ENGLISH 366 (ONLINE):
INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE NONFICTION
SPRING, 2016
****SUBJECT TO ADDITIONS AND CHANGES****

"Why bother conducting an experiment at all if you know what results it will yield? Maybe every essay automatically is in some way experimental—not an outline traveling toward a foregone conclusion but an unmapped quest that has sprung from the word question."

—John D’Agata

“We wish to assert our existence, like dogs peeing on fire hydrants. We put on display our framed photographs, our parchment diplomas, our silver-plated cups; we monogram our linen, we carve our names on trees, we scrawl them on washroom walls. It’s all the same impulse. What do we hope from it? Applause, envy, respect? Or simply attention, of any kind we can get? At the very least we want a witness. We can’t stand the idea of our own voices falling silent finally, like a radio running down.”

—Margaret Atwood, The Blind Assassin

INSTRUCTOR: Sonya Dunning
CONTACT INFORMATION: sdunning@cwu.edu

Please, please, please contact me via my Outlook e-mail (sdunning@cwu.edu) from your Outlook e-mail (not from Canvas OR from your personal, non-university non-Outlook e-mail) with any course- or assignment-related questions. I am generally very quick to respond to e-mail. However, if you don’t hear from me within 24 hours, I expect that you will e-mail me again.

I require CWU-only e-mail because it is verified to belong to the student only, and because it helps to ensure confidentiality on both ends of the exchange. It is also more efficient for me when it comes to contacting you as your CWU e-mails are built-in to the My CWU system. I prefer Outlook over Canvas messages because my correspondences with students are much easier for me to keep track of and organize and to not "miss" via Outlook than they are via Canvas.

BOOKS AND MATERIALS

- Tell it Slant, 2nd Edition by Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola
- Supplemental readings as listed on Canvas.

It is important that you purchase (or otherwise have reliable and consistent access to) Tell it Slant (2nd Edition). It is your responsibility to obtain the textbook by the first day of class. Failure to have the textbook by the first day of class will undoubtedly impact your ability to complete assignments in a timely manner, which will, in turn, impact your grade. Thus, if you are not able to obtain the textbook by the time the class starts, it is also your responsibility to be proactive and to find an alternative method for using the textbook for the assignments that are due in the interim.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE
The term “creative nonfiction” came into use in the early 1980s. It is a genre of writing that uses a wide variety of tools such as reading, research, memory, experience, and photographs to tell a true
story or to meditate on or otherwise explore a wide range of subjects ranging from love, violence, mortality, to county fairs, vanilla, or hummingbirds (though even an essay “about” something like hummingbirds is always also about something else, as well as about the writer her/himself).

Introduction to Creative Nonfiction is a “beginner’s” course designed to familiarize you with the nature of the genre of creative nonfiction, and to offer you the opportunity to practice the craft of that genre. This course is reading-intensive and writing-intensive, the intention of this reading and writing being to allow you to meet the following knowledge, skills, and values goals:

**Subject Knowledge:**
- Learn about a variety of creative nonfiction subgenres.
- Learn major terms relevant to the discussion of creative nonfiction.
- Develop an understanding of the technical choices writers make in crafting creative nonfiction.
- Gain familiarity with the common challenges of writing creative nonfiction.
- Learn how to discuss nonfiction texts in the classroom setting.

**Genre Skills:**
- Identify and analyze the elements of craft commonly used in nonfiction.
- Differentiate between subgenres within creative nonfiction.
- Apply specific nonfiction techniques from assigned readings to your own writing.
- Discuss and avoid common “pitfalls” of creative nonfiction.
- Conduct and incorporate research into your writing.
- Keep a notebook/journal.
- Thoughtfully discuss creative nonfiction in a classroom setting (the work of published authors as well as your own work and that of your peers).
- Be able to give, receive, and utilize constructive feedback.
- Revise your work in an attempt to truly “re-see” the focus and theme of your writing.

**Genre Values:**
- Appreciate the value of writing creative nonfiction as a means of “bearing witness” to the world around you.
- Appreciate the value of creative writing nonfiction as a means of paying attention to the world around you and sharing your unique observations with an audience.
- Appreciate the value of research as part of the process of writing creative nonfiction.
- Appreciate the value of reading creative nonfiction as a means of exploring new perspectives of the world around you and seeing where you stand in light of those perspectives.

