

## SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

### Colorado State University, Academic Partner

<b>Voyage:</b>	Fall 2022
<b>Discipline:</b>	English
<b>Course Number and Title:</b>	E311C Intermediate Creative Writing—Nonfiction
<b>Division:</b>	Upper
<b>Faculty Name:</b>	Dr. Zandra L. Jordan
<b>Semester Credit Hours:</b>	3

**Prerequisites:** One (1) general college composition course AND one (1) lower-division beginning creative course or one (1) lower-division newswriting course (with a minimum grade of B-)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

What makes a story worth telling, and what compels others to listen? In this creative nonfiction workshop, we will explore answers to these questions through four primary means: reading creative nonfiction, reflecting on your travels, writing about your experiences, and revising your compositions. Reading creative nonfiction—both model texts and also your peers’ prose—is a foundational step in the process of discovering what makes factual stories effective and engaging. You will learn how some exemplary writers have narrativized their lived experiences through travel writing, essays, and memoir. Then, in light of your Semester at Sea journey, you will try your hand at these genres, drawing on literary elements such as setting, characterization, description, dialogue, conflict, and resolution to capture your own lived experiences in vivid detail. You will also consider the politics and ethics of representation as you determine how to incorporate your observations into your writings. Reviewing your peers’ drafts and workshopping your works-in-progress will provide ample opportunity for thoughtful consideration of structure, voice, and style as well as preparation for an in-class presentation of one of your revised pieces. By semester’s end, you will have produced a travel narrative, a topical essay, and a short memoir reflective of your intercontinental voyage.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- Analyze the techniques that exemplary creative nonfiction writers use in their work
- Identify strategies to employ in your own writing as you “read like a writer”
- Enrich your literary imagination through the art of conscientious observation and journaling
- Understand the ethics and politics of representation and their bearing on how you see, read, and write about other cultures

- Provide thoughtful, principled, constructive critiques of your peers' writings
- Employ revision as an iterative part of the writing process
- Craft a travel narrative, a personal essay, and a short memoir with careful attention to literary technique, peer feedback, iterative revision, ethical representation, and writerly voice

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND SUPPLIES

AUTHOR: Philip Gerard

TITLE: Creative Nonfiction: Researching and Crafting Stories of Real Life

PUBLISHER: Waveland Press

ISBN: 978-1-4786-3530-7

DATE/EDITION: 2018, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

A portable journal, whether print or digital, that you will carry to record observations during travel and will reference during in-class and other writing exercises.

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

### Embarkation Day – September 9

#### 1: Introductions and Course Overview

Review the course structure, assignments, and expectations

In-class reading

Strategies for journaling as a conscientious observer

In-class writing exercise

#### 2: What is Creative Nonfiction?

Defining nonfiction as what it is

Discuss Gerard Ch. 1, "What is Creative Nonfiction Anyway?"

Discuss Langston Hughes' "In Search of Sun" (first four sections)

#### 3: What Should I Write About?

Choosing a topic and a form/genre

Discuss Gerard Ch. 2, "Finding an Original Subject"

Discuss Langston Hughes' "In Search of Sun" (last four sections)

#### 4: What Lived Experience Does/Does Not Reveal

Troubling the “facts” of personal experience

Discuss Gerard Ch.4, “The Art of the Interview”

Discuss Gerard’s “The Fact Behind the Facts or How You Can Get It All Right and Still Get It All Wrong” in *Brevity Craft*

In-class writing exercise: travel narrative

#### 5: What Conversations Should We Have?

Talking to people and other primary research

Discuss Jamaica Kincaid’s “A Small Place” in *Touchstone*

Discuss Emily Bernard’s “Interstates” in *The American Scholar*

*Journal Writing Prompt #1: Travel Narrative*

#### 6: What Nonfiction Shortform Should I Choose?

The travel narrative, the topical essay, and the short memoir

Discuss Gerard Ch.6, “What Form Will it Take?”

