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CRWR 412.01: Advanced Creative Writing - Nonfiction

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CRWR 412—ADVANCED NONFICTION WORKSHOP

Spring 2018 ~~~T/H 2-3:20 ~~~LA 233~~~Professor Judy Blunt

Office: LA 112~~~Hours: M/T/H 11-1~~~bluntj@mso.umt.edu

In the advanced nonfiction workshop, students study the art and craft of nonfiction, as readers, reviewers and writers. Writing prompts in the first weeks of class will set the tone for this course, with a goal of creating a body of new essay starts. Professional essays that exemplify the creative nonfiction genre, its narrative styles and essay formats, will be assigned for review and discussion. In addition, we will study documentary as text, both for discussion and as a trigger for response essays. Any of these in-class works may be developed and polished for submission to workshop.

Our workshop format is that of a community of writers working to give the most useful feedback on the fundamental issues of memory, meaning and method in writing from the first-person point of view.

1. The focus of the workshop is to assist in revision with an eye toward creating publishable works. Push yourself.
2. Writers scheduled to workshop provide the class copies of their essay one class period in advance.
3. Classmates will provide two copies of their written comments – a minimum of ½ page, single-spaced and signed – at the time of the workshop. The writer will keep one copy and I will keep the other.
4. We will maintain a supportive tone, but I encourage constructive criticism of the story, its diction, organization, development and voice.
5. You should be submitting essays or excerpts that are as polished as you can make them on your own; you are responsible for fully editing and proofreading tests so we are not forced to sideline issues of content and style for those of grammar, syntax and spelling. I assign grades to first drafts of your essays, which constitutes ¼ of your final grade. Put attention and effort into the workshop draft as well as the revision.
6. I expect to see all work formatted for professional submission: double spaced, 1-inch margins, titled, page numbered, legibly printed in standard 12 pt. font.
7. If the piece is an excerpt of a longer work, note that information on the front page—otherwise, make no disclaimers to your readers.
8. If you miss a workshop, you responsible for contacting classmates and gathering the scheduled essays and coming to class prepared to discuss them.
9. If you miss your own workshop, it will not be rescheduled. Don't miss your own workshop.
10. If you need to exchange workshop days, find someone who will accommodate the trade, then see me before class so we can all adjust our schedules together.

Attendance: We'll be writing, workshoping, discussing reading assignments and viewing documentaries during our class time. It's an interactive studio format that makes it impossible to repeat or make up a missed class. If you know you will miss a class in the course of our semester, please see me in advance to discuss arrangements. Students who miss three classes are on notice--required to

schedule an appointment with me to discuss the effect this will have on their grades. Students with six or more absences will be asked to drop or accept a failing grade.

Tardiness: PLEASE copy your manuscripts for workshop in advance, so last-minute printing doesn't make you late to class. Students who arrive late to class either interrupt a film or lesson in progress, or they force classmates to wait for them to arrive before work can begin. I find chronic tardiness to be especially disrespectful and discourteous. I will give two warnings, after which your late arrivals will be counted as absences. The attendance policy applies to these as well, so be conscious at the outset of your commitment to this course and your fellow writers.

Participation: I expect every student to contribute to class discussion. Thoughtful comments reflect your preparation for class, a sign that you've read the work, thought about it, and have some ideas to discuss. Participation makes up ¼ of your grade for the class, so all As with little or no participation can still result in a final 'C' grade.

Grades: I keep track of "pre-revision" grades for the essays you submit. That total added to your class participation score makes up one half of your grade. Please meet with me if you want to discuss progress as the semester continues. Your final portfolio makes up the other half of your grade and is due no later than May 7, 5 p.m. in my mailbox in LA 133. The final portfolio is 20 pages of your best revised work for the semester.

Attendance/participation issues aside, high grades will be earned by all students who:

1. demonstrate a broad understanding of the creative nonfiction genre, its narrative styles and essay formats;
2. read and respond as required to professional examples of nonfiction in various formats and subgenres;
3. write and submit a minimum of 30 pages of nonfiction in the course of the semester;
4. submit original work for three workshops on time;
5. exhibit a high level of sophistication in the critique of peer work;
6. study revision technique and apply these techniques to essay drafts;
7. overcome any persistent problems with grammar, punctuation, syntax and diction;
8. submit a final portfolio of 20 pages of revised work that displays advanced skill levels as assessed by the instructor.

I may alter or amend this syllabus to fit our changing needs as the class progresses.

Plagiarism: As senior-level students of English and creative writing, you have seen this disclaimer dozens of times. Not surprisingly, in creative nonfiction presenting another person's work as your own, or failing to document correctly the use of another's words in your work, will result in an "F" for the course, and the violation will be handed up to the proper UM authorities. Always, always, ask if you have any confusion at all about documenting sources or quoting from published sources.

Disability: This course requires an ability to read and respond to written works, to listen to and join in class discussion, and to form original written works with the goal of publication. See me after class or during office hours if you require disability accommodation to make these things possible. Regarding dogs in class: A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Only licensed service animals, please.

