

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **JOUR6200.03: Writing Craft II Fall Term 2019 MFA in Creative Nonfiction**

#### **Faculty Supervisor:**

**Dean Jobb**, Professor of Journalism

[dean.jobb@ukings.ca](mailto:dean.jobb@ukings.ca)

**Office:** 902 422 1270 x143 • **Home:** 902 542 9335

• **Cell:** 902 476 3416

#### **Overview:**

Writing Craft II combines an intense summer residency at the University of King's College with a series of written assignments completed during the fall semester. Officially, the course runs from July 31–December 6, 2019.

In advance of the summer residency, students will read assigned texts and readings, and complete related assignments.

During the residency, students will attend daily lectures, workshops, and panels offered by faculty, mentors, and guest lecturers on topics related to the craft of creative nonfiction, and participate in discussions.

During the fall semester, students will submit an “End Notes” essay assignment — and respond online to assignments written by other students. Students will also read and critique two “canonical” books of creative nonfiction and write an op-ed/commentary based on their book project.

#### **Relationship to Other Classes:**

JOUR 6200.03 will deepen students' understanding of the creative nonfiction genre they will carry forward into the final year of the MFA and into their careers.

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of Writing Craft II, students will have:

- Improved their understanding of creative nonfiction writing as a distinct literary genre with its own history, ethics, craft and professional issues.
- Enhanced their nonfiction writing skills through workshoping their own and other students' writing.
- Learned to produce a readable, informative and transparent exposition of the research techniques and sources used to prepare a creative nonfiction book.
- Expanded their knowledge and understanding of the creative nonfiction canon.

- Learned how to write an op-ed/commentary that showcases their book project and expertise.

## Assignments

### Deadlines

#### August 1, 2019

- Writer-in-Residence assignment
- Editor-in-Residence assignment

#### Sept 1, 2019

- Book Report Choices

#### September 27, 2019

- Book Report #1

#### October 25, 2019

- Book Report #2

#### November 15, 2019

- End Notes Essay

#### November 29, 2019

- Responses to End Notes Essays

#### December 6, 2019

- Op-ed/commentary based on student's project

## Marking

Writer-in-Residence assignment	Pass/Fail
Editor-in-Residence assignment	Pass/Fail
Residency participation	10%
Book Reports (2 x 15% each)	30%
End Notes assignment	40%
Op-ed/commentary assignment	20%

### A. Pre-residency Assignments:

To make best use of the limited time the Writer-in-Residence and Editor-in-Residence have with us during the residency, we ask you to do some advance reading and two short assignments. You will write a 500 report on one of the W-in-R's books and a 500 report on a reading supplied by the E-in-R. These assignments will be circulated in advance of the residency.

**Deadline: Midnight Aug. 1, 2019**

### B. Post-residency Assignments:

Students will:

- read and critique two "canonical" books of creative nonfiction (1,000 words each)

- submit a 1,500-word narrative End Notes essay, explaining the “sausage-making” research, writing, ethical and other issues related to the development of their project
- write a 700-word op-ed/commentary based on their book project

## 1. Book Reports

Below is a selection of creative nonfiction titles by a variety of writers, whose names and titles were suggested by faculty, mentors and students. I’ve also included some CNF books by your mentors for consideration because they write great stuff, and because you should read them, too.

Pick two books from the list below. Or suggest books not on the list for which you can make a good case. And write about your choices in an interesting, entertaining, informative, even provocative way.

For each book you select, provide a brief outline of its content (400 words), a bio of the author (200 words), and an analysis of the book’s significance as a work of creative nonfiction (400 words). Total for each review: 1,000 words.

### Deadlines:

**Book Choices: September 1, 2019**

**Book Reports: September 27 (#1) and October 25, 2019 (#2)**

**Words: 1,000 each**

### Suggestions:

- Don’t “read” books you’ve already read. It’s a waste of this opportunity.
- Read at least one book outside your genre comfort zone. If you love literary journalism, for instance, read at least one personal memoir.

