

Creative Nonfiction Workshop
Jordan Karnes
Per. 7
Room 204
Mon, Tues, Fri: 1:35-2:50pm
Thur: 2:05-3:05pm
Spring Semester 2022
jkarnes@oakarts.org
Google Classroom Code: tejnh7q

Course Description

Creative non-fiction can be described as “true stories well told.” In this class, we will be exploring the many facets of creative nonfiction through the study of contemporary essays, memoirs, podcasts, and interviews. Together, we will explore all this “genre” can do, personally, formally, and narratively. We will be using many of the same writing techniques that make our fiction, poetry, and journalism strong, but wielding them with the restraint of *truth of experience*. We will read a lot, and often, looking to a diverse variety of contemporary essayists and writers for examples of style, story structure, and voice.

Unit 1 will explore the idea of an origin story. We will look at many different examples and consider their function, nuance, and ability to tell a bigger picture. This section will conclude with students writing their own nonlinear versions. **Unit 2** will focus on how to incorporate research into your story. We will look at essays that tell another story while telling another more personal story. This also will be important for folks who struggle with sustaining their personal writing, as learning how to braid research and outside storytelling is an important tool for any essayist. This unit will end with a “research personal essay.” **Unit 3** will challenge the traditional structures and bring back our old friend Nathaniel Dorkskey’s concept of “intermittence” and fragmented narrative, focusing on shaping our stories through a variety of different forms and restraints. This unit will end with a visual essay project. **Unit 4** will be all about revision!

We read a lot in this class, and your participation is expected! This means jumping into class discussions, reading aloud, and of course, being engaged and involved in workshops.

Learning Outcomes:

- Be able to critically analyze class materials (essays, podcasts, etc) in discussions, considering both elements of craft and content—and how both can apply to your work.
- Learn how to respectfully, thoughtfully, constructively workshop your peers’ writing, looking to help improve themes and craft.
- Learn how to accept that same workshop feedback and consider it into your writing revision process.

- Successfully write and revise at least two 3-5 page essays this semester. More specifically, I want you to learn how to sustain your essay ideas into longer pieces.

Classroom Guidelines

- Start each class in your assigned seat with your school-assigned Chromebook and charger (if needed).
- Phones are to be **AWAY** for the entire class. This means in your bag or in the room's phone holder. **Per OSA's phone policy**, students caught with their phone will have it taken from them for the duration of class and parents will be notified. If caught again, it will be taken for the rest of the day and parents will be notified. If caught a third time, phone will be given to the administration and released only to the student's parents.
- Once you hear the bell ring, that's your queue to end conversations and give your attention to your instructor.

Workshops

Class time will be given for reading and discussion, and students will be expected to show up for class ready to engage and write. And of course, we will be workshopping. We will have **three workshops** during the semester—of which you are only expected to workshop **twice**, but can participate in as many workshops as class time will allow. Priority will be given for first-time, then second-time workshopers.

In this workshop, you and your classmates will learn how to tell your stories, trust your voice, and experiment with form as you shape the truth of your experience into narrative. We will share our pieces with each other and offer feedback from a place of **mutual trust** and **respect**. Students who take this course will commit to sharing personal stories with a safe and confidential community of other student writers.

Participation in workshop includes speaking up in discussion for each piece of writing, demonstrating that you've not only read it but considered how it could be improved.

Student Assessment & Grading

20% Weekly Writing Prompts

25% Unit 1 project

20% Workshop Participation

10% Daily Participation

25% Final Project

- Students have the opportunity to earn 3 points a day (12 points a week) for their **weekly Participation grade, which accounts for 10% towards their overall grade**. This includes a point for being on time, being present, and for actively participating.
- Students are responsible for the timely and complete submission of their work. Late work without a justified excuse (i.e. illness) caps the students' grade at a 75%. In the case of an absence due to illness, it is **the student's responsibility** to talk with me about what

they missed and how to make it up. Per school policy, students have as many days as they are absent to turn in late work.

- **If you are sick or know you will be absent on a scheduled workshop day you must contact me ASAP**, and in some cases **you** will be responsible for switching your scheduled workshop with another student.
- Per school policy, you have the amount of days you were out sick to turn in any missing work. Also, let me know and have your parents/guardians excuse your absence through the school.

How To Report Sexual Harassment or Abuse:

- Any student who believes that they have been subjected to sexual harassment by another student, an employee, or third party who has witnessed sexual harassment is strongly encouraged to report the incident to a teacher, an administrator, or other available school employee. An investigation will be conducted that will include the Dean of Students (student-related) and the Principal (employee-related), as well as a Title IX investigator.
 - Assistant Principal: kzaugg@oakarts.org
 - Dean of Students: aderoos@oakarts.org
 - Principal Mike Oz: moz@oakarts.org
- An [OSA Incident Report Form](#) can be submitted directly to the Dean of Students who will distribute the complaints to the appropriate person(s) for investigation.
- Complaints can also be accepted through an [online portal](#). These complaints will go directly to an outside third-party investigator.
- Students may tell a teacher, administrator, or other trusted adult on campus that they would like to file a complaint. All OSA employees are mandated reporters who have cleared a Department of Justice background check. Each OSA employee completes a required four-hour annual training course and exam which covers the responsibilities of being a Mandated Reporter.

Please read this with your parents, sign and return this to me no later than Friday, Jan 7th. It is worth 10 points.

By signing this, you are confirming that you have read and understood the syllabus, rules, guidelines, grading, and policies for this Creative Nonfiction Workshop.

Parent signature

Student signature