

Nonfiction Narrative Writing and Editing, English 398R, Fall 2017

Pamela Gerhardt

1001 TuTh 8:00am - 9:15am TWS 0232

1101 TuTh 9:30am - 10:45am TWS 0232

1201 TuTh 11:00am - 12:15pm TWS 0232

1505 TuTh 5:00pm - 6:15pm TWS 0224

Instructor's Office: 1206 Tawes. Office Hours: By appointment or email.

Email: gerhardt@umd.edu **Course website:** <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com>

Fall 2017 ELMS course: <https://myelms.umd.edu/courses/1229026>

Texts

On Writing Well, sixth edition, William Zinsser. You can find this used on the internet for a very small fee or find it here online for free.

<https://archive.org/details/OnWritingWell> ISBN: 978-0-0-6089154-1

We will read a short narrative book:

I would like you to read ONE short book-length memoir this semester. The reading will be due around midterm. All three books are "quick read." Here are the choices:

Big Ray by Michael Kimball (192 pages)

<https://www.amazon.com/Big-Ray-Novel-Michael-Kimball/dp/1620400677>

The Rules of Inheritance by Claire Bidwell Smith (304 pages)

<https://www.amazon.com/Rules-Inheritance-Claire-Bidwell-Smith/dp/0452298873>

Lucky That Way by Pamela Gerhardt (184 pages)

<https://www.amazon.com/Lucky-That-Way-Rediscovering-Fathers/dp/0826220045>

Course Related Policies - Official University/ARHU Documents

<http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

What is nonfiction narrative writing and why are we here?

This class is geared toward students interested in careers, such as publishing and social marketing, that will involve writing and editing nonfiction narrative. The class will provide students with opportunities to write and edit and expose them to an array of professional opportunities. Goals include creating usable forms of communication for specific audiences, learning professional standards of practice, producing credible, well-crafted texts, and developing professional communication skills.

Nonfiction narrative writing draws its influences from fiction, magazine journalism, memoirs, and personal essays. Writers use many of the same tools as fiction writers, including **scene shifts, dialogue, vivid description, character development, nonlinear structure, and shifts in tense, time and points of view**. However, unlike fiction, nonfiction narrative *strives* to focus on what is real. The author hopes to tell the truth. That is, he or she does not "make things up" and includes research in the form of anecdotes, quotes, interviews, statistics and personal experience. As we will see, the difficult business of truth telling raises many philosophical questions about both the limits and grace inherent in memory, interpretation and human experience.

In this class you will learn to read, appreciate, write and edit nonfiction narrative. You will find that the writing skills you begin to master in the class will prove useful and applicable to nearly all forms of writing tasks you will encounter in your future, both in the workplace and beyond. At its most practical level, this class will teach you how to meet the needs and interests of specific audiences and how to professionally market yourself and get your work published.

Assignments/Grading

The requirements for the course include reading, writing and responding to writing. More specifically:

- Revised draft of a 500-word narrative blog essay (15%).
- Final Revised Blog essay, with image (5%).
- A 2-3 page analysis of a publisher (10%). This is a group project.
- A 5-page narrative essay (15%).
- Six written responses to student essays (15%).
- Three reflection papers, one at beginning of semester, one at midterm, one at the end. (15%)
- Revised version of the 5-page nonfiction narrative, **plus graded first draft**. (15%)
- Participation (15%). You will be expected throughout the semester to participate in in-class oral discussions about everything you read. Some of these discussions will take place during workshop. **Participation includes homework, in-class work, pop quizzes, coming to class prepared to discuss readings, coming to class on time (students who do not show up on workshop days will lose 5 points off their final portfolio), participating in class discussions.** We need an open-discussion classroom to enhance creativity, diplomacy and learning. A

student who consistently arrives late, for example, or texts on his/her phone will receive a lower grade.

- In class lab work. (5%)

Class Structure and Deadlines

- I will respond to and grade your writing throughout the semester. We will workshop most of your work in small, informal groups. Your 5-page essay, however, will be formally workshopped and read by the entire class.
- Each 5-page student essay will receive a formal workshop once in the semester. I will hand out a sign-up sheet. Students will submit their essays electronically for workshop on CANVAS on the due date. The following week, readers can choose to print out the essays or bring in laptops/tablets on workshop days. Either way, readers MUST have a copy of the essay in front of them in order to discuss the essay during workshop.