Discuss David Sedaris’ “Repeat After Me” in *Touchstone*

#### **Due: Journal Writing Prompt #1**

#### 7: What’s the Impact of Narrative Choices on Factual Stories?

Truth-telling with literary technique

Discuss Gerard Ch.7, “Telling a True Story Using the Techniques of Fiction”

Discuss Alice Walker’s “The Best Place One Could Be on Earth”

#### 8: Why Does Ethics Matter for Creative Nonfiction?

Creative writing as an ethical art

Discuss Gerard Ch.11, “Law and Ethics”

Discuss Anika Fajardo’s “What Didn’t Happen” in *Redux Lit Journal*  
*Field Experience Overview*

#### 9: Travel Narrative Writing Workshop

Making revision an ongoing part of your creative writing process

Discuss Gerard Ch. 10, “Revising—With and Without an Editor”

#### **Due: Field Assignment**

**10:** How can I level up the structure and style of my pieces?

Unlocking your writerly persona

Discuss Gerard's "Mystery and Structure, Style and Attitude"

Discuss William Harrison's "Present Tense Africa" in *Touchstone*

**11:** Are Some Topics Off-Limits?

Writing about difficult or triggering topics

Discuss Susan Brun Rowe's "Unafraid of the Dark"

*Journal Writing Prompt #2*

**Due: Travel Narrative**

**12:** Are There Other Options?

More considerations for structuring prose

Discuss Tim Bascom's "Picturing the Personal Essay: A Visual Guide"

Discuss Erin McGraw's "Bad Eyes" in *Touchstone*

**Due: Journal Writing Prompt #2**

**13:** When is it Helpful to Look Back?

Understanding the present through the past

Discuss Lucy Cooke's "How Did African Hippos End Up in Colombia?" from *Literary Hub*

Discuss Rosa Bashir's "For Diasporic Writers, Nostalgia is a Powerful Tool for Engaging Home" from *Literary Hub*

*Journal Writing Prompt #3*

Discuss "The Angry Young Women" in Snigdha Poonam's *Dreamers: How Young Indians Are Changing the World*

Discuss Sarah Khan's "36 Hours in Kochi, India" in *The New York Times*

**14:** What Makes a True Story Believable?

Wrestling with truth and/in nonfiction

Discuss Sarah Smarsh's "Believe It" in *Creative Nonfiction*

Discuss Elian Brum's "One Person's Junk is Another Person's Treasure" in *Literary Hub*

*Journal Writing Prompt #4*

**Due: Journal Writing Prompt #3**

**15:** Topical Essay Writing Workshop

**Due: Journal Writing Prompt #4**

**16: What Makes My Own Story Compelling?**

Discuss Gerard Ch. 8, "Putting Yourself on the Line: Autobiography, Memoir, and Personal Essay"

Discuss "Trinity" and "Beginning" from Krystal Sital's memoir *Secrets We Kept: Three Women of Trinidad*

Discuss Tiffanie Drayton's "I'm a Black American. I Had to Get Out" from *The New York Times*

Journal Writing Prompt #5

**Due: Topical Essay**

**17: What's the difference between a memoir and a personal essay?**

Considering scope and connectivity

Discuss Emily Bernard's "Black is the Body" from her essay collection of the same name

Discuss David Chariandy's "A Letter to My Daughter Upon Learning the Results of an Ancestry Test" from *Literary Hub*

**Due: Journal Writing Prompt #5**

**18: Is there a best or better way to tell a challenging story?**

Writing challenging personal stories

Discuss Emily Bernard's "Scar Tissue" in *The American Scholar*

(Bernard's essay describes a violent encounter. An alternative reading option will be provided.)

