Updated-ENGL0930: Introduction to Creative Nonfiction: Writing the World (ONLINE)  

Course Instructor: Elizabeth (Beth) Taylor, PhD

Contact Information:
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Google Chat or FaceTime

Office Hours: By Email Appointment

Instructor’s Biosketch
Dr. Elizabeth S. Taylor teaches in the Nonfiction Writing Program in the Department of English at Brown University. She earned her PhD in American Literature from Brown, then taught at Harvard for five years before returning to Brown in 1994. She teaches creative nonfiction -- personal and academic essay, literary journalism, historical narrative, and memoir. She has published feature articles, flash nonfiction, essays about the teaching of nonfiction, historical narratives about the Vietnam War era, and a digital narrative about her grandmother’s life in rural Maine. Her book is The Plain Language of Love and Loss: A Quaker Memoir. She has a particular interest in mentoring students interested in all forms of nonfiction writing.

Course Description
Introduction to Creative Nonfiction is an Online course during Wintersession 2018 (December 22 – January 19) for students with a serious interest and strong skills in writing narrative essays based on fact, research, interviews, and memory. Through assignments and revisions, students will hone their investigative, analytical, and creative skills, inspired by close readings of 20th century nonfiction writers, including Jamaica Kinkaid, Annie Dillard, John McPhee, and David Foster Wallace.

Note: Introduction to Creative Nonfiction is a pre-requisite to advanced creative nonfiction writing courses in the Department of English and satisfies part of the Writing Requirement at Brown University. It does not satisfy a concentration requirement in English.

This course is offered fully online. Students do not need to be on Brown's campus to participate in this course, but they must work online each day, including weekends between December 22 and January 19. Learn what it is like to take an online course at Brown and view technical requirements at: http://brown.edu/academics/professional/onlinelearning/online-with-brown

Course Learning Objectives
In this course, students will:

1. Learn how to analyze the forms and methods of creative nonfiction.

2. Blend scholarly research with interviews and personal reflection to create three narrative essays, intertwining the forms of academic essay, literary journalism, and memoir.
3. Collaborate as peer reviewers, learning how to effectively edit their own writing as they gain insight through critiquing others’ drafts.

**Student Evaluation Criteria**

Students will earn a Satisfactory grade in this mandatory S/NC class if they:

1) Articulate the ways writers have constructed creative nonfiction through written reflections and collaborative discussions.

2) Apply the lessons from readings and assignments to their own narrative essays.

3) Write three engaging narrative essays, each evolving through 2 required drafts, online peer revision workshops, and conferences.

4) Complete all writing assignments on time, including warm-up exercises and drafts.
   **Note:** All drafts must be **Size 12 font, double-spaced, and paginated.**

5) Actively participate and contribute to discussions and revision workshops.
   **Note:** If a student misses the deadlines for 3 assignments and/or discussions without proof of medical or serious reason, they will earn No Credit (NC) for the course.

**IMPORTANT:** This is a full credit undergraduate course. To keep up with reading and writing assignments, discussion forums, and peer reviews, students are expected to participate in this course on a **daily** basis, **including weekends.** (Students must follow the assignment instructions in each “Module.” Read through the Modules’ Assignments and plan ahead to meet each deadline. You must also plan to have functional wifi access even if you are travelling.)

**Course Hours Expectations**

Over 4 weeks, students will spend approximately 180 hours on this course:

a) 10 hours per week in class discussions and revision workshops online (40 hours total).

b) Required reading for online discussions is expected to take up approximately 10 hours per week (40 hours total).

c) In addition, researching and writing drafts/revisions of three narrative essays is estimated at approximately 25 hours per week (100 hours).

**This translates to 3-6 hours of work most days.**

**Accommodations:**

Please note: Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me anytime by email, Facetime, or Google Hangout. For more information, please contact **Student and Employee Accessibility Services** at 401-863-9588 or **SEAS@brown.edu.**
Course Reading List (Readings are provided in the course)

The Problem: Ethics and Challenges when Writing About Others and Self
- Lynn Z. Bloom, “Living to Tell the Tale: The Complicated Ethics of Creative Nonfiction”
- Mark Doty, “Return to Sender”

Personal to Research to Reflection
- Anthony Farrington, “Kissing”
- Jamaica Kinkaid, “A Small Place”
- Sondra Perl, Mimi Schwartz, “The Craft of Revision”

Observation to Research to Reflection
- Annie Dillard, “Sight Into Insight”
- John McPhee, “The Search for Marvin Gardens”

Cultural Analysis: Literary Journalism
- David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”
- Gay Talese, “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold.”
- Roy Peter Clark, “The Line Between Fact and Fiction”

Readings Protocol:
Analyze how the writer wrote this essay/story as individual reflections on each reading and peer draft.

2. How is this a Story? Follow Rubric of Elements of Creative Nonfiction.

Course Schedule Overview
Assignment details and due dates are in the online course.

Dec 18-22 | Online Course Orientation
- Students will get familiar with Canvas course site and materials, introduce themselves to each other, and discuss definitions of Creative Nonfiction.

Dec 22 - 24 | Module One: Problem & Ethics of “The Truth” in Creative Nonfiction
- Students will read “Living to Tell the Tale: The Complicated Ethics of Creative Nonfiction,” by Lynn Z. Bloom and “Return to Sender,” by Mark Doty. They will discuss
the ethics and challenges to “The Truth” when writing about themselves, loved ones, and others for a public audience.

(Monday, December 25: *Holiday*)

Dec 26 - Jan 2 | Module Two: The Personal Narrative Essay
- Students will discuss Anthony Farrington’s “Kissing,” Jamaica Kinkaid’s “A Small Place,” and “The Craft of Revision,” by Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwartz, as they explore online research, bibliographic annotation, blending research with storytelling, effective peer review, and the revision process to create Narrative Essay One: Personal Experience to Research to Reflection.

(Monday, January 1: *Holiday*)

Jan 3 – 9 | Module Three: The Observational Narrative Essay
- Students will discuss Annie Dillard’s “Sight Into Insight” and John McPhee’s “The Search for Marvin Gardens,” and then propose, research, draft, peer review, and revise Narrative Essay Two: Observation to Research to Reflection.

Jan 10 - 19 | Module Four: Literary Journalism
- Students will discuss David Foster Wallace’s “Consider the Lobster,” Gay Talese’s “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold, and Roy Peter Clark’s “The Line Between Fact and Fiction” as they propose, research, do interviews for, draft, peer review, and revise Narrative Essay Three: Cultural Analysis: Literary Journalism.

(Monday, January 15: *M.L.King Holiday*)

Jan 20 | Appreciate and Reflect
- Students will “Reply All” to debrief and appreciate the course.