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2023

### ENGL 211W: Intro to Nonfiction (Points of Entry and/or Exit Wounds)

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# Points of Entry and/or Exit Wounds

ENGL 211-03 Creative Nonfiction • Spring 2023 • Tu/Th 10:45am-12pm • Kiely 325

Prof: Heather Simon

Office Hours: Tu/Th 1:40-2:40pm

## **Course Description**

We will explore the notion of creativity as it pertains to new ways of engaging familiar topics and carving out frameworks for exploring uncharted territory. We will actively read and respond to works of creative nonfiction to enrich our understanding of structure, style, and language. Assigned readings will demonstrate how creative nonfiction can encompass a variety of forms (think: reportage, braided essay, erasure, visual essay) and draw from both research and experience to offer a unique perspective and elicit an emotional response. We will develop our own creative nonfiction toolbox through a series of reflections, creative exercise, and projects. We will provide our classmates with thoughtful feedback to ensure collective growth.

This course is a Writing Intensive (W) course and fulfills one Writing Intensive requirement. W classes include a significant portion of time devoted to writing instruction. This may include things such as revision workshops, discussions of rhetorical strategies, or reflective writing assignments.

## **Learning Objectives**

- Close read & reflect on works of creative nonfiction in a variety of subgenres
- Utilize a variety of rhetorical strategies and structural techniques
- Conduct research and evaluate evidence through your own lens
- Draft vigorously and revise with purpose
- Provide productive feedback to your classmates
- Develop awareness for and sensitivity to language difference and diversity
- Trust yourself. Take risks.

## **Content Warning**

We will occasionally read and view sensitive material. If you object to or are uncomfortable participating in discourse about abuse, violence, race, immigration, various sexual and gender identities, and so on, you should drop the course. Your continued enrollment in this section indicates your commitment to engaging these subjects respectfully.

## **Required Technology**

- Blackboard - course materials, reading schedule, assignments, and discussion forums. ([what & how](#))
- Laptop/Tablet - viewing course material, and hw/classwork. ([how to request device](#))
- Zoom - in case we need to switch to online ([what & how](#))
- Google Drive ([what & how](#)) or Microsoft Word ([what & how](#))

## **Grading**

2 Creative Revisions - 40% (20% each)

Homework (reflections/creative exercises) - 30%

Participation (preparedness/discussions/in-class writing) - 20%

Final Assignment - 10%

## Course Overview

### Typical Weekly Workflow

#### **Tuesdays (& some Thursdays) – Reading Reflections Due**

- Finish the reading and post reading reflection (or complete other HW), post on BB 1 hour before class.
- Come to class with annotated readings, journals, questions, and fresh ideas, ready for class discussion..

#### **Thursdays (& some Tuesdays) – Prepare to Create**

- Review creative exercise instructions before coming to class and bring any requested material.
- In class we will finish discussion and work on creative exercises.

#### **Sundays - Creative Exercises Due**

- Complete creative exercise and post on BB discussion board by 11:59pm

#### **Weekends - Prepare (& Catch Up if needed)**

- Read & annotate texts for the coming week
- Complete any work for the week you've missed and post by midnight Sunday for credit\*
- For additional participation points or to makeup participation for a missed class you can respond to reading reflections/creative exercises from that week.

### In-Class/Blackboard Participation

Participation begins with being present and punctual to class on a regular basis, and entails more than just showing up. You must come to class prepared with all required materials, engage in class discussions, and in group activities. To ace participation you must average 4 meaningful acts of participation a week. You will only receive an A in participation if you:

- attend class regularly and on time with all required materials
- actively listen to your peers (no phones, chit chat, math hw, trips to vending machines)
- share ideas/ask questions 4+ times a week by some combination of the following
  - a) IRL - Contributing to in class discussions
  - b) BB - Commenting on a classmate's discussion posts [2+ sentences]
  - c) BB - Responding to someone's response to your own posts[2+ sentences]

### Reading Reflections

\*Due Tuesdays 1 hour before the start of class on Blackboard\*

Following each reading assignment you are required to create a discussion thread (250+ words each) in response to reflect on the literary text. I will provide more guidance for what to post each week on Blackboard. Note, you will at times receive "pre-reading" material to provide you with relevant insight pertaining to the assigned text; you are required to read all pre-reading prior to the assigned text; but you don't need to respond to the pre-reading material.

#### **To receive full credit (10pts) each discussion thread must include:**

- The gist—sum up the text (if you can; if you can't talk about why!); what key observations did you make about style/structure/language//patterns? how did you feel while reading?
- Zoom in—unpack at least one important passage, detail, or rhetorical technique you found confusing and/or thought-provoking. Include at least one quote in your post!
- At least one follow up question about the content, style, or message. In developing your questions you might think about what you might ask the writer if you could interview them.

