

CRWR 9: INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE NONFICTION

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	5
Hours:	5 lecture per week (60 total per quarter)
Prerequisite:	Demonstrated proficiency in English by placement via multiple measures OR through an equivalent placement process OR completion of ESLL 125 & ESLL 249.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 3: Arts & Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Student Learning Outcomes

- Understand the distinctive features of creative nonfiction and the different subgenres within creative nonfiction.
- Analyze the elements of craft and the influence of cultural-historical context in works of published creative nonfiction representing diverse cultures, communities, ethnicities, and traditions.
- Apply the elements of creative nonfiction craft, along with instructor and peer feedback, to create and revise works of original creative nonfiction.
- Analyze and evaluate peer-written creative nonfiction in order to create formative, constructive editorial feedback.

Description

This course provides instruction and practice in writing creative nonfiction, with an emphasis on integrated reading and writing. Students study and emulate published works, learn elements of craft and writing-process strategies, create original works of creative nonfiction, and participate in workshop and/or peer critique. Instruction also focuses on the history and development of the creative nonfiction genre, as well as the diverse forms within the genre, such as memoir, personal essay, lyric essay, travel writing, and literary journalism. Students read and analyze published creative nonfiction from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to deepen their understanding of the genre, the elements of creative-nonfiction-writing craft, and the influence of cultural, historical, and institutional contexts on the production of creative nonfiction. Little to no experience in creative writing is required to enroll.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the elements of creative nonfiction and what characteristics distinguish the genre from other forms of literary and nonfiction writing

2. Demonstrate an understanding of the main types of creative nonfiction: their distinctive features, their uses, and the discourse communities and audience expectations in which they're embedded
3. Analyze published works to identify the elements of craft that contribute to engaging, meaningful creative nonfiction
4. Analyze published works from diverse cultures, communities, and ethnicities to identify the influence of historical, cultural, and institutional contexts on creative nonfiction
5. Employ invention and development writing-process techniques to create original works demonstrating the elements of engaging, meaningful creative nonfiction
6. Synthesize instructor and peer feedback, course lectures, and self-reflection to productively revise original works of creative nonfiction
7. Analyze the meaning, style, and elements of craft in peer-written works of creative nonfiction
8. Demonstrate the editorial and communication skills required for collegial, formative feedback on peer-written works of creative nonfiction

Course Content

1. Understand elements of creative nonfiction
 - a. Literary craft and technique in creative nonfiction, such as:
 - i. Scene-making and exposition
 - ii. Description, imagery, symbolism
 - iii. Dialogue
 - iv. Characterization
 - v. Setting
 - vi. Point of view
 - vii. Prose style, voice, diction
 - viii. Structure, plot
 - b. Content and theme in creative nonfiction, such as:
 - i. Persona, authorial "I" and "we"
 - ii. Dramatic relationship between narrating persona and subject of narrative
 - iii. Integration of ideas, arguments, topics of "universal" significance, illustrating the general with the particular
 - iv. Common themes in creative nonfiction, which may include: family and childhood, relationships, identity, career, social and political topics, the arts, history, trauma and adversity, migration
 - c. Truth and accuracy in creative nonfiction
 - i. Audience expectations related to precision and factuality in nonfiction
 - ii. Framing and transparency with regard to incomplete knowledge (memory, dialogue, etc.)
 - iii. Techniques for achieving accuracy and factuality: research, interview, field activities, and site visits
 - iv. Ethical questions related to writing about real people and events
2. Understanding main types of creative nonfiction, such as:
 - a. Subgenres and forms within creative nonfiction, which may include:
 - i. Memoir
 - ii. Personal essay
 - iii. Lyric essay (braided, hermit-crab, collage, etc.)
 - iv. Literary journalism

