



English 501.03/.04 Introduction to Creative Nonfiction  
Writing for Digital Media, Spring 2020  
TR 11:10-12:30pm  
Hamilton Smith Digital Writing Studio 336

## Instructor

Dr. Melinda M. White  
she/her/hers  
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## Course Objectives

Focused on creative uses of multimedia in composition, this course will cover traditional nonfiction elements such as sensory details, narrative, and expressing the human condition, while also including visual, audio, and electronic text to engage readers. Like an artist's paintbrush, the computer can be a creative tool in the writing process. Exploring methods, forms, and functions of works of both print and digital nonfiction will provide students with context and the foundational skills to express themselves through multimedia writing projects such as video, Google Maps, and the web. Writers will become composers, telling their stories with digital media.

This Writing for Digital Media section aims to introduce the genre of creative nonfiction while also encouraging you, as writers, to think outside the box and consider new forms of writing, both through the course readings and your own writing. Observe and explore the world around you and always **listen to your broccoli**.

After participation in this course you will be expected to:

- Recognize and critique nonfiction elements of style
- Recognize that “text” can mean a variety of things, including visuals
- Write with rich description, dialogue, research, and a unique voice
- Communicate ideas clearly through multimodal texts
- Recognize strengths and weaknesses in your own writing
- Revise your own work with instructor and peer review comments
- Comment on classmates writing in a constructive way
- Develop an awareness and control of saying something valuable with words (& more)
- Hone creative writing, critical thinking, presentation, and group-work skills
- Analyze multimodal “texts” with regards to design, movement, and interactivity
- Complete meaningful textual projects in an electronic format<sup>[SEP]</sup>
- Participate in formal and informal discussion, workshop, and peer critique

## Course Texts

This course relies on Open Education Resources and all readings will be provided on Canvas or the course website: <http://multimodalmel.com/501/index.html>

You will need a writing journal for reader response, in-class writing, and storyboards, and a UNH box or Google Drive, or a USB for storage.

## Assignments

There will be four units, with four major assignments and smaller in-class graded assignments (one in each unit) as well as one textual analysis presentation throughout the semester. Work must be professional and turned in on time. No excuses. I am available for help, but not on the day a project is due. It is difficult (and never a good idea) to procrastinate work that requires technology (this includes printers!). AND ALWAYS BACK UP YOUR FILES.

**Art Narrative:** The first major writing assignment will be an art narrative. We will cover elements of narrative in class and our readings, including sensory detail description, dialogue, and structure. We will then visit the campus art gallery and you will choose a work of art to write on, connecting it to something in your life.

**Snapshot Essay:** The second unit of the semester will look at identity, focused around visual rhetoric and combining image and video with text. The readings will include print, visual, and video essays. The final assignment will be your own essay that combines visual and audio elements. Examples will be provided.

**Google Maps Essay:** Unit three will center on place writing and expand on description and visual text as we delve deeper into digital literature, with a look at hypertext and interactive texts. We will be looking at examples of essays and e-lit on place in class and discussing terms used to analyze print literature and terms that may need to be included to discuss electronic works. The major assignment will be an essay on place, composed in/for Google Maps.

**Hypertext project:** The final unit will explore links and fragmentation, how we make connections in hypertext literature, both as (w)readers and writers. We will be exploring fragmented print texts and electronic literature texts. The major assignment will be an original hypertext of electronic nonfiction, encompassing the unit's theme of connections. This essay will be uploaded to your web space and presented the last week of class. There will be technical assistance provided! This assignment includes a reflective essay.

**Close Reading analysis presentation:** At the beginning of the semester you will sign up for a close reading analysis and presentation on one of the course readings. On the day after that reading is assigned, you will give a brief introduction to the work and one passage in particular that you feel exemplifies ONE significant element of nonfiction, print or digital. You will also prepare questions for the class and lead the reading discussion. This presentation will provide you with practice reviewing and analyzing

texts while introducing you to a “new” kind of literary analysis, that includes an emphasis on visuals, design, movement, interactivity, and sound. We will be looking at examples of e-lit in class and discussing terms used to analyze print literature and terms that may need to be included to discuss electronic works. You are encouraged to meet with me to discuss the work prior to your presentation day.