The Bottom Line

To pass this class:

- Complete all assignments and readings and be prepared to discuss and complete pop quizzes.
- Attend class regularly (no more than 3 unexcused absences).
- Come to class on time. This is *essential* for effective participation.
- Provide feedback for and assist your peers.
- Participate in class discussions.

NOTE: Not all of you will earn an A in this course. Many of you will earn an A- or B+. This is a rigorous, professional writing course, and it is very difficult to move from a B+ to an A-. Please see the grading rubrics on my website for more detailed information: <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com>

Most employers consider any grade in the B-A range to be superior. In very few job markets will a B+ prevent you from getting a job. Please note that at the end of the semester I cannot negotiate with you over grades. I especially will not answer emails from students who wish to have their grade bumped up from an A- to an A.

Late Papers

All assignments will lose 5 points for each day they are late.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism and cheating are serious issues in both academic and professional circles. As required, I will refer any abuse of the honor system to the Honor Council. You can borrow from published sources so long as you mention them in the text and give adequate documentation for them. In short, don't rip off anyone's ideas. Penalties for plagiarism include an automatic "F" in this class and possible dismissal from the University.

Attendance

Please inform the instructor in advance of necessary absences due to religious holidays, medical issues or other obligations. Please send an email documenting the date of the

missed class(es) and testifying to the need for the absence. This note must include an acknowledgement that (a) the information provided is true and correct, and (b) that the student understands that providing false information to University officials is a violation of Part 9(h) of the Code of Student Conduct. The university's policies on medical and other absences can be found at:

<http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540>

Students With Disabilities

Students with a documented disability requiring special accommodations should see the instructor as early as possible in the semester. It is the student's responsibility to register with Disability Support Service (DSS) and provide the instructor with a statement from DSS about the accommodation required. (DSS is in 0126 Shoemaker Hall)

A few words about Food/Shelter

Food insecurity or homelessness can impact health, well-being, and academic performance. UMD has recently developed resources to help. Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day is encouraged to visit the [UMD Campus Pantry](#), which is located in the Health Center. Any student who lacks a safe and stable place to live is urged to contact Brooke Supple, Chief of Staff in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at [301.314.8430](tel:301.314.8430) or <http://crisisfund.umd.edu/gethelp.html>.

Class Evaluations

We require **two** evaluations. One, is issued by the department. The other, CourseEvalUM, is issued by the University.

Schedule

Week 1

August 29

Introduction to the course/syllabus: Squarespace, ELMS, Contently, grading rubrics

- Lecture: What is nonfiction narrative writing and where will you use it?
- Lecture: What is style? (Group work)

Homework:

1. Complete Bob Greene versus Joan Didion assignment. **NOTE: Ignore the instructions that ask you to write a 2-page summary.** Rather, read the two essays and be prepared to discuss in class. Possible pop quiz.

<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/greenedidion.pdf>

2. Read Zinsser, Chap. 1 and 2 and "Video, The Kiss, and On The Couch"

<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/video.couch.pdf>

<https://archive.org/details/OnWritingWell>

Aug. 31

- How to post to Canvas.
<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/canvasstudentguide.pdf>
- Discuss Zinsser, Chapters 1 and 2
- Lecture: narrative arc/tenets of professional writing
- Discuss assigned readings: Greene and Didion. Pop quiz. TA
- Discuss "Video, The Kiss, and On The Couch."
- Review reflective essay prompt.

Homework: Write a reflective essay that follows prompt #1

<https://myelms.umd.edu/courses/1229026/assignments/4454795>

Week 2

Sept. 5

- **Reflective essay #1 due to canvas** TA
- In-class exercise: Is this a narrative? (Student essays: Technoskeptic/Prague)
- Discuss upcoming narrative essay assignments.
- Watch Video: Audience

Homework: Read Zinsser, Chap. 3, 4, 12. and read "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" by Gay Talese. If can not finish this long piece, read at least until the section that begins with "It was the morning after..." and read the ending.

http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ1003-OCT_SINATRA_rev ?click=main_sr

Sept. 7

- Discuss Zinsser, Chapters 3 and 4 and 12.
- Student introductions/fill out forms.
- Discuss assigned readings. Frank Sinatra, how to interview, how to include research in a narrative.

