

Spring 2016

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY
Department of English

Professor Ethel Morgan Smith
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(I don't use MIX)
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Office Hours
11:30-1:00 pm Tuesday
and by appointment

Creative Writing Workshop: Non-Fiction-English 314

GOALS

This class will explore the genre of creative nonfiction with emphasis on the personal essay. Probably more than any other form of literary discourse, from the slave narratives to memoirs, this genre of writing has been chosen by writers to articulate ideals of selfhood, which is very important to a sense of identity, both individual and communal. In order to understand how nonfiction is put together—how the raw material of inspiration is transmuted into art—we will explore the possibilities of style and structure, by showing some of the essays and films that have to do with the impact on your work.

Your own writing will continue take form and shape as we write and discover. You will share your original works of nonfiction with a workshop of your peers. You will be expected to submit two-three essays for reading and critique. The workshop will also offer you an opportunity to develop and build on skills you've already acquired. Writing well, as you know, is difficult and demanding. It must be given your full attention. I hope this course will provide ideas to help you to further your dream of becoming a writer. We all have stories to tell. The instinct of telling stories is an intrinsic characteristic for human beings. It is also a way we organize our lives, give shape to our days or create containers for our experiences.

CLASS PROCEDURES

1. **Attendance is very necessary!** If you cannot attend class for some reason, you are responsible for finding out from a classmate what you have missed, and what the assignment is for the next class meeting. **Please do not call or email me to ask for assignments you've missed.** You are expected to be prepared to participate fully in the class discussion on the day you return to class, and to hand in any assignment that is due. This course will allow you to become a better writer of non-fiction prose. You will build on what you already know. We will read, right, and explore the genre of creative non-fiction. To become a better writer, you must commit yourself to the craft of writing as well as reading non-fiction

If you miss more than two class periods (days), your penalty will be losing one point from your grade for each class you miss.

2. Class participation will be an important portion of your grade. You are expected to have read any assignment and come to class prepared to discuss such assignment. We will have a detailed discussion about workshop as we progress in that direction.

GRADES

Grades in this class will be based on the following: Class Participation-30% and Writing Assignments-60%. Since this is a writing class I expect to see you at writing events sponsored by WVU. Attending Writing Series-10%. You're also expected to attend the Department of English readings and write at least a 500-word reflection of each reading. Most readings are listed under "class schedule."

REQUIRED TEXTS

"Autobiographical Notes" by James Baldwin

"Come Eat" or "Sunday Dinner" by Patricia Hampl

"A Letter from a Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Living in a World of Rape" by Ethel Morgan Smith

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week of:

Jan 12th	Introduction of Syllabus and Assignment: "A Letter From a Birmingham Jail"
Jan 14th	<i>Jane Austen Bookclub</i> -Room104 Wise Library
Jan 18th	Martin Luther King's Recess
Jan 19th	Complete film and discussion-Room 104 Wise Library
Jan 26th	Writing Exercises
Feb 2nd	Writing Exercises
Feb 9th	Begin workshopping your writing
Feb 16th	Workshopping continued (We work in alphabetical order.)

Feb 23rd	Workshopping continued
Feb 29th	Reading: Christa Parravani & Caroline Randall Williams
Mar 1st	“Come and Eat”
Mar 3rd	Midterm-Individual Conferences
Mar 8th	Complete and Discuss “Come and Eat”
Mar 9th	Semi Annual Pizza Party-130 Colson Hall 11:30-1:00 pm
Mar 11th	Writing Contest Deadline
Mar 17th	Workshopping
Mar 19-27th	Spring Recess
Mar 31st	Workshopping
April 5th	“Living in a World of Rape”
April 12th	Workshopping
April 13th	Department of English Awards Luncheon-Gold Ballroom- 11: 30-1:00 pm
April 16th	James Longenbach Reading-Robinson Reading Room-7:30 pm
April 21st	Calliope Reading-130 Colson Hall-
April 28th	MFA Reading
April 29th	Last Day of Classes
May 2- May 7th	Final Exams

HONOR CODE

Any work that you submit must be your own. In addition, any words, ideas, or data you borrow from another source (individual, website, and published text) must be properly documented. It is your responsibility to learn the rules and conventions of citing sources in your academic work. If you have questions about academic citation,

consult with me during office hours or raise the issue in class. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses. Clear cases will result in an **F** for the course and other academic sanctions. Please see the WVU Undergraduate Catalog section on Academic Integrity/Dishonesty for a full explanations and procedures.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

WVU is committed to social justice. I support that commitment and will work to create a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. I welcome suggestions for furthering such an environment. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veterans' status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services-304.293.6700.