**Class discussion, reader response, in-class assignments, workshop, and instructor conferences:** Since this is a creative writing class we will be relying heavily on engaging and thoughtful discussions. I want to hear what YOU think about the readings. Of course, I also expect these discussions to be respectful of others opinions and views. Each unit will have one in-class group or individual assignment and peer review workshops will also be a major part of this course. All writing will be subject to peer-review (keep this in mind when writing extremely personal things) and revision. Revision is an inevitable part of writing, even for the most experienced writers—be prepared to write and rewrite and rethink and rewrite some more. Instructor conferences will be required for drafts of all four major assignments. I will provide you with feedback but also help you work through what needs to be revised during this time. These elements of the course make up 5% of each unit.

The course will focus on both writing about visual information and composing in an electronic medium. More detailed assignment descriptions will be provided online and when assignments are introduced. Paper and project proposal memos, in-class work, reflective memos and presentations will be counted in the final percentage for that specific assignment.

Due dates and percentage breakdowns are as follows:

<b>Unit 1: The Art of Writing</b> (& writing about art)	Art narrative	Feb. 18 <sup>th</sup>	15%
	Sensory detail exercise, response, discussion, conference & workshop		5%
<b>Unit 2: Identity</b> (A picture is worth a thousand words)	Snapshot essay & presentation	March 10 <sup>th</sup>	20%
	Group visual narrative, response, discussion, conference & workshop		5%
<b>Unit 3: Place</b> (Where we have been & where we are going)	Google Maps essay	April 7 <sup>th</sup>	15%
	Group analysis presentation, response, discussion, conference & workshop		5%

<b>Unit 4: Connections</b> (Listen to your multimodal broccoli)	Hypertext project & Reflective memo	April 28/30 <sup>th</sup> May 7 <sup>th</sup>	20%
	Hypertext exercise, response, discussion, conference & workshop		5%
<b>Close Reading</b>	Individual close reading analysis presentation	Ongoing	10%
<b>Total</b>			<b>100%</b>

### Formatting

Format all non-electronic essays with the following specifications:

- 12 point font
- 1 inch margins
- Double spaced
- Black ink
- Left margin justified
- Documentation done in MLA

In addition: All files for electronic projects will be easily accessible (and instructions provided if applicable).

### Course & University Policies

#### Course disruptions

Turn off all cell phones, pagers, or other noise-making items before coming to class. These devices are not to be used in a classroom setting. If your cell phone rings you will be asked to leave class. **Texting**, instant messaging, e-mail checking, and web surfing are also not allowed during class time. In order to avoid disrupting other students in class, **you will lose a unit point** each time you are seen texting, etc. without verbal warning.

#### Deadlines

All due dates are listed in this syllabus. You will be reminded of due dates well in advance. Assignments are always due at the beginning of class. I do not accept late work. I will return your graded papers/projects within two weeks of receiving them.

#### Participation

Be advised that a good portion of your grade for each unit is dependent upon on your attendance, participation, and compliance with work schedule. Reading and discussions are what make an interesting learning environment. Your thoughts and opinions are a large part of this course. Also, most projects will have work time and workshop during class time. That means that you must be present every day in both body and mind.

## Resources

Online tutorials will be posted to the course website, but you will be expected to research and learn some software for your particular needs by finding tutorials and resources on the web. Books will also be made available to you by the instructor if applicable. You may also make appointments for individual or group conferences for any project or software concern.