Homework: Read very long piece by Joan Didion, "Slouching Toward Bethlehem," <https://nstearns.edublogs.org/files/2012/03/Slouching-toward-bethlehem-184kxww.pdf>.

Work on **blog essay**.

Week 3

Sept. 12

- Discuss assigned readings. Genre: Social Commentary, Joan Didion. Pop quiz. TA
- Lecture: Real-World editing. Adding sources (391) and signal phrases (398R). Fake news versus real news.
- Exercise: Nominalizations/tight writing/search and destroy/clarifying
- Homework: Read Zinsser, Chapters 5, 6, 7. Work on Blog essay.

Sept. 14

- **Step 1, Rough draft: Informal Workshop: Bring draft of Blog essay to class, workshop, bring two hard copies.**
- Lecture: Three Appeals/Rhetorical Triangle/Three-Way Editing/classical argument structure. **(editing exercises)**
- Discuss Zinsser, Chapters 5 and 6 and 7. **TA**
- Audience exercise, Saliva. Video: audience
- Homework: Look at publisher analysis examples:
<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/sample.Publisher%20Analysis.doc>
<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/jenny.Publisher%20Analysis.doc>

Week 4

Sept. 19

- **Step 2, revised draft of blog post is due. Submit to ELMs.**
- Discuss how to analyze a publisher. Squarespace: look at examples
- Form groups for publisher analysis
- Homework: Zinsser, Chaps. 8, 9, 10 and read Randy Shilts, "Talking Aids to Death."
 To read the article you will have to join Esquire. It's free for a month. Be sure to cancel your membership once we are done discussing the essay.
<http://archive.esquire.com/issue/19890301>

Sept. 21

- Discuss Zinsser, Chaps. 8, 9 and 10. Grammar review. Student sentences.
- Discuss assigned readings. Genre: Social Commentary. Shilts. Pop quiz. **TA**
- Form groups for working on your publisher analysis
- SIGN UP FOR FORMAL WORKSHOP. I will either bring in a sign up sheet or we will use GoogleDocs.
- Homework: Work on publisher analysis. Look at query letters:
<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/excellent.query.letter.doc>

Week 5

Sept. 26

- Discuss query letters. Cover letter format/fonts. Look at examples.
- **Write query letter. In-lab assignment.**
- SIGN UP FOR FORMAL WORKSHOP
- Homework: work on publisher analysis

Sept. 28

- **Informal workshop, draft of publisher analysis due, bring two copies of your analysis.**
- Work on publisher analysis
- SIGN UP FOR FORMAL WORKSHOP
- Work more on query letter (?) (editing exercises/in-class writing prompt)
- Homework: Read TA essay

Week 6

Oct. 3

- **Final publisher analysis due. Submit to Canvas.**
- Discuss how to respond to student writing. SIGN UP FOR WORKSHOP
- Ely: find the narrative
- TA: discuss your essay [TA](#)
- Discuss how to submit essays to Canvas for workshop.
<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/How%20Students%20upload%20docs%20for%20workshop.doc>

Homework: Continue to read Book Length Memoir – it is due soon.

Oct. 5

- Discuss query letters – show student samples. What worked/What didn't. (editing exercises)
- In-class writing prompt
- **Formal Workshop:**
 Authors -- Drafts of 5-page essay are due. Submit to Canvas under discussions. The authors who signed up must post their essays to CANVAS discussions by or before 5 pm.
 Critics -- Read the essay and type up a response– AFTER WORKSHOP, either hand over a hard copy of your response to the author or email one copy to the author and BE SURE to post one for the instructor (post in assignments for instructor).
 Everyone else -- All students, including those who are not critics, must respond orally to the essays during workshop. All students must bring in to workshop either a printed copy of the essays to be critiqued or a laptop/tablet. We need to have the essay in front of us in order to properly discuss it.

Homework:

--Read Jeannette Walls, read intro (the author and her mom in New York) and first two chapters (at least until the author leaves the hospital).

<http://english4success.ru/Upload/books/268.pdf>

--Read Zinsser, Chapter 14.

