

CRW4211: Creative Nonfiction SPRING 2025

Section: 1MF2

Meeting Place & Time: FLI 0113, Wednesday 9-11 (4:05-7:05PM)

Lecturer: Chloe Lane

Email: chloe.lane@ufl.edu

Office hours: Wednesday 3-4PM & by appointment

Office: TUR4211F (inside the Creative Writing Suite in Turlington)

Required Texts

- *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* by Joan Didion
- *Holy the Firm* by Annie Dillard
- *The Years* by Annie Ernaux
- *The Orchid Thief* by Susan Orlean
- Handouts: readings to be provided throughout the semester via Canvas

Course Objectives

There is only one that matters: To write nonfiction with more precision, depth, humor, and surprise than you might already

Since careful and reflective reading is the best way to learn how to write, you will be assigned a substantial number of published readings most weeks. You will also warm up your writing muscles with a handful of short exercises. Two-thirds of the semester will be a more traditional writing workshop, which can be described, in general, as a format in which we apply the same critical skills to our own work that we've learned to apply to the assigned readings. We are here to study and create good writing, which requires serious work.

Course Format

1. Writing: short writing exercises, one in-class presentation, one mixed-media notebook, two critical responses, two creative nonfiction submissions, and one final revision
2. Reading: essays and book-length works of nonfiction
3. Critiquing: of both the published stories and the work of your peers, knowing that close reading of another's prose should, in fact, help your own

Graded Assignments and Other Course Components

Creative exercises (6):	60 points (10 points each)
Reading presentation:	40 points
Notebook:	50 points
Critical responses (2):	100 points (50 points each)

Workshop submissions (2):	400 points (200 points each)
Final revision:	300 points
Class participation:	50 points

1000 points total

Creative Exercises 6% (60 points)

Over the course of the semester you will write 6 short creative pieces for homework. I will expect you to upload your piece to a discussion post on Canvas before the beginning of class. The exercises will be in response to the elements of craft we are discussing and the authors whose work we are reading that week. These exercises are designed to loosen you up, encourage you to take risks, and make sure you're having fun with this. So, make sure you're having fun with these!

Reading Presentation: 4% (40 points)

In the first half of the semester you will be required to lead one class discussion of a published work. You will do this in pairs. Your presentation should include: background information on the author; relevant contextualizing information for the piece of writing, as well as any interesting tidbits we, as readers, might enjoy; a detailed and thoughtful analysis of how two or three aspects of craft work in this piece of writing. They should be things we can learn from. Your presentation should provide a nice bouncy springboard for an open and fun class discussion. It might also be useful for you to prepare some questions for the class. You can use mixed media—audio, video, Powerpoints, puppetry, interpretative dance—if you like. Have some fun with this if you can.

Notebook: 5% (50 points)

Over the course of the semester you will create a 20-page notebook. This does not have to be 20 pages of writing. It can take the form of a reading journal, a diary, list of quotes or observations, drawings, photographs, a mix of all of the above. You decide. Some of you might already keep some kind of journal—a place where you make notes, observations, sketch, write down overheard snippets of dialogue, etc. to be later used. For those of you who don't, this is a chance for you to figure out whether this is something you like to do, or something you find useful.

Critical Responses: 10% (100 points)

You will write two critical responses. The first will be due near the middle of the semester, and the second will be due at the end of the semester.

I will give you more details in class regarding the responses, but they will involve a rigorous, curious, well-supported, and thoughtful analysis of one or more essays you have read and discussed in class. Your ideas should be original and fresh. The responses will be evaluated based on the following criteria: demonstrated reading of the essays; critical thinking; depth of analysis; engagement with the discussion of craft. However, it's worth noting that these

responses are not to be viewed as “academic essays.” Instead, their purpose is to encourage you to more rigorously engage with some of the discussions we have had in the classroom, with a particular focus on those which you have found pertinent to your own craft. These responses should be no more than an extension of what you are, hopefully, already thinking about when you sit down to edit your own creative nonfiction.

