

ENG 430-001: Advanced Writing Workshop

Professor (John) Lane Hall, Fall 2022

M/W 10:00AM-11:15, Art Building, room 431

Office hours (Curtin 427 or online) = M/W 8:30-9:30 and by email appointment

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note: the url (<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>) contains official information on course policies and procedures according to university guidelines. This is a good resource that outlines your rights as a student and explains things such as academic misconduct. (see document “UWM Notes” on D2L)

Course Description

Do you love to write, and find that you often create brilliant fragments, tangents and notes that seem as fresh as they are lost? Have you always been interested in describing your world in rich detail? Do you love language? Are you interested in learning how to make your own zines and chapbooks, or perhaps you are thinking of starting your own small press? If so, then you will be a great fit for this hands-on advanced writing workshop in which we focus upon short-form nonfiction as we work to gain deeper understandings of how media, design and materials actively construct meaning. We will focus our work on direct description and the power of observation as we develop our creative nonfiction; a category that includes journals, memoirs, personal essays, and other forms devoted to exploring a sense of person and place. We will also focus on self-publishing our work in the form of zines and chapbooks, and in this context will study DIY movements and the essential dynamics of engaging creative communities. This is a great course if you are wondering what to do with your love of writing once you graduate from college, or if you are looking for some great tools for teaching writing.

Requirements/Grading:

- Attendance, Engagement, Preparedness. (15%)
- Reading and discussing of assigned texts (Duncombe, Davis). (10%)
- Personal writing blog with responses appropriate to weekly prompts. (25%)
- 5 Creative Projects, as described in syllabus, with each project to have a separately evaluated draft component and a polished text pamphlet/zine component. (50%)

Attendance:

Absences: If you are sick, please stay home. If you are feeling bad, or will miss a class event, you must let me know in a timely manner. You can stay current on the work via checking Canvas and you must still fulfill the writing exercises and project development even if you have missed that particular class. You can make up most work if you miss a class, though some activities (critique sessions, discussions, etc.) require presence.

Lateness: I begin class on time and expect you to be ready. If you have an issue that makes it difficult to be on time (such as a course across campus with only a brief time to travel the distance), please let me know ahead of time and we can work something out.

Preparedness: It is expected that you come to all our class meetings fully prepared with drafts, projects and readings as assigned, and participate fully in the face-to-face

community of our workshop. Being unprepared will result in lower grades on projects and assignments.

Screen Distractions: This class requires intensive engagement with each other's work. It is expected that laptops and cell phones will be turned off and set aside during presentations and during workshop discussions. You can pursue notetaking during these times with pencil/pen and paper. Exceptions will be made for discussions of our texts, or if an ARC accommodation (see "Accommodations" below) articulates a specific need for screen-based augmentation. I retain the right to politely intervene if I feel this is a distraction to the collective goals of a workshopping environment.

Covid: We will follow all UWM Covid policies as updated and announced.

Texts (books to acquire) (All texts in order of appearance... buy them at Woodland Pattern if you are getting them locally)

- Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from the Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture*
- Lydia Davis, *Varieties of Disturbance*
- access to Canvas (some of the reading will be on the Canvas course site).

Accommodations: I'm here to help you achieve the best work possible. If something is getting in the way of that, please let me know. We can talk about it and I can direct you to campus resources. If you have a disability that requires course accommodations, you must have the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) provide me with an accommodation letter or email outlining your specific needs. **There are no exceptions - this is a UWM policy.** Accessibility Resource Center: <http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf>

Projects

Project #1: Class Blog

Objective: Engage the course material through thoughtful weekly reflection to synthesize complex information and practice writing creative nonfiction with an eye towards experimentation and exploration.

Description: Use either WordPress or Blogger or Tumbler (etc.) I don't care what you use if you can figure out how to do it. Don't use a blog you have to pay for. It is up to you whether you wish to make the blog public or not, but I must have access to it. You will throughout the semester be expected to post at least 3 shorter or 1 longer writing entry each week onto your blog, along with your exercises in accordance with prompts on Canvas. This "blog writing" (unless otherwise specified) can be in any style, form or process that interests you, though it should be in some way connected to what we are generally doing in class. It is fine to post pix, found text, snippets, thoughts, etc., along with your writing. I am looking for sustained engagement with this format. There is no word count specification, but there must be a weekly engagement with your own writing. This is hard to quantify, but easy to discern. You will need to post the specific blogpost url to Canvas under that appropriate assignment each week.

Be sure to label each post clearly with its date and title: ("Sept 6: The Mysterious Neighbor") just as you might with a journal or diary. At times you will be requested to do analytical writing related to relevant readings. All blog posts are due each week by Saturday, 9:00 a.m. Late blog posts are better than no blog posts and will receive partial credit if posted within one week of their due date. To do well in the course, you must keep up with the blog posts in a timely manner. Remember, the point is to engage weekly with your writing. It is fine to connect your blog writing with your larger, more sustained projects, but not to merely cut, paste and copy from one to the other. (That is, your blog can and should be a generative space, but the objective is sustained informal writing, not polished pieces.) While it is relatively informal, spelling and grammar and structure should always matter to a writer, as a matter of craft.

