

WRT 114: Introduction to Creative Nonfiction

WRT 114

Introduction to Creative Nonfiction (3 credits)

Class Size: 15-20

*Faculty: Ivy Kleinbart, Professional Writing Instructor,
Syracuse University*

*Administrative Contact: Sean Conrey, Associate Director,
Project Advance*

Course Catalog Description

Nonacademic writing; creative nonfiction, memoir, the essay. Students write texts experimenting with style, genre, and subject; read contemporary nonfiction texts by varied authors; attend lectures/readings of visiting writers.

Course Overview

Writing 114 provides an introduction to creative nonfiction (CNF), a genre that encompasses many kinds of prose: memoir, biography, travel writing, science writing, and literary journalism, to name a few. CNF writers almost always—in some way or other—focus on the tensions that emerge between individuals and the world around them. Thus, the title of this course, “Writing Culture,” refers to writing about oneself and others in the context of a broader culture. How do we negotiate cultural norms, expectations, rituals, and practices? How does culture shape us as individuals? To what degree do we absorb or resist our cultural influences? And how do we, as individual actors and witnesses to our world,

shape the culture in which we live? These are just a few of the many questions we'll ask ourselves as we move through this course.

In this class, students will read and reflect upon a variety of creative nonfiction texts, as well as compose their own essays. Students will have the freedom to explore a wide range of topics and experiment broadly with voice, style, form, and the use of research to enrich their writing.

Rather than present reality as a series of raw facts, CNF writers borrow techniques of fiction writing— description, anecdote, scene construction, characterization, and dialogue—to tell dynamic and compelling true stories. The crucial distinction between creative nonfiction and fiction is that nonfiction purports to tell the truth with very little embellishment, while fiction claims to be “made up.” Creative nonfiction also draws from poetic approaches to language, including imagery, metaphor, tone, and shifts in point of view and perspective. We'll study these building blocks of creative nonfiction and use them in the composition process.

Since this is an intensive writing class, we'll often engage in writing workshops in class, including brainstorming and freewriting activities, and structured peer critiques. Students will need to come to class prepared to write. All students will need a dedicated notebook for this purpose.

Pre- /Co-requisites

N/A

Course Objectives

- Students will read and critically engage with creative nonfiction texts representing a diverse range of topics, subgenres, and perspectives.
- Students will learn about, and put into practice,

conventions and characteristics of creative nonfiction.

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- Students will explore relationships between research and creative nonfiction, and learn conventions for incorporating research into their texts.
- Students will develop an awareness of audience, and work to construct an ethos and voice that responds to audience needs and expectations.
- Students will experiment with voices, styles and forms.
- Students will reflect on their writing processes.

Laboratory

N/A

Required Materials

Tell It Slant: Creating, Refining, & Publishing Creative Nonfiction, 3rd Edition; Miller & Paola, McGraw-Hill, 2019

Hard Text – ISBN: 1260454592 eText – ISBN: 9781260454604
(McGraw-Hill, Marjie Sullivan, 315-488-4167 or 800-338-3987)

In Short: A Collection of Brief Creative Nonfiction, Kitchen & Paumier Jones, Norton, 1996

Paperback – ISBN: 9780393314922 (W.W. Norton & Co., 800-233-4830, you will receive a 20% discount for 1-9 and 45% on 10 or more)

In Fact: The Best of Creative Nonfiction, Gutkind, Norton, 2004

Paperback – ISBN: 9780393326659 (W.W. Norton & Co., 800-233-4830, you will receive a 20% discount for 1-9 and 45% on 10 or more)

SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTARY READERS (Anthologies) Wide latitude is given for choosing the fiction and non-fiction texts students will read. If instructors intend to use a “reader,” the titles below have been approved.

Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction, 1st Edition; Williford & Martone, 2007 ISBN: 9781416531746 (available via Amazon)

Instructor Recommendations

The WRT 114 course requires creative writing pedagogies that aren't necessarily familiar to ELA teachers who are used to teaching literature and composition;, therefore instructors applying for this course should have extensive experience in one or more of the following:

- Disciplinary coursework in creative writing, preferably at the graduate level (MFA preferred but not required)
- Instructional experience in disciplinary creative writing, including workshop participation/pedagogy
- Extensive independent experience as a practicing creative writer

When you draft your cover letter for Summer Institute, please discuss your prior experience in one or more of the above areas of practice or study.

In addition, writing samples should follow or consciously subvert conventions of creative nonfiction.