

English M138: Creative Nonfiction across Genres and Forms

Instructor: Sammy Solis (they/them)

Office Hours: Wed 1:30-3:30 p.m. in Kaplan A86 or by appt. on [Zoom](#) (ID: 741 563 153)

Course Description

In this class, we'll explore the vast terrain of creative nonfiction. We'll analyze formal techniques for producing creative nonfiction narratives across different mediums and genres, from true crime podcasts to profiles of places and people, and from music to memoir writing. In addition to reading and discussing creative nonfiction works, we'll work on honing a regular writing practice and developing a final creative nonfiction project. We'll also practice giving and receiving feedback on creative work, with the aim of coming together as a writing community.

Learning Objectives

- o Identify distinguishing characteristics of creative nonfiction.
- o Learn to develop and maintain a writing practice.
- o Learn to give constructive feedback on works-in-progress to peers.
- o Connect literary production to broader social stakes.

Your Learning Goals

- 1.
- 2.

Note on Grades

This class is premised on being given permission to fail at writing—therefore, assignments will be graded on **completion**. You won't be graded on your writing itself, but you will get and give feedback throughout the quarter. Your final portfolio will be composed of work you have made throughout the quarter that you have spent time revising.

Course Requirements

Participation/Community Engagement: 20%

The success of the course depends upon your participation in all class activities. Please come prepared: have something to write with and access to the week's reading. Also, you know. Do the reading.

In addition, all of us will brainstorm a list of community agreements in the first week of class, to set up guidelines for treating each other respectfully and creating an inclusive classroom space. It is important to note the obvious: missing class, coming to class unprepared, or not participating fully in class discussions and assignments diminishes what you will take away from the class and what you contribute to everyone's learning.

Homework/Drafts: 20%

Bring updated drafts of your work on the days when drafts are due.

Reaction Journal: 20%

Page-long writing exercises based on weekly prompts. Complete at least five journal entries throughout the quarter in response to one of the week's prompts.

Feedback: 10%

Throughout the course, you will exchange feedback with your peers on their work. We will talk about what actionable and thoughtful feedback looks like.

Group Presentation: 10%

15-20 minutes. Find some art that inspires your group (visual art, film, music, writing—anything!) and share it with the class. Give us context. If it's a movie, you can show a scene you love. If it's a piece of writing, you can share an excerpt ahead of time (no more than 10 pages) or read part of it out loud. Why does it inspire you? What do you find interesting about it? Tell us the story of how you encountered it. Come up with a writing prompt based on what you pick and we'll do the writing prompt in class.

Final: 20%

An extended narrative nonfiction piece, of any genre, OR two shorter pieces. 7-8 pages of **revised writing** and a one-page **process memo** (letter addressing how your piece has developed throughout the course and reflecting on your writing journey).

Policies and Expectations

Inclusive Classroom Community

In this class we will work to promote an anti-discriminatory environment where everyone feels safe and welcome. Discrimination can be direct or indirect and take place at both institutional and personal levels. Such discrimination is unacceptable and I am committed to providing equality of opportunity for all by eliminating any and all discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimization. The success of this policy relies on the support and understanding of everyone in this class. We all have a responsibility not to be offensive to each other, or to participate in, or condone harassment or discrimination of any kind. As such, we will establish community agreements—guidelines for how we will treat each other and how we'll approach discussion—in the first week of class.

Checking In

I encourage your feedback at any time throughout the course about things that are helping you learn or things that aren't helping. Please communicate with me if there are ways that we can improve the course to better support student learning.

Regarding personal problems: I understand that sometimes life makes it difficult to focus on schoolwork. If you are having a personal issue that affects your participation in this course, talk to me to create a plan. Please do not wait until the end of the course to share any challenges that have negatively impacted your engagement and academic performance. The sooner we meet, the more options we will have to support your overall academic success.

Attendance

If you're not here, I can't assess your participation, so please come to class. If you miss more than two classes, I will reach out to you to check in, as your participation grade may be impacted. COVID-related absences do not count against you. If you miss more than 15% of class meetings, however, you will need to contact the Center for Accessible Education about qualifying for medical accommodations. When you miss class, it is your responsibility to either talk to a peer about what you missed, or email me to set up an office hours appointment. If you choose, I can also give you an alternate assignment to make up for the day's work.

Technology

Please keep your laptop use focused on what you need for class. It can be distracting for me and your peers if we can see other things on your screen.

Email

I will do my best to respond within 48 hours. If it's been a couple of days and you haven't heard from me, please reach out to me again. For more in-depth questions and longer conversations, and for any concerns about writing, I encourage you to come to my office hours.

Late Policy

Deadlines exist to keep you on pace with the course material. Once you fall behind, it can be a struggle to catch up. However, given the continuing challenges posed by the pandemic, I will not give late penalties to late assignments. However, all assignments (including peer feedback) must be completed by the end of the class to receive a passing grade in this course. If you anticipate needing extra time on any of the assignments, please email me and we'll work out a new due date for you.

Academic Honesty

Using the words or ideas of another person (either in part or entirety, verbatim or paraphrased) without proper citations is a breach of academic honesty. Any writing suspected of plagiarism will be submitted to the Dean for review. If you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism, or if you are feeling especially pressured and incapable of completing an assignment within the expected time frame, please speak with me.