Under student-use, images and/or text found on the web is available to you without copyright restrictions. Be aware, however, that this does not hold true if you want your work published outside an academic environment. Creative Commons also has resources available for fair use. **Always acknowledge your sources.**

The Connors Writing Center is now located in the library (behind the reference desk). I encourage each of you to visit at least once during the semester to obtain help or advice with anything from brainstorming topics to grammar and punctuation. Appointments are preferred and can be made by telephone or in person. (<http://www.unh.edu/writing/cwc>; 862-3272; 329 Dimond Library).

All software that we have in the lab is available on the library cluster computers. The Parker Media Lab (a MAC lab) is also located in the library. You can sign up for lab time to work on projects, receive help with projects, and check out equipment here (microphones, cameras, video cameras). (Dimond 237; 862-1747; <https://www.unh.edu/it/media-collaboration-services>).

## Attendance

Attendance is required as this is a discussion and workshop-based course. Missing more than three class periods will impact your course grade. Each student is allowed to miss up to three meetings (classes or conferences) regardless of the reason; there is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. **Each additional absence beyond the three deductibles may lower your final grade by one-third letter grade.** (For example, if you earned a B but missed five classes, your final grade will be a C+.) Missing a scheduled conference or more than 50% of a class meeting also counts as an absence. Exceptions will not be made unless extenuating circumstances can be documented for all absences.

## Academic Integrity

Academic Honesty is a core value at the University of New Hampshire. The [Student Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities](#) handbook defines academic honesty both inside and outside the classroom. The handbook specifically defines plagiarism in article 09.3:

### "09.3 Plagiarism

The unattributed use of the ideas, evidence, or words of another person, or the conveying of the false impression that the arguments and writing in a paper are the student's own. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. The acquisition by purchase or otherwise of a part or the whole of a piece of work which is represented as the student's own;
2. The representation of the ideas, data, or writing of another person as the student's own work, even though some wording, methods of citation, or arrangement of evidence, ideas, or arguments have been altered;
3. Concealment of the true sources of information, ideas, or argument in any piece of work."

The penalties for plagiarism can be stiff: from an "F" for an assignment to an "F" for a course, or, in some cases, expulsion from the University. It is in your best interest to make sure you understand the UNH policy. Please take a moment to complete the UNH Plagiarism tutorial: <http://www.unh.edu/liberal-arts/plagiarism/tutorial.cfm>

### **Confidentiality & mandatory reporting**

Because you may be sharing some very personal information with me in your essays or in conferences, please be aware of the following: in some circumstances in which you mention crimes/harm committed against you/by you or even secondhand in your writing or in a conference, I will have to share what you revealed. For example, **as a faculty member, I am required to report any disclosure of sexual harassment, sexual assault, unwanted sexual contact, domestic violence, relationship abuse, dating violence, and stalking to UNH police and university administrators.** Consider carefully what you share with me, and if you do not want this information reported, seek the assistance of the non-mandatory reporters available at Health Services and SHARPP (Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program). Note that SHARPP is available to you 24 hours a day should you seek advice or just want to talk (Crisis Line: 862-7233).

### **Services**

**Student Accessibility Services (SAS).** If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in this course, please register with SAS in developing a plan to address your academic needs. I will be unable to make any accommodations without a letter from SAS (201 Smith Hall; 2-2607). I cannot provide retroactive accommodations.

**Psychological and Counseling Services (PACS).** Your academic success in this course is very important to me. If during the semester, emotional or mental health issues are affecting that success, please contact Psychological and Counseling Services (PACS) (3rd floor, Smith Hall; 862-2090), which provides counseling appointments and other mental health services.

**Additional Services.** Military & Veterans Services (862-0643; 3rd floor of Thompson Hall). Center for Academic Resources (2nd floor, Smith Hall; 2-3698). IT Help via Phone (2-4242). IT Help in Person: Academic Technology Support Center (ATSC) (Dimond Library, Level 3).

## **And...**

I am dedicated to your learning, but you must be dedicated as well. Come to class prepared, complete your assignments, participate in class discussions and group work, be respectful to your peers and their ideas and you will succeed academically.

