English 366: Creative Nonfiction Writing
Dr. Terry Martin
Spring Term, 2015

L&L 416B; 963-1534
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00-3:00
(and by appointment)

“You never know what you will learn until you start writing. Then you discover truths you didn’t know existed.”

Anita Brookner

“A writer is not so much someone who has something to say as he is someone who has found a process that will bring about new things he would not have thought of if he had not started to say them.”

William Stafford

Prerequisite:
ENG 263 or permission of the instructor

Required Texts:
Eds. Robert L. Root, Jr. and Michael Steinberg

A dictionary and a thesaurus

Course Description:
English 366 is one of the classes that meets the requirements of CWU’s English: Writing Specialization major; it also fulfills the ‘Writing Strand’ of the English Language and Literature major and minor programs. In this class, you will explore varieties of creative nonfiction as both scholars and writers—by reading and discussing works written by professional writers and by writing your own. You’ll approach texts with a writer’s eye, discuss them from a craft perspective, and practice some of the techniques you discover.

This class will help you understand the variety of ways creative nonfiction is written now, offer you examples of contemporary works, and encourage you to become familiar with what practitioners, scholars, and critics in the field have to say about the various subgenres and purposes of creative nonfiction. It will help you develop strategies for brainstorming, drafting, critiquing, and revising your own nonfiction work, and provide you with the critical expertise and technical language to help you better critique your and others’ work-in-progress.

The course will alternate between class discussion and workshop sessions. During class discussion, you will be expected to explore and exchange ideas about writing, selected readings, and issues raised in class. During workshop sessions, you will be expected to share drafts of your writing, and to critique other students’ drafts. You will draft, critique, revise, and edit until you have written something that’s as good as you can get it in the time that we have.

Course Goals:
I have identified my specific course goals for you below. I realize that you will have others of your own to add to the list. I hope that you will let me know what they are; perhaps I can assist you in meeting them. English 366 will provide you with the opportunity to:
1.) Become familiar with a sampling of good creative nonfiction, some early and some recent, representing a variety of cultural perspectives.
2.) Read, analyze, and discuss creative nonfiction in order to define the techniques of composition and examine conventions of the genre.
3.) Evaluate specific works as examples of, modifications of, or challenges to those conventions.
4.) Explore these works through small and large group discussion in order to develop your understanding of the ways language makes us know, think, feel, and act.
5.) Write formal and informal responses to creative nonfiction that demonstrate engagement, reflective thought, effective inquiry, perception of patterns in language features, and responsible interpretation.
6.) Recognize and critique the strategies employed in critical writings.
7.) Compose creative nonfiction works in some of the subgenres under study, exhibiting an awareness of audience and knowledge of genre conventions.
8.) Write a memoir, or a familiar or personal essay (something that draws on memory or personal experience, grounded in narrative and description) in a traditional format.
9.) Write an essay in a contemporary format--segmented or discontinuous or disjointive, designed as collage, montage, mosaic, episodes, vignettes, etc.
10.) Revise and edit your own work for clarity and coherence.
11.) Critique the work of others in constructive, effective ways.
12.) Establish your own writing goals for papers and evaluate the degree to which you have successfully met them.

What Will Be Expected of You:
1) Read the assigned essays that encompass the genre’s full spectrum: personal essays and memoirs, literary journalism, and academic/cultural criticism.

2) Keep a reading/writing journal, composed of in-class writing exercises, and your responses to: A.) assigned readings, B.) drafts of other students’ papers, and C.) your own composing processes on work-in-progress.

3) Participate in class discussions and activities related to what you read.

4) Participate in small group discussions where you formulate interpretive questions about creative nonfiction, and respond to them. From time to time, you will be responsible for leading the discussion on a particular piece.

5) Write creative nonfiction essays and participate in peer editing/response groups.

6) Submit all essays and assignments on time and according to instructions.

7) Compile and submit a portfolio of the writing you do in this class, including self-evaluation according to the criteria provided.

8) Show up for class and actively participate. Since this is a discussion and activity class, it’s essential that you keep up with your reading and writing, attend class, contribute to discussions, and participate in activities.

9) Attend one live reading from the Lion Rock Visiting Writers Series and write a summary and response. (You will be asked to provide proof of attendance by attaching a ticket stub or program to your written response to this reading).

**Grading**

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<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading/writing journal</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Presentations</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Participation/ Professionalism</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Attendance**

Plan to be here for every class session. Remember-this is not a ‘just get someone's notes' kind of class; what you miss can't be made up. Because we meet just one evening a week, missing one session = missing one whole week of class. If you miss one class, your final grade will drop one full letter grade. If you miss two or more sessions, for whatever reason, you will not receive credit for the class.
Original Work, Written for This Class, This Term

All the essays that you turn in for English 366 must be written by you, and must be written specifically for this course. You may not submit any work that was substantively begun before our class began.

Late Work

All papers must be submitted in class on the date they are due. Papers turned in after this will be marked down one letter grade for each day late. Final papers and portfolios for the class will not be accepted late.

Classroom Conduct

I abide by University policies concerning appropriate classroom conduct, academic dishonesty, incompletes, etc. Please review these sections in your CWU catalogue if you are unfamiliar with them.

Electronic Devices

Since this is a discussion and activity-centered course, using cell phones or other electronic devices during class tends to be disruptive, and is therefore prohibited. Turn off your cell phone before entering the classroom. Computers (laptops, netbooks, etc.) are not permitted for in-class use except as arranged by Disability Support Services (see “Disability-Related Accommodations Statement”).

Incompletes

Incompletes are given only for catastrophic events or severe extended illness. They are not an acceptable solution for poor time management. While I understand that occasionally there are unforeseen events and circumstances beyond your control, I believe you can, and should, finish this class in the quarter you take it.

Diversity

In my classroom, diversity is welcomed and celebrated. I will not tolerate any forms of prejudice or discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status. We are here to learn in a climate of civility and mutual respect.

Disability-Related Accommodations

Central Washington University is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning, discuss your concerns with the instructor. Students with disabilities should contact Student Disability Services to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course, including accommodations. Student Disability Services is located in Bouillon 140. Call (509) 963-1202 or email ds@cwu.edu for more information.
“…stories are renderings of life; they can not only keep us company, but admonish us, point us in new directions, or give us the courage to stay a given course. They can offer us kinsmen, kinswomen, comrades, advisers--offer us other eyes through which we might see, other ears with which we might make soundings.”

Robert Coles in *The Call of Stories*