**English 387**

**Creative Nonfiction**

**Dr. Little**

**Fall 2023**

**Course Time: MW 12:00-1:15**

**Office Location: 124A Lawson**

**Office Hours: TR 12:30-3:30**

**e-mail:** [**dlc@reinhardt.edu**](mailto:dlc@reinhardt.edu)

**Texts**

No book needed. All readings are online as links or PDFs.

**Grades**

Student progress in the course will be measured by

1. Daily quiz on the assigned readings (20%)
2. Weekly one-page writing prompt (20%)
3. Three five-page polished creative nonfiction essays,

with a revision required for essays 1 and 2 (40%)

4. Attendance and Participation in class discussion (20%)

**Course Objectives**

1. Learn effective **strategies for generating** CNF
2. Learn to recognize and use **images** in CNF
3. Learn to recognize and use **setting** in CNF
4. Learn to write **scene** in CNF
5. Learn to write **exposition (background information)** in CNF
6. Learn to use effective **diction (word choice)** and **syntax (sentence structure)** in CNF
7. Learn to use **character**, **point of view, voice and tone** in CNF
8. Learn to recognize and generate **tension** in CNF
9. Learn to recognize and use **figurative language** in CNF
10. Learn to recognize and use **structure** in CNF
11. Learn to create effective **plot points** in CNF
12. Learn to use **movement and development** in CNF
13. Learn to use effective **chronology** and **structural strategies such as backstory, flashback, foreshadowing** in CNF
14. Learn to create effective **beginnings and endings** in CNF
15. Learn to recognize and use **insight** in CNF
16. Learn to **comprehend and analyze** the work of other CNF writers
17. Learn and **apply literary terms** to assigned texts and to your own work
18. Learn to **revise** your own writing.
19. Learn to effectively **critique** the writing of other students.

**Assessment of BFA Student Learning Outcomes**

**Student Learning Outcome 1:** All Reinhardt University BFA in Creative Writing majors will demonstrate sound skills in using genre-appropriate **structure** in creative writing assignments.

**Means of assessment**: exercises, stories

**Student Learning Outcome 2:** All Reinhardt University BFA in Creative Writing majors will demonstrate sound skills in using narrative and/or character-appropriate **voice** in creative writing assignments.

**Means of assessment:** exercises, stories

**Student Learning Outcome 3:** All Reinhardt University BFA in Creative Writing majors will demonstrate sound skills in using sensory **imagery** in creative writing assignments.

**Means of assessment:** exercises, stories

**Student Learning Outcome 4:** All Reinhardt University BFA in Creative Writing majors will learn to **comprehend and analyze literary texts**.

**Means of assessment:** journal

**Student Learning Outcome 5:** All Reinhardt University BFA in Creative Writing majors will learn to **revise** their own writing.

**Means of assessment:** story revisions

**Credit Hour Statement:**

This 15-week 3-credit hour course has 2250 minutes of classroom instruction over the course of the semester (75 minutes twice a week, equaling 150 minutes per week).

**Instructions and Grading Criteria for Essays:**

Write it in Microsoft Word and upload the file to Canvas. There is a five-page minimum. I will write comments and grade them electronically within Canvas.

* On time
* Required length (5 pages)
* Typed, double-spaced
* Free of typos and careless errors
* Original and creative
* Demonstrates investment in writing process (time, thought, effort)
* Very descriptive in setting and characters
* Imagery is strong and concrete
* Emotions are conveyed through detailed, concrete images rather than abstract statements
* Minimal “paper speak”
* Good balance of showing and telling
* Mostly scene with some exposition
* Intriguing plot, not clichéd and predictable
* Effective chronology and structure, use of flashback, foreshadowing etc.
* Point of view is consistent and effective
* Narrator sounds like a real person
* Dialogue is realistic and moves the plot forward
* Characters are “round” and complex, not stereotypes
* Beginning grabs reader’s interest
* Ending is “return with a twist,” believable but not predictable

**Revisions**

The Revision must be a substantially improved version of the essay based upon my comments on the Draft as well as peer comments from workshop if applicable. The revision must attempt to address all of the criticisms and must contain SIGNIFICANT improvements in order to receive a higher grade. You cannot just fix a few grammatical errors and expect your grade to go up.  The most important changes involve the content and structure of the essay, and if that remains the same, your grade will be the same.   Please do not waste my time with a minimally improved essay!  If you do not turn in a revision, the grade is a zero. If you turn in basically the same essay with a few tweaks, your grade will go down 20 points for the revision.   The draft and revision grades are all averaged together.