--Revise Blog essay according to my comments, find an image, post to ELMS (5% of your grade).

Week 7

Oct. 10

- **Step 3: Final Blog essay plus an image due to ELMS**
- In-class writing assignment: Reflective essay #2 TA
<https://myelms.umd.edu/courses/1229026/assignments/4454796>
- Discuss assigned readings. Walls.
- Discuss Zinsser, Chapter 14.

Homework:

- You should be reading your book length memoir.
- Read essays for workshop

Oct. 12

- **First formal workshop of 5-page essay**
- Lecture: How to Get Published

Homework: **Book Length Memoir. Read the entire book. You will do several exercises next week.**

- **Next round of Workshop volunteers: Drafts of 5-page essay are due. Submit to Canvas.**

Week 8

Oct. 17

- Discuss Book Length Memoir
- Written Lab exercise: questions about process, writing a book-length memoir.

Homework: Read and respond to student essays for workshop.

Oct. 19

- **Second Formal Workshop**
- **Workshop volunteers: Drafts are due. Submit to Canvas**

Homework: read essays for workshop

Week 9

Oct. 24

- Discuss Book Length Memoir
- In-class Exercise: Create a scene from your life.

Homework: read and respond to essays for workshop.

Oct. 26

- **Third Formal Workshop (editing exercises)**
- **Workshop volunteers: Drafts are due. Submit to Canvas.**

Homework:

--Read Anthony Swofford, "Jarhead," intro and or first two chapters.

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/97673240/Jarhead-A-Marine-s-Chronicle-of-the-Gulf-War-and-Other-Battles-by-Anthony-Swofford>

-- Read James Frey, "A Million Little Pieces,"

<https://www.readanybook.com/online/16912>

Start with “I wake” and stop reading at “I am gone.”

Week 10

Oct. 31

- Discuss Book Length Memoir: write a one-paragraph elevator pitch, in-class exercise
- Discuss assigned readings. Genre: A Vivid Sense of Place, Swofford and Frey
- Editing exercise: Sammy’s

Homework: Read and respond to essays for workshop.

Nov. 2

- **Fourth Formal Workshop**
- **Workshop volunteers: Drafts are due. Submit to Canvas.**

Homework: Zinsser, Chapter 13 and 16.

- Read Amy Poehler
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2013/10/14/131014fa_fact_poehler?utm_source=tny&utm_campaign=generalsocial&utm_medium=tumblr
- Read essay about life in Baltimore.
http://www.salon.com/2014/02/05/too_poor_for_pop_culture/

Week 11

Nov. 7

- Discuss Zinsser, Chapter 13 and 16.
- Discuss Poehler and Baltimore stories. Pop Quiz. TA
- Editing exercises: AOL, based on Chapter 16
- Homework: Read and respond to essays for workshop.

Nov. 9

- **Fifth Formal Workshop. TA**
- **Workshop volunteers: Drafts due. Submit to Canvas. THESE WILL BE WORKSHOPPED ON Tuesday , the 14th.**

Week 12

Nov. 14

- **Sixth Formal workshop**
- **Workshop volunteers: Drafts due. Submit to Canvas.**

Homework: Read an excerpt from Dave Eggers, “A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius.”

<http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/e/eggers-genius.html>

Nov. 16

- Discuss Eggers
- In-Class Writing Prompt

Week 13**Nov. 21** TBA**Nov. 23** Thanksgiving Holiday

- Homework: Read *The Chase*, by Annie Dillard.
<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~tbayindi/chase.pdf>

Week 14**Nov. 28**

- Class recap to help students write final reflection.
- Create a LinkedIn account.
- Discuss *The Chase*, by Annie Dillard.
<http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~tbayindi/chase.pdf>

Nov 30

- **Revised 5-page essay and final reflection due. Submit to Canvas.**
- Resume workshop. Ya Know? Cats on FB. LinkedIn. **TA**
- Evaluations.

Homework: Read "Robbed in PG County" and Jim Brady.

- http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/13/AR2006011302301_pf.html
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/11/AR2006021100840.html>

Week 15**Dec. 5**

- Discuss Brady and Robbed in PG County/Blog Rage/reader reactions
- Getting a Job: squarespace links
- Evaluations: online and on paper

Thurs. Dec. 7

Conferences.