Note: I will not accept blogs with white text on black backgrounds, or other eye-straining color, contrasting backgrounds or font choices. Feel free to customize your space, but please prioritize legibility!

Results: Individual blogs that are dedicated to ancillary writing and/or directed towards intellectual or creative reflection and experimentation.

Blog Grading Rubric

An "A" Blog Project:

The "A" blog demonstrates a full engagement with weekly writing. Work has intellectual depth, sources are cited if applicable, and the writing is relatively free of grammatical and spelling mistakes (within reason for informal writing). The topics are addressed with insight and clarity, and the creative writing explores an important aspect of the focus of current projects. Blogs are long enough to allow

depth of development. An “A” blog, over the semester, is consistent, on time and begins to experiment with the form and format itself through excellent writing that is thoroughly engaged in terms of length, depth and creativity

A “B” Blog Project:

The "B" blog is competent but not striking: the writer engaged analysis in a reasonable manner, if applicable, and the overall effort is “good” but work could use more engagement in depth and/or length. Posts are generally interesting, but could still use more refinement. Writing is good, but at times unclear or awkward. Creative work is promising, though not fully explored or developed. Most postings have been on time.

A “C” Blog Project:

The "C" blog has “done the assignment” but without much sustained engagement. Analysis and reflection has not been deep, and insights are infrequent. Writing is sloppy, work has not been on time, or has been too superficial.

A “D” Blog Project:

The "D" blog is incomplete and generally superficial. Real engagement with the course material is not in evidence. Work is late and/or missing and citations have not been itemized.

An “F” Blog Project:

The "F" project is not completed with work chronically late or lacking citation.

Project 1-5: Creative Non-Fiction Zines

Objective: Explore issues the form, develop personal voice in writing, work with cohesive narrative structure, experiment with process, and develop “field methodology.” Each zine project will highlight a focus regarding process and narrative structure. All zines will deal with issues of format (pamphlet) and design. We pay attention to “voice,” narrative flow, narrative form, use of language, and storytelling. Zines will be created in stages, with quick turn-around times, that involve rough drafts, feedback, editing, formalizing, layout, and self-publishing. Drafts will be specific assignments on Canvas and will be evaluated as an integral part of the finished project.

General Zine Grading Rubric

An “A” Project:

The "A" project demonstrates an understanding of narrative and storytelling. “Voice” is consistent, grammar is flawless, tense is consistent and the narrative is compelling. The zine (artifact) has a solid sense of design that works in conjunction with the text. The piece feels finished, that is, there are no obvious “loose ends” that need further development, editing or embellishment.

A “B” Project:

The "B" project is competent but not absolutely finished: the writer engaged the process in a reasonable manner, but has not fully developed the writing of the original narrative or subsequent edits towards a finished piece. The zine (artifact) is competent, but not outstanding. Use of language is good in places, but not consistently compelling, or can be developed and heightened in general. Individual stories lack editorial polish. Issues of character and setting are solid,

but not totally convincing or are lacking finish.

A “C” Project:

The "C" project has “done the assignment” but without much poetic or narrative result. Original text is not a compelling story, or is not very well written. The writer has not engaged the editing process towards refining a finished piece. Language has promise, but the stories are not tight. Honest attempt, only adequately realized.

A “D” Project:

The "D" project is an attempt, but the writer has not understood the intent or purpose of the exercise, and has not bothered to seek clarification. The project is a mish-mash, not realizing the transformative power of the writerly process. The writing has few redeeming linguistic or narrative qualities, or serious issues with structure or tense. Characters are cardboard, or undeveloped.

An “F” Project:

The "F" project is not completed, or incomplete, or totally misses the mark.

(Note: Late work will be downgraded).

Class Discussion and Workshop Critique

Objective: As a small workshop group, we will seek and give feedback to one another about our various writing projects. Everyone is expected to participate in these general discussions. We will use various “workshopping” formats to facilitate useful feedback. You should expect that your work will be reviewed by your peers and me, and that constructive comments will be generated within the classroom format throughout the semester.

General Critique & Discussion Grading Rubric

“A” Workshopping: participates fully, has read required texts, gives insightful comments based on intentions of the author, is specific in addressing issues of craft, is fully engaged in the class community.

“B” Workshopping: similar to the “A” but with less participation, and/or less insight into the presented text.

“C” Workshopping: not too much participation, or it remains vague and general, without full engagement in the class.

“D” Workshopping: little commitment to the community, rarely engages, or when called upon is not able to give relevant comment on text in question.

“F” Workshopping: isn’t participating due to absence or lack of preparedness, has little insight to offer, isn’t engaging the content.