Accommodations

If you require any accommodations due to disability, please contact the Center for Accessible Education: <https://www.cae.ucla.edu/> or (310) 825-1501. Even if you don't have a registered accommodation, if there's anything I can do in my class to improve your learning, please let me know.

Undergraduate Writing Center

Peer learning facilitators (PLFs) are undergraduates who understand the challenges of writing at UCLA. Scheduled appointment and walk-in options are available. See uwc.ucla.edu.

Other Campus Resources and Support Services

Bruin Resource Center: Includes services for transfer students, undocumented students, veterans, and students with dependents. <http://www.brc.ucla.edu/>

Career Center: <http://www.career.ucla.edu/>

Center for Accessible Education: A255 Murphy Hall: (310) 825-1501, TDD (310) 206-6083; <http://www.cae.ucla.edu/> Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the CAE, if possible in the first two weeks of the quarter.

Counseling and Psychological Services Wooden Center West: (310) 825-0768
www.caps.ucla.edu

Dashew Center for International Students and Scholars 106 Bradley Hall: (310) 825-1681 www.internationalcenter.ucla.edu

Dean of Students Office; 1206 Murphy Hall: (310) 825-3871;
www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu

Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: UCLA's Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion provides resources, events, and information about current initiatives at UCLA to support equality for all members of the UCLA community. I hope that you will communicate with me if you experience anything in this course that does not support an inclusive environment, and you can also report any incidents on [their website](#).

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Resource Center Student Activities Center, B36: (310) 206-3628 www.lgbt.ucla.edu

Letters & Science Counseling Service: A316 Murphy Hall: (310) 825-1965 www.college.ucla.edu

Library: Get help with your research, find study spaces, attend a workshop, rent a laptop, and more. Learn more: <http://www.library.ucla.edu/>

Student Legal Services; A239 Murphy Hall: (310) 825-9894; www.studentlegal.ucla.edu

Undergraduate Research Portal: The Undergraduate Research Portal helps students and faculty connect over research opportunities: urp.my.ucla.edu

UCLAONE.com: UCLA ONE is UCLA's interactive, online gateway for mentorship, professional networking, peer driven career advice and exclusive job leads. (Similar to LinkedIn for the UCLA community).

COVID-19 Instructions

Ensuring a safer campus depends on each of us following the latest UCLA health and safety guidelines. While campus policies must be modified to address changing local, state, and national orders and guidance, the most current information is available at covid-19.ucla.edu.

I will do my best to support students who are complying with the requirement to remain away from campus. Contact me if you need to stay home, and we will make alternative arrangements for you to complete your class participation for the day. Be advised that refusal to comply with current campus directives related to COVID-19 mitigation may result in dismissal from the classroom and referral to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any questions or concerns about UCLA's COVID-19 protocol, go to <https://covid-19.ucla.edu/information-for-students/>; if you have any questions specific to this course, I am happy to talk further. Thank you for protecting your fellow Bruins!

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Introductions

MONDAY	JUNETEENTH HOLIDAY
WEDNESDAY	In-Class: introductions, community agreements

Week 2: Personal Essays & Profiles

MONDAY	Read: Selections from <i>Bad Feminist</i> by Roxane Gay and <i>Something That May Shock and Discredit You</i> by Daniel Lavery Due: Sign up for a presentation slot.
WEDNESDAY	Read: "The Gatekeepers Who Get to Decide What Food is Disgusting" by Jiayang Fan and "Eat, Memory" by David Wong Louie

	Due: First draft of creative nonfiction piece due to your writing group (via email) by Friday . At least 2 pages of writing.
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Week 3: Lyric Essays

MONDAY	INDEPENDENCE DAY HOLIDAY Due: Written feedback to your writing group on their drafts (CC me on emails).
WEDNESDAY	Read: From <i>Shapes of Native Nonfiction</i> ed. by Elissa Washuta and Theresa Warburton Due: By Friday second draft of original creative nonfiction piece OR first draft of a different piece due to your writing group (via email). At least 5 pages of writing.

Week 4: Cultural Criticism

MONDAY	Read: From <i>They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us</i> by Hanif Abdurraqib Due: Written feedback to your writing group on their drafts (CC me on emails).
WEDNESDAY	Read: "How The Whitest Singer Of The 70s Became An Icon In The Philippines" by Karen Tongson Due Friday 7/15: Full draft of creative nonfiction piece (or pieces) due to me (via BruinLearn). 7-8 pages of writing.

Week 5: Place Writing & Travel Writing

MONDAY	Read: "Thirteen ways of Seeing Nature in LA" by Jenny Price (Parts I and II)
WEDNESDAY	Read: "Stranger in the Village" by James Baldwin and "Perfume, Power, and God" by Arabelle Sicardi

Week 6: True Crime

MONDAY	Read: From <i>In Cold Blood</i> by Truman Capote Sign up for a reading slot for Wednesday. You have five minutes to read aloud from your creative nonfiction piece, or you can pick some other short piece of writing you like and want to share.
WEDNESDAY	Final Class Reading: meet at Nest Amphitheatre in the Botanical Garden
FRIDAY	By midnight, upload a PDF or doc of compiled journal entries and a PDF or doc of the final draft of your CNF piece + a one-page process memo (a reflection on how your piece has developed and your journey in writing it).