## Creative Exercises

\*Due Sundays by midnight on Blackboard\*

Most weeks you will receive a creative exercise that coincides with the readings. I will give you instructions and we will typically discuss and begin the exercise in class. You will then have the weekend to finish up the exercise and post on the discussion board on Blackboard by midnight on Sundays.

### **Creative Exercise Goals + Requirements (10pts)**

Use the weekly prompt and the reading to generate your own creative piece (typically a page, but there are no formal requirements). These exercises will offer you new points of entry into themes, provide new frameworks for engaging in different forms, and help guide your independent creative writing process.

Looking ahead: You will use two of your creative exercises for your formal creative revision assignments.

## Creative Revision Assignments

Twice this semester you will be tasked with revisiting one of your creative exercises or developing a new creative piece utilizing techniques from at least one of the texts we've read this semester.

[Creative Revision 1.0 Instructions](#)

[Creative Revision 2.0 Instructions](#)

## Final Assignment

In lieu of a final exam, you will be tasked with completing one of the following culminating assignments.

Option 1: [Why I Writer Redux Reflective Portfolio](#)

Option 2: [DIY Creative Exercise Invention](#)

## Course Policies

### Community Respect

Treat your classmates and learning environment with respect. Use correct names and pronouns; ask when you are uncertain. No hate speech, insulting comments or gestures (i.e. eye rolling) will be tolerated. If you are unsure how to phrase something productively, please ask. Frame questions and criticisms with the goal of seeking understanding, rather than inflicting judgment.

### Attendance

If you cannot commit to regular in-person learning, please drop the course and enroll in an online or hybrid section. By remaining enrolled you are committing to attend and arrive on time to in-person classes twice a week.

I realize an occasional absence or late arrival may occur. If you are absent or late:

- a) Send me a brief email to let me know that you're running late and/or can't make class on a given day. I do not require detailed explanations or doctor notes—and most certainly do not want photos of traffic tickets or injuries to serve as proof.
- b) Contact a classmate for notes, updates, and new material
- c) After speaking to a classmate, you can email me with follow up questions
- d) Please do NOT email me to ask "what did I miss?" or "did I miss anything important?!" I will not reteach a lesson over email—and of course you missed something important.

### **Extensions/Late Work**

The assignments in this class build upon one another and culminate in your final assignment. Late or skipped assignments will hinder the process. I reserve the right not to accept assignments posted and published late. If you are having difficulty completing an assignment you must notify me within 24 hours of the deadline so that I can offer guidance and so that you arrange an extension if necessary. I can only help and be flexible if you communicate your needs proactively and ahead of time.

What can't be made up? Participation and rough drafts/peer review are two elements of the course that cannot be made up as they require immediate engagement with your peers. If you miss participation one week, speak to me about ways to participate more in the weeks to come.

### **CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism of any kind will be reported and will result in a zero on the assignment and may result in failure of the course. CUNY's full academic integrity policy is [here](#). Examples of Plagiarism include:

- Copying another person's actual words without the use of quotation marks and footnotes attributing the words to their source.
- Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging the source.
- Using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the source.
- Failing to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignments.
- Submitting something you have already written for a draft or an earlier paper as a revision when no changes have in fact been made.
- Internet plagiarism which includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the internet without citing the source, and "cutting and pasting" from various sources without proper attribution. Web sites set up to sell papers to students often claim they are merely offering "information" or "research" to students and that this service is acceptable and allowed throughout academia. This is absolutely untrue.

## **Campus Resources**

### **Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

The Office of Special Services (OSS) is making accommodations for students who need them to be successful in their classes. Special software, audio books, scribes, and extended time for testing are just some of the additional services the office will be providing. Students who need assistance can call the office at 718-997-5870 or email [qc.spsv@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:qc.spsv@qc.cuny.edu).

### **The QC Writing Center**

If you need additional help (beyond my office hours) with your writing, you are encouraged to use the [The Writing Center](#), which provides free writing support services to all enrolled Queens College students.

### **Food Pantry**

For information about accessing the food pantry go to: <https://knightstablefoodpantry.org/>

### **Health & Wellness Services**

For virtual counseling and other peer support services go to: <https://www.qc.cuny.edu/cs/>

## Writing Playlists

\*Curated by students from fall 2022

[LowFi Beats Radio \(YouTube\)](#): Music to relax and study with.

[Nature Scenery & Relaxing Music \(YouTube\)](#): Calming music to write to with beautiful images.

[Focus Music \(YouTube\)](#): Relaxing piano music to help focus.

[50 Most Famous Pieces of Classical Music \(YouTube\)](#): Great variety of classic moods.

[ADHD music recommendations](#): Buffet of playlists to help you focus.

[Sad Songs \(Spotify\)](#): Slow & mellow. It can either relax you or help you cough up your emotions.

