

ENC 4311:03-Advanced Article & Essay Workshop

Wednesday, 6:45 PM - 9:30 PM, WMS 116

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. & by appointment

TEXTS (at Bill's Bookstore & FSU Bookstore):

Kitchen & Jones, eds., *In Short: A Collection of Brief Creative Nonfiction* (Norton) abbr: IS
Kitchen & Jones, eds., *In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal* (Norton) abbr: IB
Oates & Atwan, eds., *Best Am Essays of the Century* (Houghton Mifflin) abbr: BA

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This is a course in the writing of creative nonfiction. Because creative nonfiction is a large and unwieldy genre, we will focus within it on the personal essay and because it's summer and our time is short and accelerated, we will focus on writing fairly short essays. We will begin to explore the range and flexibility of this form in discussions of our own work and that of published essayists. Everyone in the class will also be part of a small group, which will be responsible for leading workshop for one of four weeks and for selecting copy for inclusion in a little magazine, which they will turn in the last week of class.

By participating in in-class workshops devoted to their own work, students will learn to

- express criticism in a clear, constructive, collegial way
- receive criticism from others and use it as an aid to revision

By reading, discussing, and responding in writing to works of a diverse group of published writers, students will learn to

- recognize literary uses of language and the conventions of creative nonfiction that they might then employ in their own writing
- recognize how meaning is created within different historical periods and cultural contexts

By working together with a partner to do a presentation on an essay, students will learn to

- establish criteria for interpreting and evaluating an essay
- communicate orally in a public setting
- lead a discussion and field questions from an audience

By working together with others to help organize and publicize a public reading, students will learn to

- establish criteria for deciding who should read and what they should read at a public reading
- read their work aloud to an audience

From its origins in the work of Montaigne, the essay has been both the most private and public of genres, and we all have private as well as public selves, roles we play at home and on

the street, in our families and at work. The personal essay starts with the experience of the individual writer, but attempts by means of technique to make that personal experience speak more universally to what, for the sake of a better term, we will call the general reader. The essay can be a place where we search out who we are when we play those different roles. Essayists have also investigated all sorts of subjects (e.g., natural history, personal history, politics, etc.) and employed all sorts of formal techniques (e.g., exposition, narration, dialogue, etc.). Our goals will be to begin to learn to read and write as essayists.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Approximate weight of our different assignments as percentage of the final grade:

Discussion Board Responses	10%
Exercises (for small group work)	10%
Drafts (for workshop)	20%
Presentation with partner	10%
Comments on fellow students' drafts	10%
Public Reading (group & individual grade)	15%
Final Revision	15%
Class attendance & participation	10%

Attendance

Because this class meets just twice a week and depends on your active participation, attendance and preparation are mandatory. You are allowed one unexcused absence; after that, your overall grade for the course drops a half a grade per absence.

University policy states that students involved with university-sanctioned (including but not limited to athletics, band, ROTC, academic honor societies, and nursing) may not be counted absent on days scheduled by those programs as service work for the university. If you know you will be absent at any time during the semester for such activities, you must obtain from your advisor a signed statement on FSU letterhead noting the scheduled events for the semester. You must turn in this document by the end of the second week of classes. This is your responsibility; without the letter you will be counted absent on those days. Documented illnesses (documented, that is, by a copy of a letter from Thagard or your physician) also count as excused absences, though in none of these cases will students be excused from handing in the work assigned, or from being responsible for work covered in class.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA):

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

- (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and
- (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center
97 Woodward Avenue, South
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

Assignments

Small Groups

Everyone will be a member of one of four small groups. Each group will be responsible for responding to the exercises of the other members of the group during the first part of the semester (weeks 2-4) and for organizing a public reading.

Discussion Board Responses

You'll each be expected to respond to the anthologized essays we will be reading throughout the term on a discussion board forum on the course Blackboard site. These responses are meant to help you begin to read like a writer, but they are also meant to get you thinking about the text before we discuss it in class. Because they are meant to help you come to class informed, holding a position and ready to talk, and because I want to use them as part of my preparation for class, they must be completed **by 12:00 noon on the day of the class in which we will be discussing those particular essays**. You will receive a number grade from me on your responses (10 points possible) based on the specificity, insight, and number of your responses. There will be a discussion board forum posted each of twelve weeks (weeks 2 – 14); you're expected to post in at least ten of them. Anything beyond that is extra credit.

Exercises

During the first part of our semester (again, weeks 2 - 4) each of you will write some exercises, which will be discussed during class in your small group (the same group with which you will organize a reading). Each of these exercises will be prompted by that week's readings, either in terms of form, content or both. The discussion board forum that week will include some ideas about how you might do this. These exercises are meant to help you generate material and try your hand at specific techniques. They will also provide you with a stock of material from which you might later want to write essays. **Each exercise should be approximately one to two double-spaced pages long**. These exercises are meant to help you generate material, try your hand at specific techniques, and get started on the longer pieces you'll turn in later. I'd like you submit each of these to me as a Word file via assignment function of our Blackboard site **by 5:00 p.m. on the day preceding the class in which we will be discussing those particular drafts AND print out a hard copy of this draft to bring to class**.

