
CREATIVE NONFICTION: CRAFTING PERSONAL NARRATIVES in Spring 2021 (CL3300)

Course Code	CL3300	Professor(s)	Daniel Gunn
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-111
Class Schedule	W: 10:35-13:30 in G-009 W: 10:35-13:30 in RMOTE-00	Office Hours	Thursday 9.30-10.30 & by appointment
Credits	4	Email	dgunn@aup.edu
Semester	Spring 2021	Office Tel. Ext.	576

Course Description

This workshop explores what goes into what we call “personal narrative”. It is designed for students who wish to work on the question of what “personal” means exactly, and how far memoir and autobiography are distinct from fiction.

Must the personal necessarily be written in the first person? Assignments are aimed at helping students to judge if first person is inevitably the best way to stay personal, or if there are potential advantages to third-person narratives, and, even, to second-person. The course explores narrative structure, description, characterisation, dialogue, atmosphere, under- and over-statement, and the very important question of *context* (and how context can be moulded).

Some of the recent and contemporary authors who may be read include: Roland Barthes, Samuel Beckett, Sylvia Brownrigg, Sophie Calle, Lydia Davis, Marguerite Duras, Alison Leslie Gold, Adam Gopnik, and Georges Perec. Invited writers will run masterclasses.

This workshop accommodates students who are new to creative nonfiction writing or have taken workshops before but wish to continue developing their skills in the discipline.

Course Learning Outcomes

To develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the art of literary nonfiction through practice and analysis

To develop skills in editing and writing strategy

To recognize and practice fiction techniques for literary nonfiction

To study and practice different genres within literary nonfiction, i.e. travel, nature, memoir, etc

General Education

Course Outline

Wednesday 20 January

Introduction to work methods and expectations

Writing of self through grammar questions

Wednesday 27 January (Exercise 1 on Blackboard)

Discussion: The infraordinary

Read: Vivian Gornick: *The Situation and the Story*; Lydia Davis, selected stories; Kafka, selected stories; Sophie Calle, selected stories

Writing assignment: Write of your immediate environment in a way that turns it magical *and* real: the infraordinary

Submit to me by Sunday 24th at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 3 February (Exercise 2 on Blackboard)

Discussion: Distancing the self, achieving neutrality that is also appealing; third-, second-, and first-person narrative

Read: Beckett, *Company*; Perec, *A Man Asleep*; Gunn, *Almost You*

Writing assignment: Write of your intimate self, using the second person

Submit to me by Sunday 31st January at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 10 February: Mini-break

Wednesday 17 February (Exercise 3 on Blackboard)

Discussion: humour

Read: Geoff Dyer, *Essays*; Davis Sedaris, *Essays*; Grace Paley, stories; Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* (extract); Tim Parks, essays

Writing assignment: Write humour – the difficulty of being funny

Submit to me by Sunday 14th at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 24 February: Mini-break

Wednesday 3 March (Exercise 4 on Blackboard)

Discussion: Addiction/Obsession with Alison Leslie Gold

Read: all of Alison Leslie Gold, *Found and Lost*; Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (extracts); view *Trainspotting* (the movie)

Writing assignment: Write about your addiction/obsession in such a way that the reader can feel it.

Submit to me by Saturday 27th February at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 10 March (Exercise 5 on Blackboard)

Grief, mourning

Roland Barthes, *Mourning Diary* (extracts); Dan Gunn eulogy

Writing assignment: writing grief and mourning

NB: Submit to me by Sunday 6th at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 17 March (Exercise 6 on Blackboard)

Discussion: the epistolary form

Read: Lydia Davis, Angry letters

Writing assignment: Write to another in a way that says more of self

Submit to me by Sunday 14th at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 24 March (Exercise 7 on Blackboard)

Discussion: Family Secrets with Sylvia Brownrigg

Read: Georges Perec, "The Scene of a Stratagem"; Sylvia Brownrigg extracts (to be posted by me in due course)

Writing Assignment: Write of the secrets that bind

Submit to me by Saturday 20th at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 31 March

One-on-one sessions to discuss long piece.

Wednesday 7 April (Exercise 8 on Blackboard)

Discussion: love and sex and how to write it without sounding cheesy/embarrassing

Read: Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*; all the articles on Blackboard on and by Duras

Writing assignment: Write of Eros in a way that only makes you cringe in a good way

Submit to me by Sunday 4th at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 14 April (Exercise 9 on Blackboard)

Discussion: Tourism

Read: Adam Gornick, Essays; Geoff Dyer, Essays; László Krasznahorkai, Essays

Writing assignment: the experience of being a tourist

Submit to me by Sunday 11th at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 21 April (exercise 10 on Blackboard)

Discussion: health and the body with Andrea Applebee

Read: Andrea Applebee: *Mercy, Athena* (available at AUP bookstore)

Writing assignment: how to write of the body/health in a way more than merely symptomatic?

Submit to me by Saturday 18th at 24.00h (midnight)

Wednesday 28 April (Exercise 11 on Blackboard)

Discussion: The site-specific self (in space and time)

Read: Sophie Calle, from *And So Forth*; Georges Perec, site-specific essays; Ian Hamilton Finlay, Introduction to his work at Little Sparta

Writing assignment: staging the self: site-specific exercise

Submit to me by Sunday 25th at 24.00h (midnight)

Exam Session: 5 May at 15.00h

Presentation of the full-length essays produced by students during the semester.

Submit to me, along with the portfolio comprising what you judge to be your most interesting 6 weekly pieces, by midday, Friday 29 April.

Textbooks

Title	Author	Publisher	ISBN	Required
The Lover	Marguerite Duras	Harper Perennial	9780007205004	No
Mercy, Athena	Andrea Applebee	Sylph Editions & AUP	9781909631342	No
Found and Lost	Alison Leslie Gold	Notting Hill Editions	9781910749593	No

Attendance Policy

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods.

Grading Policy

In class participation and performance:	45%
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Portfolio comprising 6 in-class assignments and one final long piece (minimum of 3,000 words) and an abstract/commentary	55%
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Other
