

Fall 2015

ENGL 5918

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University of New Orleans

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ENGLISH 5918
CREATIVE NONFICTION LITERATURE
ON-LINE
FALL 2015

English 5918-476

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Office hours: Tu 4-6; W 1-3; Th 1-3

Office hours: since this is an on-line course, we can't meet in my office—unless, of course, you live in, or near, New Orleans. If you do, I'm happy to see you during office hours. Otherwise, students may e-mail me individually with questions or concerns.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: A low residency class in creative nonfiction literature.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester,

1. Students will be able to identify the range and styles of creative nonfiction.
2. Students will be able to classify and compare the techniques of creative nonfiction; of how a piece is constructed and why.
3. Students will be able to discuss and illustrate an individual creative nonfiction writer's unique voice.
4. Students will be able to characterize what creative nonfiction can do that fiction can't and why, as well as to describe its limitations.

5. Students will be able to explain and discuss some of the ethical matters raised in writing creative nonfiction.

MEANS OF ACHIEVING COURSE GOALS:

1. By being exposed to as many subgenres of creative nonfiction as possible—profiles; the personal essay; humor; travel writing; writing about war; food writing; nature writing; writing about the environment; memoir and others.
2. By reading three books of creative nonfiction.
3. By discussing these works on line in discussion forums. Ideally, the forums will be organic; that is, one reaction will spark another and the discussion will take on a life of its own.
4. By writing three longer papers and one or two shorter papers that will analyze the works students read. Students will go into detail about the books and essays, exploring techniques, voice, point of view, word choice, dialogue, pace, and so on.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Assignments: Three long papers, 30-40 pages total. One or two shorter papers, 4-6 pages. All work should be double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman type, with reasonable—i.e., not to the edges of the paper—margins.

Research: At least one of the three papers should incorporate some kind of research. The research can be formal, involving print and/or electronic resources, or more physical in nature, involving field observation and practical investigation, legwork, interviewing and so on.

PARTICIPATION: Pertinent participation in on-line discussion forums will form a significant part—25%—of your grade. This will be crucial to the success of the class and to your learning this semester. I fully expect everyone to contribute with care and effort for each forum.

EVALUATION:

1. **Participation: (25%)**
2. **Writing, three longer papers (60%)**
3. **Writing, one or two shorter papers (15%)**

READINGS: We will read and comment on selected creative nonfiction readings. These will include three books as well as individual pieces that will be posted on Moodle.

BOOKS: Note: please get the same edition. It doesn't matter if it's used. But we all need the same edition of the book so that the page references are the same. A different edition of the same book will have different pagination.

Into Thin Air by Jon Krakauer (Anchor, 1999) ISBN: 0385494785.

Fierce Attachments by Vivian Gornick (Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1987) ISBN: 0374529965.

Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates (Spiegel and Grau, 2015) ISBN: 0812993543.

ENGLISH 5918 GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY

Graduate students will write an essay on the topic: what makes good creative nonfiction. They will supply specific examples, drawing on any of the readings from the semester but a minimum of four.

Length: 5 typed double-spaced pages. Due date to be determined, but no earlier than November.

PLAGIARISM AND INTELLECTUAL HONESTY: Any instance of plagiarism will be reported to the UNO Committee on Discipline for appropriate action. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, even at this point, and its official consequences, check the University's official word on the subject:

www.uno.edu/student-affairs-enrollment-management/documents/academic-dishonesty-policy-rev2014.pdf

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are required to contact Office of Disability Services, 248 University Center,

(504) 280-6222, to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. This should be done in the first week of the semester. For a full explanation of the University's policy regarding this matter, please consult this UNO webpage: www.uno.edu/disability-services/. Both the UNO Academic and Disability Policy will be posted on Moodle as well.

PLEASE NOTE: To ensure academic integrity, all students enrolled in distance learning courses at the University of New Orleans may be required to participate in additional student identification procedures. At the discretion of the faculty member teaching the course, these measures may include on-campus proctored examinations, off-site or online proctored examinations, or other reasonable measures to ensure student identity. Authentication measures for this course are identified below and any fees associated are the responsibility of the student. For the purposes of this class, the employment of secure log-ins and passwords as used by Moodle will satisfy that University requirement.

GRADING STANDARDS:

A Excellent, exceptional, original. Thorough and consistently industrious in thought and in craft. Consistently engaging and interesting to read. Sound grammar and mechanics. Clear evidence of labor and polish and highest standards with the refusal to accept the second rate.

B Very good to good. Often industrious in thought and in execution, with obvious attempts at achieving excellence. Sometimes engaging and interesting to read. Sound grammar and mechanics.

C Shows effort but is without particular originality, distinction, thoroughness, or industry in thought, feeling or description. Doesn't steadily maintain reader interest. A rant can be this way, as can telling much and showing little. As can recounting events superficially or from an overly self-involved perspective.

D Minimally adequate in the areas mention above with little evidence of having strived for excellence.

E Not at all adequate in the areas specified above. A weak, lazy paper written carelessly, without any personal investment.