Discuss Naomi Shihab Nye's "This is Not Who We Are" in *Touchstone*

**19: Preparing for the Memoir Writing Workshop**

Discuss Beth Nguyen's "Unsilencing the Writing Workshop"

Draw on journals to model the workshop format

Journal Writing Prompt #6

**20: Short Memoir Writing Workshop**

**Due: Journal Writing Prompt #6**

**21: Short Memoir Writing Workshop**

**22: Short Memoir Writing Workshop**

Journal Writing Prompt #7

**23:** Short Memoir Writing Workshop

**Due:** Journal Writing Prompt #7

**24:** How Has Travel Shaped Me as a Creative Nonfictionist?

Constructing a reflective class text  
*Journal Writing Prompt #8*

**Due:** Short Memoir

**25—FINAL CLASS:** Final Exam

Course wrap-up

**Due:** Journal Writing Prompt #8

**Disembarkation Day — December 22**

## FIELD WORK

Semester at Sea® field experiences allow for an unparalleled opportunity to compare, contrast, and synthesize the different cultures and countries encountered over the course of the voyage. In addition to the one field class, students will complete a Comparative Experiential Project that span multiple countries.

### Field Class & Assignment

**STUDENTS: Field Class proposals listed below are not finalized.** Confirmed ports, dates, and times will be posted to the [Fall 22 Courses and Field Class page](#) when available.

**Field Class attendance is mandatory for all students enrolled in this course. Do not book individual travel plans or a Semester at Sea sponsored trip on the day of your field class.**

Field Classes constitute 20% of the contact hours for each course.

**Field Class Title:** Writing About Lived Experience

### Outcomes:

- Enrich your literary imagination through the art of conscientious observation and journaling
- Understand the ethics and politics of representation and their bearing on how you see, read, and write about other cultures

### Activities:

You will visit two or three local sites to learn more about the history and culture of the place. At least one of the sites will provide access to historical information that you are unable to

research on your own while aboard the ship. You will have lunch in a local restaurant or marketplace and then explore the natural beauty of the region. Ideally, you will have an opportunity to engage with local residents and learn about their lives.

#### Assessment:

Inspired by the day's events and observations, you will keep a detailed journal of your experiences and produce a 300-word abstract for one of your major assignments, either the travel narrative, topical essay, or short memoir.

#### **Comparative Experiential Project**

The CEP is the required comparative assignment that span multiple countries. The Comparative Experiential Project constitutes at least 5% of the grade for each course.

For your CEP, you will keep a journal of your observations in each port-of-call in response to eight journal prompts. The course schedule includes the dates when journal prompts will be provided in class as well as the due dates for journal submissions. Prompts are typically assigned before each port-of-call and are due the next class day. Each journal must be 300 to 500-words typed (or 1 to 2 single-spaced handwritten pages) and will be evaluated based on alignment with the prompt and demonstrated engagement with elements of fiction writing learned in the course.

#### **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

Attendance and Participation: 10%

(includes preparation for and active participation in reading discussions, in-class writing exercises, writing workshops, and all other class activities)

CEP Journal: 10%

(reflections on your observations in each port of call and completion of eight journal prompts)

Travel Narrative: 20%

Topical Essay: 20%

Short Memoir: 20%

Field Class and Assignments: 20%

#### **GRADING SCALE**

The following Grading Scale is utilized for student evaluation. Pass/Fail is not an option for Semester at Sea® coursework. Note that C-, D+ and D- grades are also not assigned on Semester at Sea® in accordance with the grading system at Colorado State University (the academic partner institution).

Pluses and minuses are awarded as follows on a 100% scale:

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory/Poor</u>	<u>Failing</u>
97-100%: A+	87-89%: B+	77-79%: C+	Less than 60%: F
93-96%: A	83-86%: B	70-76%: C	
90-92%: A-	80-82%: B-	60-69%: D	

## ATTENDANCE/ENGAGEMENT IN THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Attendance in all Semester at Sea® classes, including the Field Class, is mandatory. Students must inform their instructors prior to any unanticipated absence and take the initiative to make up missed work in a timely fashion. Instructors must make reasonable efforts to enable students to make up work which must be accomplished under the instructor's supervision (e.g., examinations, laboratories). In the event of a conflict in regard to this policy, individuals may appeal using established CSU procedures.

## CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Semester at Sea® is committed to the Voyage Community Values. Consequently, the classroom environment is founded on mutual respect, community, and an aim toward equity. The Voyage Community Values support the creation of a collaborative and vibrant community. Our community is the foundation of our learning, critical inquiry, and discovery. Each member of this course has a responsibility to uphold these values when engaging with one another.

With that, please review the following Voyage Community Values:

- **Well-Being:** We commit to the health, safety and well-being of ourselves, all members of our voyage community, *and* members of the communities we will visit.
- **Interconnectedness:** We understand our actions and attitudes have an impact locally and globally. We always seek to positively affect the planet and the people around us near and far.
- **Respect:** We honor the inherent dignity of *all people* with an abiding commitment to freedom of expression, scholarly discourse and the advancement of knowledge. We have the right to be treated, and the responsibility to treat others, with fairness and equity.
- **Inclusion:** We ensure inclusive environments that welcome, value, affirm and embrace *all people* within the shipboard community and in each country we visit.
- **Integrity:** We are honest and ethical in all of our interactions, including our academic work. We hold ourselves accountable for our actions.



- **Excellence:** We model the highest academic standards of preparation, inquiry and knowledge and consistently seek to understand complex issues and express informed opinions with courage and conviction.

## LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS

Semester at Sea® provides academic accommodations for students with diagnosed learning disabilities, in accordance with ADA guidelines. Students who will need accommodations in a class, should contact ISE to discuss their individual needs. Any accommodation must be discussed in a timely manner prior to implementation.

A letter from students' home institutions verifying the accommodations received on their home campuses (dated within the last three years) is required before any accommodation is provided on the ship. Students must submit verification of accommodations to their Student Services advisor as soon as possible, but no later than two months prior to the voyage. More details can be found within the **Course Registration Packet**, posted to the student portal prior to registration.

## STUDENT CONDUCT CODE

The foundation of a university is truth and knowledge, each of which relies in a fundamental manner upon academic integrity and is diminished significantly by academic misconduct. Academic integrity is conceptualized as doing and taking credit for one's own work. A pervasive attitude promoting academic integrity enhances the sense of community and adds value to the educational process. All within the University are affected by the cooperative commitment to academic integrity. All Semester at Sea® courses adhere to this Academic Integrity Policy and Student Conduct Code.

Depending on the nature of the assignment or exam, the faculty member may require a written declaration of the following honor pledge: "I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."

## RESERVE BOOKS FOR THE LIBRARY

None

## FILMS

None

## ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

AUTHOR: Langston Hughes; introduction by Arnold Rampersad  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "In Search of Sun"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *I Wonder as I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey*  
DATE/EDITION: 1993  
PAGES: xi - 32

AUTHOR: Alice Walker  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "The best place one could be on Earth"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *The Electronic Intifada*  
<https://electronicintifada.net/content/best-place-one-could-be-earth/8359>  
DATE: July 24, 2009  
PAGES: ?

AUTHOR: Ellery Washington  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "James Baldwin's Paris"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *The New York Times*  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/travel/james-baldwins-paris.html>  
DATE: Jan. 17, 2014

AUTHOR: James Baldwin  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Stranger in the Village"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Notes of a Native Son*  
ISBN: 9780807006238  
<https://www.janvaneyck.nl/site/assets/files/2312/baldwin.pdf>  
DATE: 1955  
PAGES: ?