Author	Title
• Ackerman, Diane	The Moon By Whale Light
• Angelou, Maya	<i>I know why the caged bird sings</i>
• Alexievich, Svetlana	<i>Boys In Zinc</i>
• Alexievich, Svetlana	<i>War’s Unwomanly Face</i>
• Agee, James	Let Us Now Praise Famous Men
• Auletta, Ken	Three Blind Mice: How the TV Networks Lost Their Way
• Baldwin, James	Notes of a Native Son
• Berendt, John	Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil
• Bernstein, Carl, and Woodward, Bob	All the President’s Men
• Bissinger, Buzz	Friday Night Lights
• Blais, Madeleine	The Heart is an Instrument: Portraits in Journalism

• Boo, Katherine	<i>Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death &amp; Hope in a Mumbai Undercity</i>
• Bowden, Mark	Black Hawk Down
• Brown, Ian*	The Boy in the Moon
• Bydlowska, Jowita *	<i>Drunk Mom</i>
• Cameron, Stevie*	On The Farm
• Capote, Truman	In Cold Blood
• Cariou, Warren*	Lake of the Prairies
• Carr, David	Night of the Gun
• Carr, Mary	The Liar's Club
• Casey, Allan	Lakeland
• Chatwin, Bruce	The Songlines
• Chong, Denise*	The Concubine's Children
• Collins, Anne*	In the Sleep Room
• Conover, Ted	Newjack
• D'Allaire, Romeo*	Shake Hands With The Devil
• Danica, Elly*	Don't: A Woman's Word
• Denick, Barbara	Nothing to Envy
• de Villiers, Marq	Water
• Didion, Joan	Year of Magical Thinking
• Didion, Joan	Where I Come From
• Dryden, Ken	The Game
• Djwa, Sandra	Journey With No Maps
• Dillard, Annie	Pilgrim at Tinker Creek
• Dillard, Annie	An American Childhood
• Eggers, Dave	A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius
• Ephron, Nora	Crazy Salad
• Fagin, Dan	<i>Toms River: A Story of Science and Salvation</i>
• Falconer, Tim	That Good Night
• Falconer, Tim	Drive
• Falconer, Tim	Bad Singer
• Finkel, David	Good Soldiers
• Flynn, Sean	3000 Degrees
• Fong Bates, Judy*	The Year of Finding Memory
• French, Tom	South of Heaven
• Frost, Karolyn Smardz*	I've Got a Home in Glory Land
• Freidan, Betty	The Feminine Mystique
• Fuller, Alexandra	Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight

• Gelhorn, Martha	The View from the Ground
• Gill, Charlotte*	Eating Dirt
• Gilbert, Elizabeth	Eat, Pray, Love
• Glenn, Lorri Neilsen*	Threading Light
• Godfrey, Rebecca*	Under the Bridge: The True Story of Reena Virk
• Gray, Charlotte	The Massey Murders
• Greal, Lucy	Autobiography of a Face
• Greene, Melissa Faye	Praying for Sheetrock
• Greene, Melissa Faye	Last Man Out
• Gwyn, Sandra*	The Private Capital
• Harr, Jonathan	A Civil Action
• Hayes, David*	No Easy Answers
• Hayes, David*	<i>Power and Influence</i>
• Hemingway, Ernest	Death in the Afternoon
• Herr, Michael	Dispatches
• Herriot, Trevor*	River in a Dry Land
• Hersey, John	Hiroshima
• Hillenbrand, Laura	Seabiscuit
• Jobb, Dean	Empire of Deception
• Johnston, Wayne*	Baltimore's Mansion
• Junger, Sebastian	The Perfect Storm
• Junger, Sebastian	War
• Kapuscinski, Ryszard	Another Day of Life
• Kapuscinski, Ryszard	The Soccer War
• Karr, Mary	The Liar's Club
• Kidder, Tracy	Soul of a New Machine
• King, Ross*	Leonardo and the Last Supper
• Kimber, Stephen*	What Lies Across the Water
• Kimber, Stephen*	Sailors, Slackers and Blind Pigs
• Kingsolver, Barbara	Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food
• Kowlowitz, Alex	There Are No Children Here
• Krakauer, Jon	Into Thin Air
• Kramer, Jane	The Last Cowboy
• Langewiesche, William	<i>American Ground</i>
• Larson, Erik	<i>The Devil in the White City</i>
• Lewis, Michael	The Big Short
• LeBlanc, Adrian Nicole	Random Family

