



English 501.03/.04 Introduction to Creative Nonfiction
Writing for Digital Media, Fall 2026
TR 11:10am – 12:30pm
Hamilton Smith Digital Writing Studio 336

Instructor

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she/her/hers

330G Hamilton Smith

Office hours: T/TH 2:00-3:30pm, W 2-4 online, and by appt.

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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
- 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>

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.

Work must be professional, **original**, and turned in on time. As in a workplace, if you are going to miss a deadline, talk to me in advance. I am always available for help and questions, but not on the day a project is due.

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.

Map 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 or StoryMap.

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/multimedia project 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.

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 35% of your total grade for the semester.

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:

Unit 1: The Art of Writing (& writing about art)	Art narrative	Sept. 29 th	15%
	Sensory detail exercise, response, discussion, conference & workshop		10%
Unit 2: Identity (A picture is worth a thousand words)	Snapshot essay & presentation	Oct. 22 nd	15%
	Group visual narrative, response, discussion, conference & workshop		10%
Unit 3: Place (Where we have been & where we are going)	Map essay	Nov. 12 th	15%
	Group analysis presentation, response, discussion, conference & workshop		10%
Unit 4: Connections (Listen to your multimodal broccoli)	Hypertext project & Reflective memo	Dec. 8 th /11 th	20%
	Hypertext exercise, response, discussion, conference & workshop		5%
Total			100%

Formatting

Format non-electronic writing 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.

Netiquette Guidelines (from UNH Academic Technologies)

Netiquette is the socially and professionally acceptable way to communicate on the Internet. We are all expected to abide by these guidelines of “netiquette” when using online communication tools with your classmates and instructor. Guidelines can be found through the [Faculty Resource Hub](#) and at this [Academic Technology resource](#). More general guidance can be found [here](#).

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. If you are dealing with an unexpected, extenuating circumstance that will keep you out of class or affect your performance for more than a day or two, reach out to the Dean of Students (dean.students@unh.edu) to request a letter be sent to all your faculty.

Academic Integrity

From [UNH's policy on Academic Integrity](#): All members of UNH share responsibility for promoting and protecting the highest standards of integrity in scholarship and professional practice. The value of honesty and the expectation of conduct that goes with it are intended to reinforce a learning environment where students and faculty can pursue independent work without unnecessary restraints. At the same time, the University recognizes its responsibility to encourage and inculcate values and standards of conduct that will guide its students throughout their careers.

This means that each member will adhere to the principles and rules of the University and pursue academic work in a straightforward and truthful manner, free from deception or fraud. Students are expected to complete independent, original work for each academic activity unless otherwise specified by the faculty member. Students should seek clarification when in doubt. Any attempts to deviate from these principles will be construed as acts of academic dishonesty subject to disciplinary action.

Artificial Intelligence: Unless otherwise specified, the use of Automated Writing Tools, including chatGPT and similar artificial intelligence (AI) tools, is strictly prohibited in this course, even when properly attributed. The use of automated writing tools is considered plagiarism (as defined by UNH's [Academic Integrity Policy](#)) and will be handled in accordance with existing policy.

Plagiarism: Use or submission of intellectual property, ideas, evidence produced by another person, including computer generated text or work outsourced to third-parties, in whole or in part as one's own in any academic assessment without providing proper citation or attribution. In some cases, reusing one's own previous work without acknowledging or citing the original work can constitute self-plagiarism.

Please review [UNH's plagiarism tutorial](#).

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, you find you are experiencing emotional or mental

health issues, please contact the University's ([PACS](#)) (3rd floor, Smith Hall; 603-862-2090/TTY: 7-1-1) which provides counseling appointments and other mental health services. If urgent, students may call PACS M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m., and schedule an Urgent Same-Day Appointment.

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, September 1st

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, September 3rd

Continue introductions, class schedule

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

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

Tuesday, September 8th

Reading discussion: descriptive writing & sensory details

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, September 10th

Reading discussion, form/style & ekphrastic essays

Share sensory detail exercise

Read: "Ekphrasis" and one ekphrastic poem from poets.org (bring with you next week)

Tuesday, September 15th

Art Museum Visit!!! (Otto visit)

e-mail art narrative proposal

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

Thursday, September 17th

Share ekphrastic poems/activity

Reading discussion: more ekphrasis & dialogue

In-class work on dialogue

Sign up for conferences for next week!

Read: "Dead Christ" by Brian Bouldrey

Tuesday, September 22nd

Individual conferences this week!

