

Moodle web address: <https://ay15.moodle.umn.edu/course/view.php?id=10709>.

Email Policy: Emails should use professional language, be formal in format, and be specific. Format considerations include the subject heading, salutation, body, closing, name and/or signature. Proofread and spellcheck your email before sending it. Before sending questions via email, make sure that your question is not answered on the course syllabus, an assignment sheet, or on Moodle.

Course Outcomes

This course is organized to help you develop writing skills associated to creative nonfiction writing. At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- ⊗ Define the memoir genre while also recognizing its diversity, flexibility, and complexity
- ⊗ Strengthen creative and analytical writing skills by focusing on array of classic and contemporary authors and styles as models for your work
- ⊗ Focus on the process of writing as a means of learning and effective communication
- ⊗ Examine diverse cultures, traditions, values, and perspectives through readings, discussion, and writing assignments
- ⊗ Practice stylistic techniques of the genre through exercises in point of view, voice, tone, figurative language, scene-setting, narrative, dialogue, and so forth
- ⊗ Produce several substantial memoir pieces, culminating in a final portfolio that is clear, organized, sophisticated, and polished
- ⊗ Develop your abilities as an engaged and critical reader – of your own work, of the work of your peers, and of the work of others.

Course Grading Organization

10%	Class Engagement
10%	Journal/Notebook and Reading Discussion Questions
10%	Writing Prompt Compositions
20%	Reading Response Papers (5% each)
15%	Workshops/Conferences (3% each)
35%	Final Portfolio and Reading

Course Grading Scale

A	94-100%	B+	87-89%	B-	80-82%	C	73-76%	D	60-69%
A-	90-93%	B	83-86%	C+	77-79%	C-	70-72%	F	0-59%

An “A” quality document is excellent and far exceeds the fundamental assignment expectations. The writer’s thoughts are unique and compelling. The document supports a single, precise idea with thorough development, and the writer’s organization focuses and promotes discussion. Evidence and support have a clear purpose within paragraphs and relate to the essay’s topic. The reader is easily guided through the writer’s thoughts via topic sentences and smooth transitions. Outside sources strengthen the writer’s message and are followed with informative analysis. The reader is not distracted by surface or rhetorical errors. The document is written for a specific audience as indicated by the format, style, tone, and word choice employed.

A “B” quality document is strong and goes beyond the fundamental assignment expectations. The document supports a specific concept, and the writer’s organization and formatting helps focus and direct the discussion. Paragraphs relate to the document’s topic, and topic sentences guide the reader.

Paragraphs provide sufficient support and transition fairly well, though further development would enrich the document. Outside sources strengthen the writer's message; however, the writer may not always follow the evidence with effective analysis. Grammatical or rhetorical issues are occasionally present, but do not distract the reader. Overall, the writer sparks an interest in the reader, but may fall short in sustaining the reader's attention, perhaps due to writing to an indistinct audience.

A "C" quality document is developing and meets the fundamental assignment expectations. The document works to support a specific idea yet may not be as thoroughly developed, focused, or organized as possible. Paragraphs relate to the document's topic; however, they may fail to guide the reader, lack sufficient evidence/support, or contain limited discussion and need further development. Outside sources are included in the document but may lack purpose or analysis. Grammatical or rhetorical issues might additionally weaken the document. Based on generalized word choice or inexact formatting, it may appear that the writer has not considered the audience. Revision would enhance the document's quality.

A "D" quality document is deficient and falls below the fundamental assignment expectations. The document may identify a specific concept as its focus but fails to effectively develop and support the writer's perspective for a defined audience. Outside sources are not included in the document or are not skillfully incorporated/cited as support. Grammatical or rhetorical issues weaken the document and are distracting. The document has potential, but more drafting, planning, and revision are necessary to increase the document's quality.

An "F" quality document does not meet expectations and requires structure, focus, purpose, support, and development <AND/OR> the document contains plagiarized content.

Class Engagement

Your engagement in class is essential to your success in this class. I expect that you will:

- ⊗ *Be physically and mentally present.* Be on time and bring the necessary materials to class. Put away your phone and computer so you can focus on what is occurring in class. Someone is paying money for you to be here and earn a grade; don't let that person's money go to waste.
- ⊗ *Be prepared.* Complete the assigned reading and writing to the best of your ability and bring them to class. Provide yourself with enough time to prepare for class.
- ⊗ *Actively engage in class activities.* Practicing writing techniques and challenging yourself with new perspectives and skills will help improve your writing.
- ⊗ *Intelligently contribute to class discussions.* Point out something that interested you in the reading. Identify something you'd like the class to spend time discussing. Answer questions. Add to what another student said. Make a connection. Suggest a way to reconsider the topic. Respectfully challenge an idea or opinion.
- ⊗ *Ask thoughtful questions.* Your classmates and I cannot read your mind! Speak up when you need something clarified or would like the class to contemplate an element of a topic.
- ⊗ *Put whatever negative past experiences you've had with writing behind you and give yourself a blank slate.* Writing is a process and a skill you develop over time. Have faith in your abilities.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to be present in class and on time. Think of this class like a professional workplace environment. By choosing not to attend class or arriving late, you decrease your chances of success in the course--just as being tardy or not present will negatively affect your standing at work. Your daily attendance and class engagement will enhance the overall classroom/work environment and aid in broadening both your own and other students'/colleagues' knowledge.

I will take attendance every day promptly at the beginning of class. If you have four unexcused absences, you will lose 5% of your final course grade. Each additional unexcused absence will dock 0.5% off your course grade. If your unexcused absences become excessive, you will be asked to withdraw from the class. Consider this your warning. I will not remind you of how many times you've been absent.

I realize there are, on occasion, unexpected and unavoidable circumstances that will cause you to be unable to attend class. I ask that you notify me as soon as possible of your absence; e-mail or in person is best. You should ask a classmate for notes from the day(s) you miss and check the minutes on Moodle. You are responsible for what is assigned. *Please note:* notifying me of why you were absent does not necessarily excuse your absence. In order to excuse your absence, you must provide written documentation from an authority associated with your absence.

Excused Absences: If there are legitimate and verifiable circumstances for your absence (subpoenas, jury duty, religious observances, illness, bereavement for immediate family, and NCAA varsity intercollegiate athletics), you may request an opportunity for make-up work. To do this you must provide written documentation to legitimize an excused absence immediately following the absence if not before. Please see the university's excused absence policy for further details:

<http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/ExcusedAbsence.html>.

Documenting Outside Sources

All documents referencing outside sources must have a works cited/bibliography page and in-text citations/superscript numbers. I highly recommend you find an MLA/Chicago Style citation manual to reference. You may already own such a citation manual from other courses you have taken. If you do not own one, you can find citation manuals in the library to rent or you may purchase one. If you choose to purchase one, I recommend:

Ø Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *A Pocket Style Manual*. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015. Print.

Writing Support: If you are interested in receiving writing support outside of this class, you have two options, both of which are located in the new Learning Commons on the second floor of the Library. Either opportunity can help you at any stage of the writing process. The first option is to work one-on-one with a graduate student or faculty writing consultant at the Writers' Workshop. To make an appointment at the Writers' Workshop or for more information, visit <http://d.umn.edu/writwork>. Students in this class have permission to see a Writers' Workshop consultant for all take-home exams. The second opportunity is to see an undergraduate peer tutor in the Supportive Services Program Tutoring Center. See <http://d.umn.edu/tutoring/> for more information.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated. I am eager to read *your* writing and hear *your* critical thoughts on topics. Be confident in your ability to express opinions and convey ideas through your own written word. Presenting another person's work as your own is dishonest, and your violation of academic integrity will be reported and penalized. There must be significant change and progress as you draft and write your documents.

If you have any questions about what constitutes academic honesty and plagiarism, please consult UMD's policies which are thoroughly covered at: <http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/StudentAcademicIntegrity.html>.

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. For additional information, please see:

<http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/ClassNotesAppropriateUseof.html>

Classroom Etiquette

I expect my classroom to be a welcoming and invigorating environment for all students. Any behavior that disrupts it will not be tolerated. Please do not talk excessively, make loud or distracting noises, leave and enter the classroom repeatedly, make threats or insults to the faculty member or other students, produce offensive language or gestures, or sleep during class. Please shut off or put your phone on silent in addition to putting it away during class. If I see you using your cell phone in class for non-emergency situations, I will ask you to put it away and you will lose participation for that day.

Please see the Student Conduct Code for further information about your rights and responsibilities:

http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf.

Teaching & Learning: Instructor and Student Responsibilities

UMD is committed to providing a positive, safe, and inclusive place for all who study and work here. Instructors and students have mutual responsibility to insure that the environment in all of these settings supports teaching and learning, is respectful of the rights and freedoms of all members, and promotes a civil and open exchange of ideas. To reference the full policy please see:

<http://www.d.umn.edu/vcaa/TeachingLearning.html>.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy and practice of the University of Minnesota Duluth to create inclusive learning environments for all students, including students with disabilities. If there are aspects of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or your ability to meet course requirements such as time limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. You are also encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Resources to discuss and arrange reasonable accommodations. Call 218-726-6130 or visit the DR web site at www.d.umn.edu/access for more information.