**Weekly Writing Prompts**

A one-page writing prompt will be due each Tuesday, uploaded to Canvas before class. There is a one-page minimum, although it can be longer. I will write comments and grade it in Canvas. The writing prompts are informal brainstorms and not expected to be polished writing.

However, they must be spell-checked and written with care and investment. A short, sloppy, or careless writing prompt will receive a C or lower.

**Late Writing Prompts or Essays**

There will be a ten-point deduction for each class period that an assignment is late. Canvas will not accept late work, so you will have to email it to me if it is late. Late work is an imposition on your professor’s time and patience. I understand that occasionally illness or family situations can cause you to be late with your work, but please do not be late with multiple assignments.

**Attendance and Tardiness Policy**

**College professors are now required by the federal government to take attendance and to report when students who are receiving Financial Aid, which is pretty much everybody, stop coming to class. If you have excessive absences, you could have to pay back your student loans out of your own pocket.**

Each student is allowed to miss two class meetings, no questions asked. However, serious personal or family illness should be the only reason a student would miss more than two class meetings. Three or four absences will adversely affect your participation grade. There is no way that a student who misses more than four class meetings could absorb the content of the course, and students with more than four absences will be administratively withdrawn from the class. Athletes do receive excused absences for games, but I must have written documentation from the coach. It is a good idea to give each of your professors your game schedule at the beginning of the semester.

Everyone is occasionally late to class. However, it is discourteous to be late all of the time. If you are repeatedly late, I will call you into my office to discuss the problem, and your participation grade will be a C or lower.

**Academic Dishonesty Policy**

If you plagiarize any assignment, I will fail you for the class, and I may choose to refer you to Judicial for punishment. Plagiarism is defined as presenting as your own any work that is not your own, whether it is work written by another student or parent or work copied from a written source or the Internet.

**Participation**

Participation is an extremely important part of this class and can make or break your grade. In order to receive an A or B in participation, you should contribute to the class on a regular basis. However, please do not “hog” class discussion or go off on irrelevant tangents. We need to stay on task. If I feel that you are dominating class discussion or going off on tangents, I will call you into my office to discuss the problem.

**Class Behavior**

My expectations for appropriate and acceptable classroom behavior are as follows:

1. Be on time.
2. Come prepared with the appropriate books and written assignments.
3. **PHONES MUST BE TURNED OFF AND PUT AWAY. ABSOLUTELY NO TEXTING OR CHECKING MESSAGES. I DO NOT WANT TO SEE THE PHONE AND I WILL DEDUCT A POINT FROM YOUR 10-POINT PARTICIPATION GRADE FOR EVERY TIME I SEE IT.**
4. Be courteous and respectful of others during class discussion. No derogatory remarks on the basis of gender, race, religion or sexuality will be tolerated. Reinhardt University does not condone or tolerate discrimination. If any such remarks are made, I will ask you to stop and to meet with me outside of class to discuss the problem. If the problem continues, I will withdraw you from the class.
5. Raise your hand when you want to speak and wait until it’s your turn. Keep your remarks relevant to the discussion and of a reasonable length and number.
6. Be respectful to the professor inside and outside of class. If you have problems or questions regarding a grade, attendance, course expectations or late assignments, the appropriate place to discuss that is in my office.

**READING ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE CLASS ON THE DAY THEY ARE LISTED. WE DO NOT READ IN CLASS. ALL READING IS TO BE COMPLETED PRIOR TO CLASS AND EACH CLASS WILL BEGIN WITH A QUIZ ON THAT DAY’S ASSIGNED READING.**

**Part I: Writing Place**

**Week 1**

**Mon., 8/14.:** Introduction: What is Creative Nonfiction? Assign craft elements:

* Setting description (image=appeals to the 5 senses)
* Character description and development (image, actions, dialogue, growth)
* Story structure (something weird happens that matters; What is the conflict? how it the story organized?)
* Word choice (diction, what are the most interesting and strongest words?)
* Voice, style, mood and tone (syntax=sentence structure; What is the “vibe” of the piece and how does the writer create it? What is the “trademark style” of this writer?)
* Figurative language: symbols, metaphor, simile, personification

**Wed., 8/16:** BarryLopez, “The Invitation” in *Granta*; Quiz

<http://granta.com/invitation/>

**Week 2**

**Mon.,** **8/21:** **Writing Prompt 1 Due:** Download the Merlin app and/or the Seek app; go outside and identify a bird or plant or insect that you find interesting and write a description and reflection about it (not just Wikipedia facts!)

