

English 595.01/695.01 Writing for/from Experience and Research

Instructor: Aritha van Herk

Description

The Creative Nonfiction genre has gained considerable traction as a form investigating substantial intellectual questions in contemporary times. Although focused on narrative, it is less a genre in and of itself than a text instigated by voice and research, strong description, evocative images, and powerful revelations. While it relies on the author's ability to recount or to springboard from actual events, it relies also on imagination and craft to relay important ideas: stories of experience, loss, coincidence, accident, and yes, events. Most of all, the successful work of nonfiction incites reflection on a crucial moment of recognition that the writer can offer the reader.

This course will examine several contemporary works of creative non-fiction, including examples of autobiography, memoir, travel narrative, literary journalism and ficto-criticism as models to inspire and inform students' own writing of a work of creative non-fiction. The aim of the course is to enable students to research and develop a powerful piece of writing that is both creative and critical, whether a lyric essay, a meditation, or a well-researched dive into an historical or place-based subject.

This is a course that will seek to inspire students to stretch their notions of writing as a persuasive or informative incentive in order to create a narrative that will stretch beyond an expository essay. However, it will be equally valuable to students focussed on both the Creative Writing and Critical stream.

The class will function as a workshop of the whole and the work students write will be workshopped at least twice in the term.

The students will be expected to produce, by the end of the course, a 75 page work of Creative Nonfiction.

By August 1st, 2021, prospective students should submit a proposal of the long project they wish to undertake, and 20 pages of writing relevant to that project. Admission to this course is determined by portfolio and is granted by departmental permission.

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