Workshops

As previously noted, writing is a process. In this class you will write multiple drafts of your documents to help you shape and refine your words so your ideas are conveyed in the best possible way. In addition to informal discussions of your writing in class, there are three scheduled formal workshops where class time will be used for you to respond to other students' documents through written and verbal feedback, as well as allow you to have focused discussion about your writing and provide you with commentary from your peers. In order to have your writing workshopped you must upload a copy of your complete draft to Moodle by midnight two days before your workshop date. *Please note:* complete does not mean perfect; complete means it has all the essential parts and you have made a strong effort to fully express your ideas. You will receive credit for not only submitting a complete draft for your peers to review, but also for actively commenting on your peers' completed drafts.

Conferences

You will meet with me in my office to workshop your writing at least twice during the semester: once during weeks 2-8 and once during weeks 9-14. You will choose when to utilize my office hours to meet with me during each set of weeks. Your conferences are intended to be a resource for you and give you individual time to speak with me about your writing. Please bring questions, specific discussion points, copies of your document (digital or print), sources, and any other related documents to your meeting. You are responsible for guiding the discussion about your document during the conference. You are welcome to additionally visit my office whenever you have class questions or concerns or would simply like to talk.

Readings

The texts we will be reading are intended serve as inspiration, guidance, and models for our own writing. Our class discussion of these texts will center on how they “work” and what kind of affect they have on us as readers. Our focus will be on the craft and technique of the writing. Issues such as subject matter, organizational scheme or structure, point of view, voice and tone will no doubt come up in our discussion.

These readings should also address some of the class’s central concerns: What compels us to write about our own life experiences? What motivates us to read about the experiences of others? How can we truthfully represent our life experiences through the written word? How do memoir writers recreate their pasts? How does our understanding of our present selves now influence how we write about our past selves? How can authors remember dialogue and scenes without fabricating? What happens if an author embellishes or manipulates the facts to create a better story? We will think about, if not answer, these questions as the semester progresses.

Journal/Notebook

You will keep a journal/notebook to record creative writings, ideas, reflections, notes from workshops and class discussions, inquiries, observations, responses to texts and prompts, philosophical considerations, etcetera. Your journal/notebook is a place to explore, imagine, try new techniques, and make mistakes. Be prepared to turn in your journal twice during the semester as part of your grade. Your journal/notebook will also include reading discussion questions, as detailed below.

Reading Discussion Questions: As part of your preparation to discuss an assigned reading, you will compose a thoughtful question to prompt class discussion of the reading. The question should be recorded in your journal/notebook. On days that there is more than one text assigned, you need to develop a question for only one of the readings. Please note that you still need to read all of the assigned texts. As you compose the entries, please date them and note which text and page(s) you are focusing on. I will check that you have been composing these entries through calling for questions during discussion and when you turn in your journal/notebook.

Writing Prompt Compositions

You will complete at least thirteen writing prompt compositions which are intended to inspire your writing. You should plan to complete approximately one prompt a week, except during workshop weeks, though you are welcome to do more. Some weeks I will designate a particular prompt that you should complete; otherwise, you may choose, though you should not choose all of your prompts from the same source, and the prompts should vary in focus. The prompts can be found in Gutkind’s book and in a Google Document on Moodle. You will record your compositions in a Google Document that you share with me and which I will view from time to time.

Final Portfolio

Each student will be responsible for submitting a final, 20+-page double spaced portfolio of heavily revised and polished writing they've completed while enrolled in the class. In addition to the portfolio of their creative work, students are required to write a critical introduction to the portfolio. The critical introduction should chart the student's writing process, revision, and an overall self-assessment of work during the semester; students should also explain how the course readings, discussions, and writing activities inspired or influenced their own writing. Students will present their final portfolio at the end of the semester via a class reading. Due to the amount of work that is required to present a successful final portfolio and reading, these tasks are a major component of the course grade.

Course Schedule

I reserve the right to make adjustments to the schedule and will notify you of any changes in a timely manner. Please check your campus e-mail and the Moodle news forum regularly.

Due Dates: What is written next to each date is what you are expected to have read prior to class and be prepared to discuss in class on that date, in addition to what is due to turn in. I will collect work promptly at the beginning of class. All work should be printed, unless otherwise indicated. I will not accept work emailed to me, unless I have made arrangements with you to do so.

Late Work: Work handed in after the class period when the assignment is due is considered late. Each day a document is late, including weekends, you will lose five points toward the assignment grade. I will not accept documents more than one week past the due date. If you do not have your document when it is due in class, you may hand it in late during my office hours or bring it to the Writing Studies department office (Humanities 420) and have your document placed in my mailbox. If you visit the Writing Studies office after hours, there is a metal drop box to place your document in. Make sure your name and my name are on the document.