Discriminatory behavior based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or age will not be tolerated. I am committed to your success and hope this class helps you to become a better writer, thinker and academic.

I will be available in class, during office hours, and by appointment to answer any questions that you may have. If you are having any problems, please talk to me before due dates, etc. Please feel free to e-mail me or to call me to arrange an appointment. E-mail is usually the best way to contact me. As a general rule, please allow me at least **24 hours** to acknowledge and/or respond to your queries.

The following schedule is tentative and subject to changes depending on class dynamics and instructor mood. ☺

## **Schedule**

### **Unit 1: The Art of Writing (& writing about art)**

#### **Tuesday, January 21<sup>st</sup>**

Introduction to each other and course

Read: Syllabus, “What is Creative Nonfiction?” & excerpt from *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott, come with an example of creative nonfiction for discussion

#### **Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Continue introductions, class schedule

Reading discussion: defining creative nonfiction & the art of writing (& broccoli)

Introduce close readings

Read: “How to Write Vivid Descriptions,” “Write till You Drop” & “Total Eclipse” by Annie Dillard

#### **Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup>**

Close reading/reading discussion: descriptive writing & sensory details

Sign up for close readings

Intro to Art Narrative assignment

#### **Sensory detail exercise**

Read: Interviews with the authors, “Why I Write” by TTW & excerpts from *Leap* by Terry Tempest Williams and *Still Life with Oysters and Lemon* by Mark Doty

#### **Thursday, January 30<sup>th</sup>**

Close reading/Reading discussion, form/style & ekphrastic essays

Share sensory detail exercise

Read: “Ekphrasis” and one ekphrastic poem from poets.org (bring with you next Thursday)

**Tuesday, February 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Art Museum Day!**

**e-mail art narrative proposal**

Read: “Building Blocks of Creative Nonfiction: Characterization and Scene,” NowNovel dialogue examples, and Dave Eggers excerpts

**Thursday, February 6<sup>th</sup>**

Close reading/Reading discussion: more ekphrasis & dialogue

Share ekphrastic poems/activity

In-class work on dialogue

Sign up for conferences for next week!

Read: “Dead Christ” by Brian Bouldrey

**Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Individual conferences this week!**

Close reading/Reading discussion: ekphrasis, visuals, & video essays

Art narratives in process check-in, preparing for workshop

**Rough draft for Thursday**

**Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>**

Small group workshop rough draft/revisions

Read: “My Mother in Two Photographs...” by Aleida Rodríguez

## **Unit 2: Identity (A picture is worth a thousand words)**

**Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Art Narrative due!**

Visual rhetoric & terms for analysis

Photo essays

Introduction to Snapshot essays, technology & examples

Visual narrative group assignments

Read: “Caring for your Introvert” by Jonathan Rauch, “A Path Taken, with All the Certainty of Youth” by Margaret Atwood, & individual excerpts from *The 27<sup>th</sup> Letter of the Alphabet* by Kim Adrian

**Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup>**

Close reading/Reading discussion: identity

In-class group work on visual narratives

Possible visit from Parker Media Lab

Read: excerpts from *Ways of Seeing* and *Picturing Texts* & excerpts from *Lucky* by Gabrielle Bell & *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi



## **Tuesday, February 25<sup>th</sup>**

Close reading/Reading discussion: images & text

Group Visual Narrative presentations

Pre-writing/Planning/Storyboarding snapshot essays

Read: Blackbird video essay introduction & “Mangoes” by John Bresland & “Baptism” by Marilyn Freeman

## **Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup>**

Close reading/Reading discussion: video essays & identity

Work on snapshot essays

Sign up for conferences

Read: “Walking the Line,” Fitting the Pattern by Christine Wilks, “That Kind of Daughter” by Kristen Radtke & City Fish by JR Carpenter