Read Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* excerpt; Quiz

**Wed., 8/23**: Glenis Redmond, “What Hangs on Trees”; Quiz

<https://orionmagazine.org/article/what-hangs-on-trees/>

**Week 3**

**Mon., 8/28:** **Writing Prompt 2 Due:** Write about the home of a family member or the house where you grew up (whatever has the most story potential)

Read Louis Owens, Motion of Fire and Form excerpt (PDF)

**Wed., 8/30:** Fletcher Moore, “The Many Battles of Atlanta”; Quiz

<http://bittersoutherner.com/the-many-battles-of-atlanta#.VyoDYHrMgx4>

**Week 4**

**Mon., 9/4: Labor Day, No Class**

**Wed., 9/6: Writing Prompt 3 Due:** Write about a place that you’ve been to that holds wreckage or danger or secrecy such as a dump, a junkyard, an abandoned or run-down house,ora secret place that teenagers sneak off to and do risky things

Jeanette Walls, *The Glass Castle* excerpt AND poem “Cherry Log Road” by James Dickey; Quiz

**Week 5**

**Mon., 9/11: Essay 1 Draft Due, Workshops**

**Wed., 9/13: Workshops**

**Part II: Writing the Body**

**Week 6**

**Mon., 9/18:** Writing Prompt 4 Due: Write about an incident from your childhood involving your body (can be happy or sad)

Alice Walker, “When the Other Dancer is the Self”: Quiz

Wed., 9/20: Penny Wolfson, “Moonrise” *The Atlantic*; **Quiz**

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2001/12/moonrise/302370/>

**Week 7**

**Mon., 9/25:** Writing Prompt 5 Due: Write about a disability, illness or injury experienced by either yourself or someone close to you

Lucy Grealy “Mirrors” (PDF); Quiz

**Wed., 9/27:** Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* excerpt (PDF); Quiz

**Week 8**

**Mon., 10/2:** Writing Prompt 6 Due:Write about a body image issue you have experienced (could relate to race, body type, hair, gender and sexuality)

Richard Rodriquez, *The Hunger of Memory* excerpt (PDF) AND Edwidge Danticat “Krik?Krak!” (PDF)

**Wed., 10/4: FALL BREAK**

**Week 9**

**Mon., 10/9: Essay 1 Revision Due;** Terry Tempest Williams, “The Clan of One Breasted Women”; Quiz

[**https://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/jennifer.decker/engl1301-5/clan-of-the-one-breasted-women**](https://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/jennifer.decker/engl1301-5/clan-of-the-one-breasted-women)

**Wed., 10/11:** Brent Staples, “The Coroner’s Photographs” (PDF); Quiz

**Week 10**

**Mon., 10/16: Essay 2 Draft Due, Workshops**

**Wed., 10/18: Workshops**

**Part III: Writing the Mind and Spirit**

**Week 11**

**Mon., 10/23: Writing Prompt 7:** Write about a mental health struggle you have experienced.

Andrew Solomon “The Noonday Demon”; Quiz

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/first/s/24solomon.html>

**Wed., 10/25:** Oliver Sacks, “The Man Who Mistook Hs Wife for a Hat”; Quiz

https://web.arch.virginia.edu/arch5420/docs/reading/sackspdf/sacksvl.pdf

**Week 12**

**Mon., 10/30: Writing Prompt 8:** Write about how a childhood experience with religion impacted you OR write about an experience with a holiday like Halloween or Christmas or July 4th

Ira Sukrungruang, “Hello, It’s Halloween”; Quiz

<https://www.lionsroar.com/hello-its-halloween/>

**Wed., 11/1:** Barbara Brown Taylor, “The Practice of Getting Lost” (PDF); **Quiz**

**Week 13**

**Mon., 11/6:** **Writing Prompt Due 9:** Write about a travel experience that was life-changing for you OR a place or moment that brought you a spiritual or other kind of epiphany

Matthew Crompton, “Into the Hills”

**Wed., 11/8: Essay 2 Revision Due;** Loren Eisley, “The Star Thrower”; **Quiz**

<http://www.brontaylor.com/courses/pdf/Eiseley--StarThrower.pdf>

**Week 14**

**Mon., 11/13:** Jonathan Mosedale, “Encounter in the Vale” *The New Atlantis*; **Quiz**

<https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/encounter-in-the-vale>

**Wed., 11/15: Essay 3 Due,** Workshops

**Week 15**

**Mon., 11/20:** Workshops