

ENGL 0180
Introduction to Creative Nonfiction
Spring 2010

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I'm telling you this now, at the start of our journey, because I know you are expecting such facts from nonfiction. But henceforth please do not consider these "nonfictions." I want you preoccupied with art in this book, not with facts for the sake of facts. A fact come from the Latin word *factum*—literally, "a thing done"—a neuter past participle construction that suggest a fact is merely something upon which and action has happened. It's not even a word that can do its own work. From the same Latin root for fact we get the words "artifice," "counterfeit," "deficient," "façade," "infect," "mifeasance," and "superficial." "There are no facts," Emerson once wrote, "only art."

—John D'Agata from his introduction to *The Next American Essay*

Summation:

In this class we will explore several genres of Creative Nonfiction including the lyric essay, historical narrative, science narrative and memoir. For each section we will look closely at readings culled from modern and contemporary sources and then engage in a series of workshops, writing drills and one-on-one conferences. The focus of the class will be on further developing your unique voice and range as well as augmenting your talents as a critical reader.

Required Text:

Course Packet

Course Requirements:

For this class you will write five papers of differing lengths and intensities, each one focusing on a particular sub-genre of creative nonfiction. These papers will be edited in peer-revision workshops and individual conferences with me. In your workshops, you will be expected to engage in thoughtful discussion and make precise comments.

Note that this class is a workshop—not a lecture—and as such your participation is essential. Thus, if you miss more than three classes you will not receive credit for the course.

Assignment Guidelines:

All work is to be submitted electronically on the due date by noon. When submitting a paper to your group make sure to CC me as well, so that I have a copy of each draft.

For the conferences you will need to submit a copy—again by email—of your most recent draft at least a day before the conference. On the day of the conference you will also need to bring a copy of each draft of your paper and be prepared to discuss: the specific edits you've made and why, any difficulties you've had with the assignment, the strengths of the paper and how you wish to expand/improve the piece.

When you email me I would like to put your first and last name, the section number (08) and the name of the assignment in the subject line. Yes, this is ridiculously picky, but doing it makes it easier to sort through the emails and reply in a timely fashion as well as insuring that your message is not filtered out as junk mail.

Example subject line: Michael Stewart | 08 | Lyric Essay

When you turn in a paper it should be double-spaced and use Times 12pt font. Do not mess with the margins or the headers or the character spacing or the hyphenations or anything else to squeeze out another page. It is better that your paper is a bit short than that you resort to trickery of the typographical variety.

For citations you should use MLA format.