AUTHOR: Philip Gerard  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: Ch. 1 "The Fact Behind the Facts or How You Can Get It All Right and Still Get It All Wrong"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Brevity*  
VOLUME: 26  
DATE: 2008  
PAGES: [https://www.creativenonfiction.org/brevity/craft/craft\\_gerard\\_26.html](https://www.creativenonfiction.org/brevity/craft/craft_gerard_26.html)

AUTHOR: Tim Bascom  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Picturing the Personal Essay: A Visual Guide"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Creative Nonfiction*  
VOLUME: 49  
DATE: 2013  
PAGES: <https://creativenonfiction.org/online-reading/picturing-personal-essay-visual-guide>

AUTHOR: Sarah Smarsh  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Believe It"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Creative Nonfiction*  
VOLUME: 55, The Memoir Issue  
DATE: ?  
PAGES: <https://creativenonfiction.org/writing/believe-it/>

AUTHOR: Kristal Sital  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Trinity" and "Beginning"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Secrets We Kept: Three Women of Trinidad*  
VOLUME:  
DATE: 2018  
PAGES: ?

AUTHOR: Emily Bernard  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Scar Tissue"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *The American Scholar*  
VOLUME: Autumn 2011  
DATE: Aug. 25, 2011  
PAGES: <https://theamericanscholar.org/scar-tissue/#.XwTQeZNKg6i>

AUTHOR: Anika Fajardo  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "What Didn't Happen"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Redux Lit Journal*  
VOLUME: 128  
DATE: May 19, 2014  
PAGES: <http://www.reduxlitjournal.com/2014/05/128-what-didnt-happen-by-anika-fajardo.html>

AUTHOR: Emily Bernard  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Black is the Body"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Black is the Body: Stories from my Grandmother's Time, My Mother's Time, and Mine*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: 2019  
PAGES: pp. 84-97

AUTHOR: Tiffanie Drayton  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "I'm a Black American. I Had to Get Out"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *The New York Times*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: June 12, 2020  
PAGES: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/12/opinion/sunday/black-america-racism-refugee.html>

AUTHOR: Lucy Cooke  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "How Did African Hippos End Up in Colombia?"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Literary Hub*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: April 17, 2018  
PAGES: <https://lithub.com/how-did-african-hippos-end-up-in-colombia/>

AUTHOR: Rosa Bashir  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "For Diasporic Writers, Nostalgia is a Powerful Tool for Engaging Home"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Literary Hub*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: September 20, 2019  
PAGES: <https://lithub.com/for-diasporic-writers-nostalgia-is-a-powerful-tool-for-engaging-home/>

AUTHOR: Eliane Brum  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "One Person's Junk is Another Person's Treasure"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Literary Hub*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: September 17, 2019  
PAGES: <https://lithub.com/one-persons-junk-is-another-persons-treasure/>

AUTHOR: David Chariandy  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "A Letter to My Daughter Upon Learning the Results of an Ancestry Test"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Literary Hub*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: March 11, 2019  
PAGES: <https://lithub.com/a-letter-to-my-daughter-upon-learning-the-results-of-an-ancestry-test/>

AUTHOR: Naomi Shihab Nye  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "This is Not Who We Are"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: 2007  
PAGES: 401-404

AUTHOR: Jamaica Kincaid  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "A Small Place"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: 2007  
PAGES: 257-264

AUTHOR: Erin McGraw  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Bad Eyes"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction*  
VOLUME:  
DATE: 2007  
PAGES: 360-369

AUTHOR: William Harrison  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Present Tense Africa"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction*  
VOLUME:  
DATE: 2007  
PAGES: 220 - 230

AUTHOR: David Sedaris  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Repeat After Me"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Touchstone Anthology of Contemporary Creative Nonfiction*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: 2007  
PAGES: 443-451

AUTHOR: Susan Brun Rowe  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "Unafraid of the Dark"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Creative Nonfiction*  
VOLUME: Issue 66/ Dangerous Creations  
DATE:  
PAGES: <https://creativenonfiction.org/writing/unafraid-of-the-dark/>

AUTHOR: Sarah Khan  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "36 Hours in Kochi, India"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: The New York Times  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: Dec. 19, 2019  
PAGES: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/19/travel/what-to-do-36-hours-in-kochi-india.html>

AUTHOR: Snigdha Poonam  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: "The Angry Women"  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: *Dreamers: How Young Indians are Changing the World*  
VOLUME: n/a  
DATE: 2018  
PAGES: 149-191