Primer

Writing can be tough. The great secret? Most of what you need to in order shape your narrative or poem—to find in your voice or to capture an audience—is right in front of you. It’s around you. It’s everywhere. Even if you’re writing a science fiction manuscript or a series of poems about a space alien who rides a unicorn, standing in awe and documenting the tangible world around you will help like you wouldn’t believe.

Intermediate Nonfiction is meant to help us read, discuss, and write in a strange vein without a proper name. The nonfiction novel. Gonzo Journalism. New Journalism. Longform writing. Literary reportage. Creative journalism. To put it as simply as I can: this course is intended to move you out of your own brain (at least a little bit) and to investigate the world around us as a fertile source for material.

I blame compulsory secondary education for turning the word essay into something terror-inducing. We are not here to write about Benjamin Franklin or the Haymarket Revolt. We aren’t here to craft a five-paragraph paper that may or may not help us on standardized testing. We are here to understand one of the most complex and rewarding genres of creative writing.

From our General Course Bulletin: Readings and discussion demonstrating the basic structural and technical elements of creative non-fiction with opportunities for practice and peer workshop. Prerequisite: ENG 261 or consent of instructor.

Texts

Provided by Yours Truly.
Bolts, Nuts

• Please purchase a red folder for this course and bring it with you every class meeting. The folder should contain everything that pertains to this class.

• Attendance is mandatory. Your third absence will result in a half-letter-grade deduction from your final grade. The fifth absence will result in a final grade of F. It should be noted that my last name, an Anglicized version of Brennenstuhl, originates from Medieval Stuttgart, where historically the Swabian peoples are from. Among the qualities they admire most is punctuality. I will be militant in my roll-taking, and will take roll within five minutes of the beginning of class.

• Plagiarism tends to be rare in creative writing classes, but it has been known to happen. Later in this syllabus, in a section required by the state, we will outline the university’s policy. But know this: plagiarism will lead to a final grade of F for the course.

• You will write three short pieces as mimetic exercises: reactions to something we’ve read. We’ll meet one on one to discuss these.

• You will be divided into two groups, Group A and Group B. You will be responsible for annotating and editing the work of those within your group. You'll also be responsible for engaging in lively discussions about both works being workshopped.

• You will write two longer pieces of nonfiction.

• You will put together a final portfolio.

Grading Breakdown
Three Exercises 30
Two Nonfiction Pieces 20
Critical Responses 35
Participation 15
Final 100

Insofar as: 100-90: A; 89-80: B; 79-70: C; 69-60: D; 59- F

Students with Disabilities
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.
Academic Integrity (A-9.1)
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
1. The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.
2. The student will employ techniques and strategies for crafting carefully composed, competent creative work in a variety of genres (fiction, poetry, literary non-fiction).
3. The student will articulate useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.
4. The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.
5. The student will compose and sustain a complete, polished manuscript of substance in the focus-genre.

Acceptable Student Behavior
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic, or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance available to help SFA students succeed.
Schedule

Week of Aug. 27
Introduction to the Course

Sept. 2
Readings and Discussion
Exercise One Due

Sept. 9
Readings and Discussion
Exercise Two Due

Sept. 16 – Dec. 2
Workshops

Dec. 11
Final Portfolio Due