Measures of assessment will include the following, which is accompanied by the English Department’s list of learner outcomes:

- Well-informed participation in class discussion.
- Performance on quizzes.
- Performance on Craft Presentation.
- Completion of weekly check-ins/journals.
- Performance on techniques exercises.
• Performance on “major assignments,” i.e. your portfolio essays.
• Performance in small group workshop.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner Outcome</th>
<th>Means of Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will identify and apply the techniques that govern creative nonfiction.</td>
<td>Students will read textbook chapters on creative nonfiction and be quizzed on their contents. They will also write at least two full-length creative nonfiction essays displaying what they've learned about its techniques.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will learn to distinguish between varieties of creative nonfiction.</td>
<td>Students will read published essays that illustrate different types of creative nonfiction and be quizzed on their content. They will also do exercises modeling the various types of creative nonfiction.</td>
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<td>Students will learn about the overlapping elements common to poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction.</td>
<td>Students will read examples of published creative nonfiction that employs elements of fiction and poetry and be quizzed on the material; they will write two essays employing strategies common to both creative nonfiction and one of the other genres.</td>
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<td>Students will complete and submit a portfolio of revised work that demonstrates their repertoire of creative nonfiction writing skills.</td>
<td>Portfolios will be assessed on the degree to which they illustrate familiarity with specific knowledge and skills related to the writer's craft, and on the degree to which the writing has improved through the revision process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will learn to recognize the value of drafting, peer feedback and reflection as vital to the creative process.</td>
<td>Students will write peer reviews for each of their peers' longer writing assignments. In their portfolios, they will explain how they responded to peer critiques in revising their own work.</td>
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<td>Students will learn research strategies to generate and deepen their material.</td>
<td>Students will conduct an interview, do library research to develop their essays.</td>
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**WRITING PROCESS AND QUALITY EXPECTATIONS**

Because English 366 students are upper division, have completed Central's English 101 and 102 (or the equivalent), or have transferred to CWU with AA degrees, grammar and usage are assumed as acquired basic skills. Basic research skills, including the use of proper citation, are also expected. However, because many students continue to experience problems with these skills and because particular skills are crucial in technical writing, some assignments may be intended to help students perfect these skills.

Members of the CWU Writing Program faculty recognize that writing is a process and that writers
depend on a community of readers in order to develop and improve. We thus expect each student to participate in this course in the following ways:

- Prewriting to generate and clarify content
- Revising to provide economy, clarity, unity, and balance
- Editing your own work and the work of others
- Writing polished prose that is purposeful, clear, and effective
- Understanding and using criteria to self-assess your writing
- Working responsibly in writing groups
- Engaging critically and constructively in the exchange of ideas during all conversations and activities
- Demonstrating academic integrity in all written projects

COMPUTER AND CANVAS REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

To succeed in this online course, you need access to a computer and the Internet. You also need to be able to read Word documents (.doc or .docx) and PowerPoint slides and watch online videos. QuickTime Player, which you can download for free, is a good program for opening/viewing videos. You will also be taking tests online. Canvas is your classroom and your “gradebook,” and it is your responsibility to ensure that you have adequate access to Canvas and are well-versed on how it works. Should you be unfamiliar with how Canvas works, it is your responsibility to seek the support and training you need in order to meet the demands of this course and the online learning environment at large.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE DESIGN

This course consists of a sequence of weekly units or modules, each of which includes a carefully scaffolded series of assigned reading and assignments that will ultimately culminate in the three essays you will write for this course: Long Essay 1: “I” Essay, Long Essay 2: “Eye Essay/Literary Journalism, and the Flash Nonfiction Essay. Below, you will find a more detailed description of foundation-building course activities (minor assignments), and you can review the individual assignment sheets for more information about the three essays. See Grading Details and Policies for information on point values for each major writing assignment and each type of exercise or activity.

FOUNDATION-BUILDING COURSE ACTIVITIES (MINOR ASSIGNMENTS)

- **Weekly Discussions:** Provide a forum for small group and whole class discussion of a topic of relevance to the week’s readings.
- **Weekly Craft Exercises:** Let you practice a technique relevant to the weekly reading and discussion and to respond to the work of others.
- **Workshops:** Give you a chance to share drafts of your major assignments and to respond to the work of others.
- **Weekly Check-Ins/Journals:** Give you a chance to reflect on the week’s work, to share images or ideas of interest, to ask questions, and/or to complete a specific task in preparation for future assignments.
- **Reading Quizzes:** Assess your comprehension of assigned readings.

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS
• Long Essay 1: “I” Essay (1500-3000 words)
• Long Essay 2: “Eye” Essay/Literary Journalism (1500-3000 words)
• Flash Nonfiction (500-750 words)

NOTE: One of your long essays should be “traditional” (story-like/primarily horizontal) in form, while the other should be a lyric essay, more experimental in form, i.e. a fragmented essay.

GRADING
I will provide evaluation criteria with each major assignment sheet. You should read those criteria. Here are the percentages and corresponding point values for each grade available for the course, which has a total of 1000 points possible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Needed</th>
<th>Points Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>940-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>900-939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>870-899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>840-869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
<td>800-839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>770-799</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76</td>
<td>740-769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
<td>700-739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>670-699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66</td>
<td>640-669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-63</td>
<td>600-339</td>
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</tbody>
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Grading is rigorous. Please remember that grades are earned, not given. Complete the readings in a timely fashion, take notes, pay attention. Participate in class discussions in an informed manner (having engaged with and absorbed the assigned readings). Read assignment sheets and relevant “guides” carefully and follow directions. Contact me in advance, via your Outlook e-mail, with any questions about assignment requirements.