- v. Profile
- vi. Travel writing
- vii. Criticism/commentary (art, music, literature, culture, etc.)
- b. Differing objectives, content, style, and audience expectations among subgenres
- 3. Analyze published creative nonfiction to identify key elements
 - a. Reading as writers: identifying techniques and approaches in published creative nonfiction that are applicable to original work
 - i. Identify the themes and meanings in published creative nonfiction
 - ii. Examine how authorial choices with regard to form, subgenre, and elements of craft contribute to effective communication of theme and meaning
 - b. Historical development of creative nonfiction and its subgenres
- 4. Analyze published creative nonfiction from diverse cultures, communities, and ethnicities to identify influence of cultural, historical context
 - a. Read and analyze published creative nonfiction by authors representing diverse cultures, communities, and ethnicities, such as:
 - i. Arab authors
 - ii. Asian American authors
 - iii. Authors from the LGBTQ+ community
 - iv. Authors with disabilities
 - v. Black authors
 - vi. Indigenous and Native American authors
 - vii. Jewish authors
 - viii. Latine authors
 - ix. Low-income and working-class authors
 - x. Pacific Islander authors
 - b. Identify influence of cultural, historical context, such as:
 - i. Influence of subject position, cultural, and historical context on aspects of craft and form
 - ii. Influence of subject position, cultural, and historical context on subject matter, content
 - iii. Historical and cultural biases in canonization and publication
 - iv. Influence of cultural and historical contexts on themes, identities, and subject matter represented in published creative nonfiction; marginalization
 - v. Resistance to stereotypes and received narratives in creative nonfiction
- 5. Employ writing-process techniques to create original works, such as:
 - a. Identify as creative writers
 - i. Deconstruct stereotypes and assumptions pertaining to the "figure of the writer"
 - ii. Cultivate "authorial permission" for the student-writer and marginalized voices
 - b. Scaffolded invention
 - i. Writing prompts and exercises targeting specific elements of craft
 - ii. Writing prompts and exercises cultivating self-reflection, unearthing material from lived experience and observations related to prominent themes in creative nonfiction
 - c. Develop writing practice (e.g., notebooks and journals, consistent schedule)
 - d. Apply course content (craft, form, genre, etc.) to conceptualization, development, and drafting
 - e. Develop meta-cognitive awareness of writing process
- 6. Revise original works of creative nonfiction
 - a. Apply student and instructor feedback, as well as course content/lectures, to global and local revision of original work
 - b. Self-analysis of original work; identify opportunities for improvement
- 7. Analyze peer-written works of creative nonfiction
 - a. Identify authorial intention and purpose in peer-written original work
 - b. Identify elements of craft, form, and style present in student work and how they contribute to writer's purpose
 - c. Identify how revision and the incorporation of craft could help writer to achieve purpose more successfully
- 8. Demonstrate the editorial and communication skills required for collegial, formative feedback on peer-written works of creative nonfiction
 - a. Workshop participation, which may include:
 - i. Collaboratively establish norms, language, and goals of workshop
 - ii. Regular and constructive contributions to workshop discussion
 - iii. Substantive written feedback in advance of workshop
 - iv. Focused, equitable, and supportive feedback
 - v. Support "authorial permission" for the student-writer and marginalized voices
 - b. Meaningful, constructive feedback, which may include:
 - i. Identifying and honoring writers' intentions; tailoring feedback to writers' intentions
 - ii. Using shared terms, techniques, and elements of craft from course content in feedback
 - iii. Distinguishing between summative and formative feedback; balancing appreciation with critique
 - iv. Distinguishing between global and local feedback and appropriate application of each

Lab Content

Not applicable.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

When taught online/hybrid, ongoing access to computer with email software capabilities; email address; internet browsing software.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

A minimum of 6,000 words of original creative nonfiction
 Original creative work that demonstrates elements of craft, genre awareness, and writing-process strategies
 Writing exercises targeting specific elements of craft, themes, forms
 Regular and substantive contributions to workshop and/or peer review discussions
 Formative, collegial written feedback on peer/student work
 Written analytical responses to published creative nonfiction
 Revision of original work demonstrating synthesis of student and instructor feedback and course content

Written portfolio review in which students analyzes own work, progress, strengths, areas for improvement

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lectures, readings, group learning activities, and in-class discussions on craft, the writing-process, form, and genre
 Lecture and discussion related to published works of creative nonfiction
 Workshop and/or peer review of original student writing
 Oral presentations related to original student work and/or published creative nonfiction
 Instructor feedback, written and verbal, on original student writing

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Angelou, Maya. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. 1969.

Baldwin, James. Notes of a Native Son. 1955.

Bechdel, Alison. Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic. 2022.

Chee, Alexander. How to Write an Autobiographical Novel: Essays. 2018.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. Between the World and Me. 2015.

D'Agata, John. The Next American Essay. 2003.

Febos, Melissa. Body Work: The Radical Power of Personal Narrative. 2022.

Gay, Roxane. Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body. 2018.

Gutkind, Lee. You Can't Make This Stuff Up: The Complete Guide to Writing Creative Nonfiction. 2012.

Hsu, Hua. Stay True: A Memoir. 2023.

Inoue, Asao. Above the Well: An Antiracist Literacy Argument from a Boy of Color. 2021.

Kim, Suki. Without You, There Is No Us: Undercover Among the Sons of North Korea's Elite. 2015.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. The Woman Warrior. 1976.

Kramer, Mark, and Wendy Call, eds.. Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writers' Guide. 2007.

Lamott, Anne. Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life. 2019.

Lopate, Phillip, ed.. The Art of the Personal Essay. 1995.

Luiselli, Valeria. Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions. 2017.

Miller, Brenda, and Suzanne Paola. Tell It Slant: Creating, Refining, and Publishing Creative Nonfiction. 2019.

Mura, David. A Stranger's Journey: Race, Identity, and Narrative Craft in Writing. 2018.

Oates, Joyce Carol, and Robert Atwan, eds.. The Best American Essays of the Century. 2000.

Prentiss, Sean, and Joe Wilkins, eds.. The Far Edges of the Fourth Genre: An Anthology of Explorations in Creative Nonfiction. 2014.

Rodriguez, Richard. Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez. 1983.

Root, Robert L., and Michael Steinberg, eds.. The Fourth Genre: Contemporary Writers of/On Creative Nonfiction. 2002.

Williford, Lex, and Michael Martone, eds.. Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction: Work from 1970 to the Present. 2007.

Although many of these texts are older than the suggested "5 years or newer" standard, they remain seminal texts in this area of study.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Write original creative nonfiction and submit for workshop and/or peer review
2. Complete invention, writing-process, and revision activities
3. Respond to writing exercises targeting aspects of theme, craft, and/or genre
4. Provide written and verbal feedback on student-peer written creative nonfiction
5. Read a published work of creative nonfiction and complete a written analysis focusing on theme, craft, and/or aspects of genre
6. Assemble a portfolio of original work and write a self-analysis reflecting on progress, strengths, and areas for improvement
7. Prepare an original work of creative nonfiction for submission and publication in a campus-based publication (e.g., The Script)

Discipline(s)

English