Reading discussion: ekphrasis, visuals, & video essays

Art narratives in process check-in, preparing for workshop

Rough draft for Thursday

Thursday, September 24th

Workshop art narrative essays/revisions

Read: "My Mother in Two Photographs..." by Aleida Rodríguez & a brief look at "The Lyric Essay" by Deborah Tall

Unit 2: Identity (A picture is worth a thousand words)**Tuesday, September 29th**

Art Narrative due!

Visual rhetoric & terms for analysis

Introduction to Snapshot essays, technology & examples

Visual narrative group assignments

Read: "Becoming You" by Joshua Rothman (library), "A Path Taken, with All the Certainty of Youth" & "9 Beginnings" by Margaret Atwood & more on "The Lyric Essay" from *Tell it Slant*

Thursday, October 1st

Reading discussion: identity

In-class group work on visual narratives

Read: excerpt from Picturing Texts, excerpts from Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi, & “Things I Thought Made Sense Just Don’t Anymore” by Mira Jacobs

Tuesday, October 6th

Reading discussion: images & text

Group Visual Narrative presentations

Pre-writing/Planning/Storyboarding snapshot essays

Read: Blackbird video essay introduction & “Mangoes” by John Bresland & “Estrellada” by Vanessa Angélica Villarreal

Thursday, October 8th

Reading discussion: video essays & identity

Work on snapshot essays

Sign up for conferences

Read: “That Kind of Daughter” by Kristen Radtke & “Flawed” by Andrea Dorfman

Tuesday, October 13th

No class. Classes follow a Wednesday schedule!

Thursday, October 15th

Individual conferences this week!

Reading discussion: interactivity & reader/author relationships

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

Work on snapshot essays

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

Tuesday, October 20th

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)

Thursday, October 22nd

Snapshot Essays due (& presentations)

Reading discussion: Merging identity & place & home & maps

Read: “How to write about Place in Creative Nonfiction” and “The Ashes of August” by Kim Barnes

Tuesday, October 27th

(Presentations continued)

Reading discussion: researching/capturing place, “home”

Introduce Map Essay, technology & examples

Group analysis assignments

Read: "Writing the Travel Essay" & "History" by Dinty Moore

Thursday, October 29th

Analyzing place & travel

Home free write

Pre-writing/planning/mapping Map 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

Tuesday, November 3rd

Reading discussion: code, generative text, & authorship

In-class work on Map essays

Read: "High Muck a Muck: Playing Chinese" by Nicola Harwood, excerpt from *Stealing Buddha's Dinner* by Bich Minh Nguyen

Thursday, November 5th

Individual conferences this week!

Reading discussion: multimedia elements & design & co-authorship

In-class work on Map essays

Read: excerpt from *Circle K Cycles* by Karen Tei Yamashita

Tuesday, November 10th

Workshop Map drafts/revision

Read: "As we May Think" by Vannevar Bush (library)

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

Thursday, November 12th

Maps Essay Due!

Reading discussion: links, connections, & hypertext

Introduction to hypertext essay & examples

Collage!

Read: "My Body, A Wunderkammer" by Shelley Jackson & "All Girls Must be Everything" by Tina Fey ("The Fall" by Alan Bigelow, "The Bafflement Fires" by Jason Nelson, "Yesterday Today Tomorrow," & "Infinite Worries Bash" for in-class exercise Thursday)

Tuesday, November 17th

Reading discussion: "My Body," media & authorship

Navigation options (a look at diverse styles)

Media options/brainstorming topics

Topic proposals due (via email)

Read: “The Gathering Cloud” by JR Carpenter (winner of the 2016 New Media Prize) & “Merged with the Screen for Days” by Judy Malloy

Thursday, November 19th

Reading discussion: the elegance of e-lit

In-class work on projects

Twine/ThingLink tutorial

Read: “The End of Books” by Robert Coover

Tuesday, November 24th

Reading discussion: the past & future of e-lit

Virtual Reality?

Reflective memos

Work on projects

Sign up for workshop & conferences

Happy Thanksgiving!

Tuesday, December 1st

Individual conferences this week!

Work on projects/ posting drafts

Thursday, December 3rd

Workshop hypertext essays/revision

Tuesday, December 8th

Hypertext Essays due!

Presentations & discussion/workshop

Thursday, December 10th

Last day of class!

Presentations & discussion/workshop

Final project revisions & reflections due by Friday, December 11th!