Extensions: Talk to me *at least three days before the due date* if you believe you need an assignment extension. You must have a convincing reason for why you need the extension and a reasonable proposal for when you will complete the assignment. I will not grant extensions due to computer issues at the last minute, so make sure you save and back up your work.

Assigned readings that are not from the course texts are available on Moodle. Acronyms for the course texts are as follows:

- ⊗ *The Argonauts* (TA)
- ⊗ *The Long Goodbye: A Memoir* (TLG)
- ⊗ *Packinghouse Daughter: A Memoir* (PD)
- ⊗ *Water and What We Know: Following the Roots of a Northern Life* (WAWWK)
- ⊗ *You Can't Make This Stuff Up: The Complete Guide to Writing Creative Nonfiction—from Memoir to Literary Journalism and Everything in Between* (YCMTSU)

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Readings/Activities</i>	<i>Due</i>
<i>1</i>	Jan. 13	Introduction to the course and expectations.	
	Jan. 15	YCMTSU 3-13; "A Repertoire of Forms" Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwartz; "What Makes Nonfiction Creative" Dinty M. Moore; "Why I Write" Joan Didion	

2	Jan. 18	NO CLASS: MLK Day	
	Jan. 20	YCMTSU 14-43; “Memoir? Fiction? Where’s the Line?” Mimi Schwartz; “On Keeping a Notebook” Joan Didion	
	Jan. 22	YCMTSU 44-77; “Building Blocks of Creative Nonfiction: Discovery” Dinty M. Moore	
3	Jan. 25	YCMTSU 78-96; excerpt from <i>The Situation and the Story</i> Vivian Gornick	
	Jan. 27	YCMTSU 99-134; “Scene, Summary, Reflection” and “Ways In…” Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwartz	
	Jan. 29	YCMTSU 135-182; excerpts from <i>The Year of Magical Thinking</i> Joan Didion	
4	Feb. 1	YCMTSU 183-217; “Memory and Imagination” Patricia Hampl	
	Feb. 3	YCMTSU 218-245; “Twenty Ways to Talk About Creative Nonfiction” Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwartz; “Pas de Deux” and “The Rural Routes” W. Scott Olsen	
	Feb. 5	WAWWK ix-xv, 1-30; “The Personal Essay” Dinty M. Moore	
5	Feb. 8	WAWWK 31-70	
	Feb. 10	WAWWK 71-103	
	Feb. 12	WAWWK 104-144	
6	Feb. 15	WAWWK 145-193	
	Feb. 17	WAWWK 194-218	Reading Response #1
	Feb. 19	“Active Listening,” “Principles of Responding,” and “When You are the Writer...Responder” Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwartz	Journal/Notebook
7	Feb. 22	Workshop	Draft and/or feedback
	Feb. 24	Workshop	Draft and/or feedback
	Feb. 26	PD 5-35; “The Memoir Essay” Dinty M. Moore	
8	Feb. 29	PD 36-74	
	Mar. 2	PD 75-118	
	Mar. 4	PD 119-164	
*	M 7-11	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK	
9	Mar. 14	PD 165-212	
	Mar. 16	PD 213-242	
	Mar. 18	PD 243-275	Reading Response #2
10	Mar. 21	Workshop	Draft and/or feedback
	Mar. 23	Workshop	Draft and/or feedback
	Mar. 25	Workshop	Draft and/or feedback
11	Mar. 28	TLG 1-26; “The Rewriter’s Concerns” Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwartz	
	Mar. 30	TLG 27-81	
	Apr. 1	TLG 83-116	
12	Apr. 4	TLG 119-162	
	Apr. 6	TLG 163-210	
	Apr. 8	TLG 211-237	
13	Apr. 11	TLG 241-275	

	Apr. 13	TLG 277-297; Workshop	Reading Response #3; Journal/Notebook; Draft and/or feedback
	Apr. 15	Workshop	Draft and/or feedback
14	Apr. 18	Workshop	Draft and/or feedback
	Apr. 20	Workshop	Draft and/or feedback
	Apr. 22	TA 3-39 “the philosophers.”	
15	Apr. 25	TA 39 “In October”-76 “to be.”	
	Apr. 27	TA 77 “Insemination after”-110 “fatigue, both.”	
	Apr. 29	TA 110 “In an”-143	Reading Response #4; Writing Prompt Compositions
16	May 2	Final Exam 2:00-3:55 p.m. Reading	Final Portfolio