

Creative Nonfiction
ENGLISH 204, 304, 404

2:30-3:45 TTh

Patterson 211

Spring Semester, 2015

Instructor: Gayle Brandeis

Email: gbrandeis@sierranevada.edu

Office: Prim 302

Course description: Creative non-fiction gives us an opportunity to look both within and beyond ourselves, to explore both self and world. Every Tuesday, we will discuss an essay from our text, as well as related craft issues (tone, voice, point of view, setting, situation vs. story, the ethics of writing about family, the reliability of memory, subjective truth, etc.); each Thursday, we will workshop student essays. We will also do some in class writing during every session to keep our creative juices flowing, our writing muscles flexed. I will share other hand-outs in class and over Moodle throughout the semester, as well. I hope by the end of the term, you will know yourself more deeply as well as understand what makes an essay satisfying for both writer and reader.

Text: *The Best American Essays 2014*, edited by John Jeremiah Sullivan

Grades:

In a workshop setting, attendance is mandatory to be able to develop and maintain a supportive community and sense of trust within the group. Two absences are acceptable (though not desirable); anything beyond that will affect your grade.

Your grade will be determined in equal measure by:

--your original creative non-fiction (you will submit one original 5-7 page essay for workshop and one significant revision of that story in your portfolio, along with a short essay exploring your revision choices, and three of your favorite in class writing exercises.) **404 students will write and revise two essays.**

—your two assignments: one on place; one placing yourself in history.

--your participation in class (including discussions, workshop critiques and in-class writing exercises)

--204 students will write one annotation, 304 students will write two annotations and 404

students will write three annotations of essays read in class. Annotations are essentially a short review of the essay (1-2 pages), focusing upon what you learned from the essay as a writer, and how you plan to apply what you learned to your own work.

General guidelines:

--Come to class on time and prepared, and be sure to turn off all cell phones, iPods, etc. Laptops are okay for notes and in-class writing, but you may not go online.

--Type all assignments in 12pt Times New Roman (or a comparable standard font) in black ink, double spaced, 1-inch margins, 8 ½ x11” paper, page numbers clearly marked.

--Email your essay to me at least 48 hours before your scheduled workshop and I'll post it on Moodle, or bring copies of your essay the class session before your workshop time (we will set the schedule the first day of class). I will pass out a separate sheet of workshop guidelines to clarify the process. It is important to me to create a safe, supportive workshop environment, one in which everyone is honest but kind. My greatest hope is that all of you will leave workshop excited to make your work even better.

--Be willing to explore, to be vulnerable, to push your own boundaries, to dig deep and take creative risks.

Class Schedule

T 1/20 Introduction to our time together--intentions, expectations, workshop schedule, etc.

Th 1/22 Discuss Forward by Robert Atwan (p. ix) and Introduction by John Jeremiah Sullivan (p. xvii) and related craft issues, write

T 1/27 Discuss “Dear Friend, From My Life I Write to You in Your Life” by Yiyun Li (p. 109) and related craft issues, write

Th 1/29 Workshop, write

Cathy Lin Che will be reading her poetry in the library on 1/29 at 6:30pm—non-fiction writers can learn a lot from poetry; go if you can

T 2/3 Discuss “The Old Man at Burning Man” by Wells Tower (p. 165) and related craft issues, write

Th 2/5 Workshop, write

F 2/6-S 2/7***Saeed Jones will be giving a reading on 2/6 and a workshop on 2/7—don't miss the chance to learn from this important poet!***

T 2/10 Discuss “Thanksgiving in Magnolia” by Ariel Levy (p. 100) and related craft issues, write

Th 2/12 Workshop, write

T 2/17 Discuss “Legend: William de Kooning” by Baron Wormser (p. 202) and related craft issues, write