At the end of the quarter, should your grade be on the cusp, I will consider "rounding up" in your favor. However, I will only do so if you meet the following requirements:

• You have completed and submitted ALL assignments ON TIME
• You are no more than 1% shy of earning the higher grade

Grade Distribution/Weights, Per Canvas Assignment Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Group</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor Assignments (Discussions, Journals, “Check-ins,” Workshops) (350 points)</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Assignments (Essays, Craft Presentations, Portfolio, 500 points total)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (150 points total)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS
**Length**

Most of your assignments have the acceptable word-count range stated prominently on the assignment sheet. If you fall short of the minimum in that range, you have not met the minimum requirements of the assignment. When you don't meet the minimum word count requirement, your grade will be reduced automatically. Expect an automatic reduction of at least 1 point for every 5 words you are shy of a word count requirement. It is possible to earn “0” points.

**Submission Formatting**

Unless otherwise stated on the assignment sheet, your assignments should be double-spaced with 12-point Times New Roman or Calibri font and should engage with MLA formatting conventions. Note that Word sometimes sets the default margins to 1.25 inches. You will need to change this. Please also review submission guidelines for individual exercises and assignments, as well as "Guidelines for Class Discussions," “Guidelines for Craft Exercises,” and "Guidelines for Peer Review."

**File Formats and Labeling**

For work that is turned in online, you must provide a .docx, or .doc file, and I must be able to open the file. If I can’t open the file, I’ll ask you to resend and the assignment will be counted as late, according the policy described below. Please note that OpenOffice allows you to save your file as .doc, which is fine. Files must be labeled clearly, per assignment specifications. Failure to meet these requirements will impact your eligibility to earn maximum points.

**Late Work**

Work that is eligible for late submission will be marked down one FULL letter grade for every day that it is late (an A becomes a B, for example). This deduction is in addition to any others that apply per evaluation criteria. After two days, I will not accept the assignment at all. It is your responsibility to turn your work in on time. I will only rarely provide reminders if you have assignments that are missing. This policy applies only to your initial posts of Weekly Craft Exercises, to your Weekly “Check-Ins,” to your Craft Presentation, and to your Portfolio. Quizzes, initial Weekly Discussion posts and responses, Weekly Craft Exercise responses, and workshop rough drafts and workshop feedback MUST be submitted on time in order to be eligible for credit. Quizzes must also be submitted on time.

Unless otherwise stated, assignments are due by 11:59 PM on the day they are listed on the schedule (see below). However, I do allow a three-hour "grace period" for submissions. What this means is that I will accept assignments with a minimal two-point reduction up until 2:59 AM. After the two-hour grace period is over, assignments will be considered late as previously described. No exceptions.

I also allow one "Get out of Jail Free" card for an initial Weekly Discussion post or an initial Weekly Craft Exercise, for Weekly Check-Ins, or for your Final Portfolio. This means that you have one safety net that expires after 24 hours should you need an extra day to complete and/or to submit one of the aforementioned assignments. In order to be eligible for this option, however, you MUST e-mail me at sdunning@cwu.edu (from your CWU Outlook e-mail) with a professional, courteous e-mail in which you request the extension.

Rough drafts, (Discussion/Craft Exercise) responses, and Workshop feedback are eligible for the
"Grace Period" option, but NOT for "Get Out of Jail Free" or for late submission.

Similarly, quizzes must be completed on time.

Resubmission/Revision
No assignment in this course is eligible for revision or resubmission.

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY
It is very easy to tell when a student has plagiarized in this class. If I suspect that you have plagiarized, I will run your assignment through Turnitin, a plagiarism detection service (many assignments will be run through TurnItIn by default). If it appears that you have, indeed, plagiarized, you will, at the very minimum, receive an F in the course. I will also report the behavior to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the process outlined in the CWU Academic Dishonesty policy will be followed. The Academic Dishonesty Policy can be found here: http://www.cwu.edu/resources-reports/cwup-5-90-0104-academic-dishonesty. If you have any questions about how to properly cite your work, contact me before the assignment is due. It's not plagiarism until you turn it in for credit. After you turn it in for credit, it doesn't matter whether you meant to do it or just “didn't understand” how to cite properly! If you didn't understand how to cite properly, it was your responsibility to ask for help. Finally, it should go without saying that you must do your own work for this class. All of your writing must be 100% your own and must be produced for this class. You should not recycle work from previous classes, and you should never copy another writer’s work.

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR
Behavior that is disruptive of class or disrespectful of other students will affect your performance and ultimately your grade. Please treat others in this class with respect and follow the guidelines of the student conduct code.

INCLUSIVITY STATEMENT
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.

ADA STATEMENT
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 Disability Services to discuss a range of options for removing barriers, including accommodations. Student Disability Services is located in Hogue 126. Call (509) 963-2214 or email ds@cwu.edu for more information.