate Advising: Nov. 1-Nov. 20*

### **Thurs., Nov. 2**

1. Workshop for Experimental Pieces:
  1. Read both "Letters to the Reader" in Quip
  2. Marina: newest note in Quip has link to password-protected blog and password
  3. Adrianna: "Kiss of Death" text is in the "Workshop: Experimental Essays" folder in Blackboard

"Travels in Georgia" Part II & "Structure" in Readings & Assignments folder in Blackboard

Homework for next class:

1. Experimental Essay Workshop: Bridget & Sam
2. Catching up: Sarah Smarsh!
3. 1 "X" page in journal and 2 regular pages, about immersion and/or anything else

### **Mon. Nov. 6**

- Experimental Essay Workshop: Bridget & Sam
- Catching up: Sarah Smarsh!

Homework for next class:

1. Experimental Essay Workshop: Sam & Emily
2. Read “Woven” by Lidia Yuknavitch: <https://www.guernicamag.com/features/woven/>

### **Thurs., Nov. 9**

Workshop of Experimental Memoir Pieces: Sam & Emily

- “Woven” by Lidia Yuknavitch: <https://www.guernicamag.com/features/woven/>

Homework for next class:

1. Experimental Essay Workshop: Kelly & Meg
2. Lee Martin, “The Layers of Memoir,” <http://leemartinauthor.com/2014/11/the-layers-of-memoir/>

### **Mon. Nov. 13**

1. Experimental Essay Workshop: Kelly & Meg

Layering: Lee Martin, “The Layers of Memoir,” <http://leemartinauthor.com/2014/11/the-layers-of-memoir/>

Homework for next class:

1. Experimental Essay Workshop: AJ & Irene
2. Read Kiese Laymon, “How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America,” <http://gawker.com/5927452/how-to-slowly-kill-yourself-and-others-in-america-a-remembrance>

### **Thurs., Nov. 16**

1. Experimental Essay Workshop: AJ & Irene
2. Read Kiese Laymon, “How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America,” <http://gawker.com/5927452/how-to-slowly-kill-yourself-and-others-in-america-a-remembrance>

Homework for next class:

1. Immersion Pieces Due!!!!

**Mon., Nov. 20**

**Immersion Pieces Due; early workshop**

**Thurs., Nov. 23**

No Class: Thanksgiving

**Mon., Nov. 27**

Workshop 3 immersion pieces: AJ, Meg, Kelly

**Thurs., Nov. 30**

Workshop 3 immersion pieces: Irene, Sam, Emily

**Literary Event:** Theatre in the Raw, Theatre Fairfield presents a musical, One State, Two State, Red State, Blue State by Wes Savick, and the actual performance will be a staged reading/singing. The performance dates are Nov. 30 and Dec 2-3.

**Literary Event:** Performing for Change presents a performance exploring social justice movements present at past, Dec. 2 at 8 pm, Gonzaga Auditorium.

**Mon., Dec. 4**

Workshop 3 immersion pieces: Bridget, Adrianna, Marina

Fill out [IDEA course evaluation](#). Thank you!

**Thurs., Dec. 7**

Workshop 3 immersion pieces: Allison, Carlye, Billie

**Mon., Dec. 11**

Workshop 3 immersion pieces: Ryanne, Kaitlyn, Alex