

Carleton University
Spring/Summer 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 2915 A: Writing Creative Nonfiction
Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor
Prerequisites: None

Instructor: John Coleman
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***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

Course description: This course familiarizes students with creative approaches to writing non-fiction. Students will learn strategies for writing pieces of different lengths and forms. We will explore how to use literary storytelling techniques in our writing, as well as how our own personal experiences and perspectives can be represented in creative non-fiction. We will read, discuss and write about exemplary forms of creative non-fiction, and texts about writing, by writers from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Students will also consider critical debates about what it can be like to be a writer in contemporary multicultural society. Our weekly workshops will include a variety of interactive, manageable writing prompts. Students will also complete larger writing assignments throughout the term.

Learning Outcomes: The purpose of this course is for students to:

- Be introduced to creative approaches to writing non-fiction
- Practice and develop strategies for writing and revising pieces of different forms and lengths
- Develop skills in workshopping, brainstorming, drafting and editing
- Be introduced to recent critical debates about what it can be like to be a writer in multicultural society

Texts:

Required text to purchase:

- John Warner, *The Writer's Practice*

Additional required texts will be available on Ares and Brightspace.

Evaluation:

All work completed for this course will receive a numerical grade that corresponds to the guidelines set out by the Faculty of Arts:

90-100 – A+; 85-89 – A; 80-84 – A-; 77-79 – B+; 73-76 – B; 70-72 – B-; 67-69 – C+; 63-66 – C; 60-62 – C-; 57-59 – D+; 53-56 – D; 50-52 – D-; Below 50 – F

All term work will be subject to the following general evaluation criteria:

Each student is encouraged to genuinely engage with course material by expressing clear ideas about assigned readings, lecture material and class discussions.

Furthermore, it is paramount for students to display a genuine attempt at:

- (a) developing writing and comprehension skills
- (b) genuine, critical engagement with course material

Aside from the discussion posts and replies, all written assignments designated under “Term Work” will be subject to the following evaluative criteria in addition to any particular criteria stated in each assignment’s outline:

- 1) Written assignments are to be presented in MLA citation style and format. All references must be cited parenthetically in your prose. Written assignments should be formatted following MLA style (typed, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman Font, numbered pages, identification info at top left-hand corner of page one). Students are encouraged to consult the Eighth Edition of the *MLA Handbook*.
- 2) Where applicable, significant consideration will be paid to:
 - (a) accuracy in identifying texts, authors and context
 - (b) effective expression and communication of ideas through proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence and paragraph structure

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Term Work:

- **Reading Response, due November 14, 15% of final grade:**

Students will write a reading response based on a text and topic assigned by the instructor. The assignment instructions will be provided in advance of the due date.

- **3 Writing Assignments, 15% each for a total of 45% of the final grade:**

Students will submit a creative piece in response to each writing assignment’s instructions, as well as a reflection on specific writing principles they have learned and employed in the piece. Students will get feedback from the instructor on their pieces, and they can select from

some of these pieces to revise and submit with their final project. Further explanation will be provided in the assignment instructions in advance of each writing assignment's due date.

⇒ **Due dates:**

- Writing Assignment 1
 - Early feedback assignment: Writing Assignment 1 will be graded and returned with feedback by the early feedback deadline.
- Writing Assignment 2
- Writing Assignment 3

- **Prompt Journal, 20% of the final grade (pass/fail grading):**

In our classes, students will be given writing prompts. Some of these will come from John Warner's *The Writing Practice* and others will be distributed in class. Each student is required to compile a journal of responses they write for prompts. These will be brief, engaging responses designed to get students thinking about the larger writing assignments they are working on. Further explanation will be provided in the assignment instructions in advance of the due date.

The prompt journal is designed to provide students with independent, manageable exercises which will help them develop as a writer both during and after this course. Written feedback will not be provided. To receive a passing grade, responses to prompts from 8 of our workshops must be adequately completed; otherwise, the journal will receive a failing grade.

- **Final Project, 20% of the final grade:**

Students will submit a final project which can consist of revised writing from the term and/or a new creative piece. Students will also submit a reflection on the experience of taking part in our workshops and class activities. Further explanation will be provided in the assignment instructions in advance of the due date.