[Bollywood Songs \(spotify\)](#): Energy-filled. You don't need to understand it to have a great time.

## Tentative Schedule

### Week 1: Personal Essay

**Read & Reflect:** [“Why I Write” by David A. Picket](#)

**Key Terms:** [Personal Essay](#), [Anaphora](#), [Paradox](#)

**Create:** [Creative Exercise](#) - Why I Write

### Week 2: Point of View

**Read & Reflect:** [Citizen excerpt by Claudia Rankine](#)

**Read & Reflect:** [“Cattails” by Nikky Finney](#)

**Key Terms:** Second Person, Third Person, Imagery

**Create:** [Creative Exercise](#) - POV Play

### Week 3 & 4: Literary Journalism & Collage Essay

**Read & Reflect:** [“Immigration as a Second Language”](#) by Marwa Helal

**Read:** [Interview](#) with Helal

**Key Terms:** Collage Essay, Literary Journalism, Abecedarian, Epigraph, Epilogue

**Prepare:** Come to class with two potential epigraphs

**Create:** [Creative Exercise](#) - Points of Entry

### Week 5: Peer Review & Revision

**Review Assignment:** Read instructions for your first [Creative Revision Assignment](#)

**Brainstorm:** Write a brief proposal about which creative exercise(s) you would like to develop and revise

**Workshop:** Bring rough draft to class for peer review workshop.

### Week 6: Process Paper & Intro to Constraints

**Read:** [“The Choice of Constraint” by Rachel Hazelton](#)

**Creative Revision 1 Due:** Upload Process Paper, Creative Revision, Rough Draft on blackboard

### Week 7: Erasure

**Read:** [Grappling Against Oppression with Poetic Erasure](#) & [Boom in Erasure Poetry” by Rachel Stone](#)

**Read & Reflect:** [“Explorer” by Candace Williams](#); Source: [Explorer Verner Home with African Curios](#)

**Read & Reflect:** [“Form N-400 Erasures” by Niina Pollari](#); Source: [N-400 Application](#)

**Key Terms:** Erasure, Caesura

**Prepare:** Come to class with a text to use for your Erasure

**Create:** [Creative Exercise](#) - Erasure

### Week 8: Subverting Form

**Read & Reflect:** "[How to Queer Ecology: One Goose at a Time by Alex Johnson](#)"

**Key Terms:** Juxtaposition, Metaphor, Diction

**Prepare:** Come to class with a word or concept whose definition you want to challenge in your creative exercise. I recommend OED.com for origins of words, however the word does not need to be in English.

**Create:** [Creative Exercise](#) - Subversive Lesson Plan

### Week 9: Braided Essay

**Read:** [What is a Braided Essay?](#)

**Read & Reflect:** "[How to let go of the world](#)" by Franny Choi

**Read & Reflect:** [excerpt from On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous by Ocean Vuong](#)

**Read:** Vuong [Interview](#)

**Key Words:** Braided Essay, Lyric Essay, Motif; Autofiction, Epistolary, Metafiction

**Prepare:** Come to class with a source for your braided essay. \*You can bring in a source you have used for a previous exercise.

**Create:** [Creative Exercise](#) - Braiding Grief

### Week 10 & 11: Dealer's Choice

**Read & Reflect:** A CNF piece of your choice

**Create:** [Creative Exercise](#) - Create Your Own

### Week 12 & 13: Made Forms

**Read:** "[Made Forms](#)" by Cindy Juyoung Ok

**Read & Reflect:** [Diana Khoi Nguyen excerpt from Ghost Of](#)

**Read & Reflect:** [Travesty Generator](#) by Lillian-Yvonne Bertram

**Read:** [Nguyen interview](#)

**Key Terms:** Triptych, Hybrid, Collage

**Prepare:** Come to class with either a small object or printed photograph/image for exercise.

**Create:** [Creative Exercise](#) - Made Form

### Week 14: Creative Revision 2.0// Peer Review & Revision

**Review Assignment:** Read instructions for the [Creative Revision 2.0](#)

**Brainstorm:** Write a brief proposal about which creative exercise(s) you would like to develop and revise

**Workshop:** Bring rough draft to class for peer review workshop.

**Revise:** Employ [radical revision exercises](#)

### Week 15 [last week of class!]: DIY Prompts/Rituals & Open Mic

**Review Final Assignments:** Option 1 [Why I Writer Redux Reflective Portfolio](#) and Option 2 [DIY Creative Exercise Invention](#)

**Open Mic:** Prepare to read for 2-4 minutes during our last class

**Creative Revision 2.0 Due:** Upload Process Paper, Creative Revision, Rough Draft on blackboard

### Week 16 [no class]: Last Call!

**Final Assignment Due:** Upload final assignment to blackboard

**Extensions:** Settle any extensions