## **Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

### **Individual conferences this week!**

Close reading/Reading discussion: interactivity & reader/author relationships

Hypertext, how to talk about e-lit, terms for analysis

Work on snapshot essays

Read: “Electronic Literature: What is it?” by N. Katherine Hayles & “Mr. Plimpton’s Revenge” by Dinty Moore

## **Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>**

Reading discussion: nonlinear/linear narrative

Workshop snapshot essays/Revision

Read: “How to write like a \*(((@\*(#\$\$&” and excerpt from *Wild* by Cheryl Strayed

## **Unit 3: Place (Where we have been & where we are going)**

## **Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>**

### **Snapshot Essays due (& presentations)**

Reading discussion: Merging identity & place & home & maps

Read: “How to write about Place in Creative Nonfiction,” “The Ashes of August” by Kim Barnes, “The Art of the Travel Essay” & “History” by Dinty Moore

## **Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>**

### **(Presentations continued)**

Close Reading/Reading discussion: researching/capturing place, “home”

Introduce Google Maps Essay, technology & examples

Group analysis assignments

Read: “Pine Point” by the Goggles and assigned Hyperlocal Essays

## **March 16-20 Spring Break!**

### **Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>**

Group Hyperlocal analysis presentations

Pre-writing/planning/mapping Google Maps Essay

Read: “Taroko Gorge” by Nick Montfort and excerpts from *A Walk in the Woods* by Bill Bryson and *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer

### **Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup>**

Close reading/Reading discussion: code, generative text, & authorship

In-class work on Google Maps

Read: “High Muck a Muck: Playing Chinese” by Nicola Harwood and excerpt from *Stealing Buddha’s Dinner* by Bich Minh Nguyen

### **Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>**

#### **Individual conferences this week!**

Close reading/Reading discussion: multimedia elements & design & co-authorship

In-class work on Google Maps

Read: “As we May Think” by Vannevar Bush & excerpt from *Computer Lib/Dream Machines* by Ted Nelson & excerpt from *Circle K Cycles* by Karen Tei Yamashita

### **Thursday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Workshop Google Maps drafts/revision

Reading discussion: links, connections & hypertext (& collage)

Introduction of hypertext project

Media options/brainstorming

Read: “My Body, A Wunderkammer” by Shelley Jackson & excerpt from *Bossypants* by Tina Fey

## **Unit 4: Connections (Listen to your (multimodal) broccoli)**

### **Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Google Maps Essay Due!**

Close reading/Reading discussion, hypertext, fragmentation & lexias

Introduction to hypertext essay & examples

In-class My Body assignment

Topics, planning & storyboards

Bring images/text for hypertext tutorial!

### **Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Dreamweaver/Twine tutorial**

Hypertext assignment

In-class work on projects

Read: “88 Constellations for Wittgenstein” by David Clark & “The Fall” by Alan Bigelow & “The Bafflement Fires” by Jason Nelson (website/in class)

**Topic proposals due (via email)**

**Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>**

Close reading/Reading discussion, media & authorship

Navigation options (a look at three diverse styles)

Hypertext assignment, cont.

In-class work on projects

Read: “The Gathering Cloud” by JR Carpenter (winner of the 2016 New Media Prize) & “Arriving Simultaneously on Multiple Far-Flung Systems” by Judy Malloy (short-listed for the 2018 Coover award for electronic literature)

**Thursday, April 16<sup>th</sup>**

Close reading/Reading discussion: the elegance of e-lit

In-class work on projects

Read: “The End of Books” by Robert Coover & *Novelling* by Will Luers, Hazel Smith, and Roger Dean (winner of the 2018 Coover award for electronic literature)

**Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>**

**Individual Conferences this week!**

Reading discussion: the past & future of e-lit

Virtual Reality?

Reflective memos

In-class work on projects

**Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>**

In-class work on projects/ Posting drafts

Sign up for workshop & conferences

**Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup>**

Presentations & discussion/workshop

**Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>**

Last day of class!

Presentations & discussion/workshop

**Final project revisions & reflections due by Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup>**