Workshop Submissions: 40% (400 points)

Twice during the semester, you will submit a piece of writing to be workshopped by your peers.

Do not write these pieces the night before they are due. I will be able to tell if this is the case, and your grade will be lowered accordingly. Manuscripts must be delivered to the class *the week before* they are to be workshopped. There is no late delivery. There is no switching. No last-minute writing. If you are unable to turn in the piece on time, an entire letter grade will be deducted from your final grade. Please bring enough copies for everyone. And remember: you are responsible for knowing the basic conventions of style and usage—see Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style*, or me, for guidance.

Final Revision: 30% (300 points)

You will rewrite/revise one of your workshop submissions, based on my comments and those of your peers. Your revision will be turned in as your final project. This should be polished and thoroughly proofread. Ideally, it should be of such a quality that you feel confident and ready to submit it to literary journals. You will also turn in a 500 words summary of the major revisions you’ve made and why you think these are successful revisions. You will point to specifics in your original workshop submission, and the comments you receive from me and your peers.

Class Participation 5% (50 points)

Read. Class time is wasted if no one has anything to say about the readings. If I feel people are not reading, I will start requiring weekly critical responses. On the schedule, the “Readings” section tells you what you should read before the class on that date. Doing the reading is only half the assignment. In-class discussion of the material is the other half. Not having your books in class will result in a participation grade of zero for the day.

On workshop days it is expected that you will come to class having read each piece carefully *at least once*, and that you have spent time formulating a response to it. In addition to your marginal comments in ink or pencil, attach your typed or handwritten response to the author’s piece with a staple. These responses will form part of your participation grade. In-class discussion, preparedness (including timely response to all class emails), and (especially) engagement/attitude are all parts of participation. A writing workshop should be a safe place where everyone should feel encouraged and welcome to share their thoughts/feelings—the participation of those who fail to respect their peers’ thoughts/feelings will be graded accordingly.

Formatting

Each assignment will be submitted in double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman (or Garamond or Baskerville if you must). Pages must be numbered. One staple goes in the upper-left-hand corner if you're submitting a hardcopy. There must be a title, something beyond "First Workshop Submission." Titles can be hard—do your best! You are responsible for photocopying your workshop submissions.

Attendance

You are allowed two absences without explanation, but do not miss the day you are being workshopped. Skipping your workshop will result in a failing grade for that submission. A third absence will result in a failing grade for this class. Reserve the day you don't attend class for a day you really need it. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, are exempted from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with me prior to the date that will be missed. Two tardies (arriving more than ten minutes late, or leaving class early) equals one absence.

Notes

- You are responsible for checking your university emails. I will sometimes give or change assignments or readings via email, as well as make any necessary changes to the schedule. *You are responsible for checking your email and approaching me with any questions.* If I have sent an email to you, I will assume you have read and understood it.
- I may change anything on this syllabus at any time.
- Beware: This course is reading intensive and writing intensive. It is required that you come to class each week fully prepared. We are here to study and create serious nonfiction, which requires serious work. Do not fall prey to the pandemic impression that creative courses are easy. If you're hoping for an easy A, this class is not for you.

Final grade appeals: Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

UWP Writing Studio: The Writing Studio at the University of Florida is an excellent resource for improving reading comprehension and writing skills. For more information, see: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Statement of student disability services: The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, see: <https://disability.ufl.edu/>

Statement on harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: [https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/1-006/#:~:text=c\)%20Disciplinary%20Action.-,1.,2.](https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/1-006/#:~:text=c)%20Disciplinary%20Action.-,1.,2.)

Statement on academic honesty: All students must abide by the Student Honor Code And Student Conduct Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Grading Scale:

A: 94-100	A-: 90-93	B+: 87-89	B: 84-86	B-: 80-83	C+: 77-79
C: 73-76	C-: 70-72	D+: 67-69	D: 63-66	D-: 60-62	E: 0-59

