

## **Writers In New York Creative NF Workshop, Summer 2021**

### **Course Description:**

The best literary nonfiction borrows several things from fiction: strong character development, well-developed, nuanced scenes, and a tangible narrative arc. But it also often bears the hallmarks of good journalism: thorough research, live reporting and a writer's quizzical, intelligent stance. This class meets directly at the intersection of fiction's energy and journalism's integrity—the place where literary nonfiction is born.

In this class, students will not only learn the components of a good story, but what makes an idea compelling to a diverse audience to begin with. We'll look at and write two forms of nonfiction: memoir, and the personal essay. We'll read masters in these styles as well as some newer voices—writers like Joan Didion, Jamaica Kincaid, bell hooks, and Jonnathan Franzen, to look at elements like tone and approach, argument and appeal. Each form is distinct, but we'll build on the skills we establish as the class moves along. The memoir, for instance, will be a short assignment, and based entirely on your lived experience. The personal essay can incorporate pieces of your life and belief systems, but must also integrate reporting and outside research.

Emphasis in this course will be on revision, and we will workshop both of the assignments so students can learn effective editing strategies for their own writing by working closely with their peers. Readings will be somewhat extensive and come from one compiled reader, available as a PDF.

### **Required Tools and Texts:**

- Course Reader, available as a PDF

### **Course requirements:**

- Attendance & participation
- Close readings of required texts
- Writing Exercises
- One memoir (1200- 1800 words)
- One personal essay (1500-2500 words)

### **Format**

Papers are to be typed, double-spaced, and stapled. When you are up for workshop, you must submit your paper to NYU Classes on or before the deadline we determine in class. You must staple all drafts (with my comments) to the final papers. Please do not submit written work that you do not want others to see.

### **Late and Missed Assignments**

Although drafts will not be graded, they still must be turned in on time. If you submit a draft late, I cannot promise to read it in time for my comments to be useful to you. If you do not turn in a draft, you are still responsible for turning in a final version of the paper, the grade of which will be lowered by one letter. Late final papers will adversely affect the grade as well. Remember that late or missed exercises or drafts often take their toll on the quality of final papers.

### **Attendance**

This only meets once per week, so your attendance is vital. Aside from religious observances, you are permitted only one absence without adversely affecting your grade.

### **Grading**

The final grade for the semester will be determined as follows:

Exercises	5%
Class participation	20%
Memoir	50%
Personal Essay	50%

**You must complete all of your work in order to pass the class.**

### **Week One**

#### **Class One**

Introduction

What is Literary Nonfiction?

In-class Exercise

Reading for next week: Luc Sante, Alison Smith and Oscar Hijuelos

Assignment for next week: Sante writing exercise

#### **Class Two**

Discuss Alison Smith and Oscar Hijuelos

Sante Exercises

Emotional truth versus literal truth

Writing Children: Kid logic

The physical world—using all five senses

Assignment: Prep for Workshop and read The Button Man

### **Week Two**

#### **Class Three**

Workshop Group A

#### **Class Four**

Workshop Group B  
Reading for next week: Rodriguez, Didion and Franzen

### **Week Three**

#### **Class Five**

#### **MEMOIRS DUE**

Discuss the Personal Essay: What is It?

Discuss Rodriguez and Didion

Place as Focus

Incorporating research

Reading for Next Class: McKibben, hooks and Kincaid

#### **Class Six**

Discuss McKibben, hooks and Kincaid

Idea as Focus

Style, voice persuasion

### **Week Four**

#### **Class Seven**

Workshop Group B

#### **Class Eight**

Workshop group Workshop Group A

**Final Personal Essays to be submitted via email after class is complete**