You will receive a number grade from me on your draft (10 points possible). You won't be graded on spelling, grammar and mechanics in either your exercises or responses, but I hope that

your respect for your readers and the English language will prompt you to proofread them and clean them up as much as possible anyway.

Essay Drafts and Workshop

Twice during the rest of the semester you will deliver a draft of a short essay. Each draft should be 3 to 4 double-spaced pages long in Times 12 point with one-inch margins and a title. It should also include your name and be paginated. *You should submit these drafts electronically by 5:00 p.m. on the day prior to the class in which we will be discussing them (i.e., Tuesday by 5 p.m. for our Wednesday class). Do this by email through the Blackboard site to everyone in the class. Paste it into the body of the email AND attach it as a Word file. Please save it as .doc file.* Your fellow classmates and I will be responsible for printing out a hard copy of your piece that we will comment on and bring to class. You will receive a letter grade from me on your draft. I will grade these on the basis of spelling, grammar and mechanics as well as originality, coherence, and use of the essay form. No late drafts will be accepted.

Comments On Fellow Students' Drafts

Everyone will be expected to write on a printed copy of every student's draft and come to class prepared to workshop. In other words, everyone will get written comments from everyone else. (If you prefer to use Word's track changes to comment, you may, but you still need to print out a hard copy to bring to class, to refer to in discussion, and to give to the person who wrote it.)

This class depends in large part on critiquing each other's work. Each time a student's work is critiqued, he or she will also critique the critiques by assigning them a numerical grade (0 to 10) on a sheet I will provide. The grade is meant to evaluate how specific, thorough, insightful and collegial the responses were. I will also hand out a rubric and a form that will help you do this. I will collect and tally these critiques of the critiques and on the basis of those tallies you will each be assigned a grade on your comments on each other's drafts. You will receive credit for completing this sheet and turning it in.

Presentation with a Partner

I will pair each of you with a partner. The two of you will then be responsible for doing a ten-minute long presentation to the class on one of the longer published essays we will be reading. These are the essays from *Best American Essays of the Century* edited by Robert Atwan and Joyce Carol Oates. You will be expected to offer some background about the piece, identify key aspects and passages, propose what we as writers might learn from the essay, and help lead a discussion of the piece. Again, you'll receive a handout later to help you plan your presentation.

Public Reading

To break the isolation of the classroom, help you think about writing as a community activity, enlarge your sense of audience, and help you battle shyness I will divide the class up into small groups and ask each group to organize a reading of its work at a location in Tallahassee of its own choosing. This reading should be held some time during the last few weeks of classes and should be approximately 45 minutes to one hour long. Your group might read at a school, fraternity or sorority, residence hall, church, community center, assisted care facility, coffee shop, or any other formal setting that requires you to share your work with an audience that includes people outside of this class (and, I hope, some people you don't even know). **You will**

receive a group grade (based on a portfolio of materials about the reading) and an individual grade (based on peer critiques that I receive from each member of the group, including yourself, i.e. you will self-evaluate). See below for a handout later that describes this assignment in more detail.

Final Revision

At our last class you will turn in a final revision of ONE of your essays (and a copy of the earlier draft of this essay that has my comments on it). This revision should be 8 to 10 pages long. Though it is your essay, the expectation is that you will have learned something from the workshopping process that you were able to use as you revised. It will receive a letter grade and will be graded on spelling, grammar and mechanics as well as originality, coherence and use of the essay form, but even more importantly, it will be graded on how aggressively and bravely you revise (i.e., a grade of A on the earlier shorter version does not guarantee an A on the revision).

**Never turn in your only copy of something.
Keep a copy of everything.
*Again, all assignments are due when they are due, not later.***

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the undocumented use of someone else's work. It amounts to stealing and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is a violation of the Academic Honor Policy and is grounds for failure in this course. If you do not understand how to cite a source, see me.

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to ". . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>.)