Th 2/19 Workshop, write **1st annotation due for 204, 304 and 404 students**
T 2/24 Discuss “The Man at the River” by Dave Eggers (p. 31) and related craft issues, write
Th 2/26 Workshop, write
T 3/3 Discuss “The Devil’s Bait” by Leslie Jamison (p. 83) and related craft issues, write
Th 3/5 Workshop, write
F 3/6-S 3/7 ***Short story author Mark Maynard will be giving a reading on Friday and a workshop on Saturday—don’t miss it!***
T 3/10 Discuss “Slickheads” by Lawrence Jackson (p. 66) and related craft issues, write
Th 3/12 Workshop, write **PLACE ASSIGNMENT DUE**
T 3/17 **Spring Break**
Th 3/19 **Spring Break**
T 3/24 Discuss “Strange Beads” by Wendy Brenner (p. 5) and related craft issues, write
Th 3/26 Workshop, write **2nd annotation due for 304 and 404 students**
T 3/31 Discuss “Someone Else” by Chris Offut (p. 140) and related craft issues, write
Th 4/2 Workshop, write
T 4/7 Discuss “On Enmity” by Mary Gordon (p. 41) and related craft issues, write
Th 4/9 **Out of Town**
T 4/14 Discuss “Joy” by Zadie Smith (p. 145) and related craft issues, write
Th 4/16 Workshop, write **PLACING YOURSELF IN HISTORY ASSIGNMENT DUE**
F 4/17-S 4/18 ***Poets Gailmarie Pahmeier & David Lee will be giving a reading Friday and a workshop Saturday—this should be a blast; come if you can.***
T 4/21 Discuss “Becoming Them” by James Wood (p. 195) and related craft issues, write
Th 4/23 Workshop, write **3rd annotation due for 404 students**
T 4/28 Discuss “How to Make a Slave” by Jerald Walker (p. 186) and related craft issues, write
Th 4/30 Workshop, write
T 5/5 Discuss “The Final Day in Rome” by John H. Culver (p. 18) and related craft issues, write
Final Saturday, May 9 at 6:30 pm (turn in portfolios, have informal reading)

SCHOOL POLICIES

Sierra Nevada College Mission Statement: Sierra Nevada College graduates will be educated to be scholars of and contributors to a sustainable world. Sierra Nevada College combines the liberal arts and professional preparedness through an interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes entrepreneurial thinking and environmental, social, economic and educational sustainability.

Core Themes: Liberal Arts, Professional Preparedness, Entrepreneurial Thinking, Sustainability

Learning Differences: In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with a documented disability are eligible for support services and accommodations. If a student wishes to request an accommodation, please contact

the Director of Academic Support Services, Henry Conover, at (775) 831-1314 x7534, hconover@sierranevada.edu.

The Honor Code: The faculty of SNC believes students must be held to high standards of integrity in all aspects of college life in order to promote the educational mission of the College and to encourage respect for the rights of others. Each student brings to the SNC community unique skills, talents, values and experiences which, when expressed within the community, contribute to the quality of the educational environment and the growth and development of the individual. Students share with members of the faculty, administration and staff the responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment conducive to learning and personal development, where actions are guided by mutual respect, integrity, responsibility and trust. The faculty and students alike must make diligent efforts to ensure high standards are upheld by their colleagues and peers as well as themselves. Therefore faculty and students accept responsibility for maintaining these standards at Sierra Nevada College and are obligated to comply with its regulations and procedures, which they are expected to read and understand.

Consequences of Violating the Student Honor Code: SNC students and faculty share the responsibility for maintaining an environment of academic honesty. Thus, all are responsible for knowing and abiding by the SNC Faculty/Student Honor Code published in the current SNC Catalog. Faculty are responsible for presenting the Honor Code and the consequences of violating it to students at the start of their classes AND for reporting all incidences of academic dishonesty to the Provost. Students are responsible for knowing what constitutes CHEATING, PLAGIARISM and FABRICATION and for refraining from these and other forms of academic dishonesty. Violations of the Honor Code become part of a student's academic record.

1st Offense: Student receives a zero for assignment/exam and counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

2nd Offense: Student fails course and receives counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

3rd Offense: Student is expelled.

The SNC Email System: The SNC email system is the official communication vehicle among students, faculty members and administrative staff and is designed to protect the confidentiality of student information as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 Act (FERPA). Students should check their college email accounts daily during the school year.

Students have a right to forward their SNC e-mail to another e-mail account (for example, @hotmail or @gmail). However, confidentiality of student information protected by FERPA cannot be guaranteed for SNC e-mail forwarded to an outside vendor. Having email redirected does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with official communication sent to his or her SNC email account.