Cell Phones

Please turn your cell phone off during class.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week One Introduction to the Personal Essay as a Genre

W 8/31 **Syllabus and Goals**
Darlington, IB 100 White & Hoagland Handouts
Discuss White & Hoagland Handouts
Hand out Map & Autobiography Exercises

Week Two The Personal Essay with Memory as Its Source

W 9/7 Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow," BA 159
Duncan, IS 120
Small Group Discussion of Map & Autobiography Exercises
Hand out Scene & Dialogue Exercises

Week Three Scenes: Encounters, Immediacy, Dialogue, Detail, Interior Voice

W 9/14 **Dialogue** **Recollected Scene** **Recollected Scene**
Immediate Thoughts **Present Tense** **Past Tense**
McCourt, IB 50 Udall, IB 43 **Reflection**
Simon, IB 176 Cherry, IS 172
Small Group Discussion of Scene & Dialogue Exercises

Week Four Scenes: Second Hand or Family Stories, Stories Partially Yours

W 9/21 Price, IB 39
Panning, IB 54
Presentation: Oates, "They All Just Went Away," BA 553
Workshop

Week Five Scenes- Reflection, Retrospection, Distance

W 9/28 **Presentation:** Baldwin, "Notes of a Native Son," BA 220
Workshop

Week Six Specialized Knowledge

W 10/5 O'Brien, IS 60
Presentation: Herr, "Illumination Rounds," BA 327
Workshop

Week Seven Research

W 10/12 Burroughs, IS 110
Presentation: Walker, "Looking for Zora," BA 395
Presentation: Gould, "The Creation Myths of Cooperstown," BA 520
Workshop

Week Eight Voice/Style/Lyricism

W 10/19 **Presentation:** Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," BA 114
Presentation: Ehrlich, "The Solace of Open Spaces," BA 467
Workshop

Week Nine Organization: Theme, The Focused or Braided Essay

W 10/26 McClannahan, IB 180
Presentation: McPhee, "The Search for Marvin Gardens," BA 361
Workshop

Week Ten Organization: Metaphor

W 11/2 Sanders, IS 247
Salter, IB 266
Norris, IB 136
Workshop

Week Eleven Organization: Narrative

W 11/9 **Presentation:** White, "Once More to the Lake," BA 179

Workshop

Week Twelve **Organization: Disjunctiveness**

W 11/16 **Presentation:** Didion, “The White Album,” BA 421
Workshop

Week Thirteen **THANKSGIVING**

W 11/23 NO CLASS

Week Fourteen **Revision Discussion**

W 11/30 Maureen Stanton’s “Zion” and “On Writing Zion” (handouts)

Week Fifteen **Group Portfolios & Final Revisions**

W 12/7 Final Class Meeting & Debriefing
Final Revision Due **Group Reading Portfolio Due**

More on the Group Reading

Division of Labor

You will need to establish a division of labor. I don’t care how you do this as long as it is fair and equitable. Tasks might include booking the location, serving as master of ceremonies for the reading, advertising the event, producing a program, refreshments, preparing the final portfolio, clean up and thank you notes.

Time & Place

You will need to get to work right away on setting a date and booking a room. My expectation is that you will hold your reading sometime the week before Thanksgiving but I’m flexible about this. I suggest this window because it’s late in the term and so you will be done with most of your writing and revision by then, giving you a lot of possibilities to choose from. This will also give you time after Thanksgiving to assemble your Final Group Portfolio (see below) and work on your individual final revision.

Possible venues for your reading might be a school, church, assisted care facility, coffee shop, children’s summer camp, or common room in your apartment complex, sorority, fraternity or residence hall.

Program

During class you will workshop in the same group with which you’re planning your reading. This will give you many opportunities to get to know each other’s work, which will in turn help you plan the program for your reading. You may want to organize your reading around a theme or have it serve as a benefit, but in any case you’ll want to come up with some kind of appropriate order (e.g., funny alternating with serious, narrative alternating with exposition, etc.). Also, you’ll need to plan the length so that everyone is reading about the same amount and the whole program is not more than 45 minutes or so, including time for introductions and probably questions & answers. You’ll also need to provide your audience with a printed program that includes the order of the reading, titles, short bios, etc. ***Finally, remember you are representing our class, department, creative writing program and FSU. Be polite, choose reading selections that are appropriate for your audience, and thank everyone for coming.***

Timetable

Much of this you need to work out on your own. I will give you some time in class to meet, but you will probably need to get together outside of class at least once or twice to have a rehearsal and do additional planning. To get you jumpstarted and help you with your planning, I am setting an intermediate deadline of Wednesday, June 1, when I want you to let me know when and where you're going to have your reading. This notification should include a signed agreement with a person in charge of the facility (e.g., school principle, church minister, apartment complex manager, etc.). I would prefer that this be on letterhead or an email cc'd to me, but in any case it should include their phone number.

Final Group Portfolio (Group Grade)

On Weds, 12/7, at our final class, each group will submit a portfolio of their work. At minimum, this should include a one-page summary of the group's activity that consists of three sections: 1. a description of how you worked together to plan the reading, 2. a description of the reading itself, and 3. a description of what you would do differently next time. The portfolio may include anything else you deem appropriate (e.g., copies of your printed program, fliers, photos, a CD, etc.).

Peer Critique (Individual Grade)

Each of you will fill out a form on which I will ask you to grade yourself and your group members. This form will include a rubric with criteria such as attendance, participation, cooperation, initiative, etc.