• Liebling, A. J.	The Earl of Louisiana
• Lopez, Barry	Arctic Dreams
• MacIntyre, Linden*	Causeway
• MacKinnon, J. B. *	Dead Man in Paradise
• MacMillan, Margaret	Paris 1919
• Mahoney, Rosemary	Whoredom in Kimmage
• Mailer, Norman	Armies of the Night
• Mairs, Nancy	Voice Lessons
• Mairs, Nancy	Remembering the Bone House
• Malcolm, Janet	The Journalist and the Murderer
• Maracle, Lee	I am Woman
• Marquez, Gabriel Garcia	News of a Kidnapping
• Mason Lee, Robert*	100 Monkeys: The Triumph of Popular Wisdom in Canadian Politics
• McFarlane, David*	The Danger Tree
• McGoogan, Ken*	Lady Franklin's Revenge
• McGoogan, Ken*	Fatal Passage
• McPhee, John	Annals of the Former World
• Mitchell, Joseph	Up in the Old Hotel
• Mitford, Jessica	The American Way of Death
• Moon, William Least Heat	Blue Highways
• Mukherjee, Siddhartha	<i>The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer</i>
• Mezlekia, Nega	Notes from the Hyena's Belly
• Mortenson, Greg	Three Cups of Tea
• Newman, Peter C.*	Distemper of Our Times
• Nikofoeruk, Andrew*	Saboteurs
• Orlean, Susan	The Orchid Thief
• Orwell, George	Road to Wigan Pier
• Orwell, George	Homage to Catalonia
• Patchett, Ann	Story of a Happy Marriage
• Paterniti, Michael	Driving Mr. Albert
• Plimpton, George	Paper Lion
• Raddall, Thomas*	In My Time
• Read, Piers Paul	Alive
• Richards, David Adams*	Lines on the Water
• Rhodes, Richard	The Making of the Atomic Bomb
• Roberts, Paul William	A War Against Truth: An Intimate account of the Invasion of Iraq

• Ross, Gary*	Sting: The Incredible Obsession of Brian Molony
• Ross, Lillian	Picture
• Sacco, Joe	Palestine
• Sack, John	M
• Seltzer, Richard	Confessions of a Knife
• Silcott, Jane*	Everything Rustles
• Simon, David	Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets
• Skloot, Rebecca	The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
• Smith, Graeme*	The Dogs are Eating Them Now
• Solnit, Rebecca	The Faraway Nearby
• Strayed, Cheryl*	Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail
• Stroud, Carsten*	Close Pursuit: A Week in the Life of an NYPD Homicide Detective
• Sullivan, Rosemary*	Shadowmaker: The Life of Gwendolyn MacEwan
• Talese, Gay	Honor Thy Father
• Talese, Gay	The Kingdom and the Power
• Terkel, Studs	Working
• Texier, Catherine	Breakup
• Thompson, Hunter	Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas
• Thompson, Hunter	Hell's Angels
• Thurston, Harry*	A Place Between the Tides
• Thurston, Harry*	Secrets of the Sands
• Toews, Miriam*	Swing Low
• Tracey, Lindalee*	On The Edge: A Journey into the Heart of Canada
• Vaillant, John*	The Golden Spruce
• Vaillant, John*	The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival
• Vassanji, M. G.	A Place Within: Rediscovering India
• Wallace, David Foster	<i>A Supposedly Fun Thing I Will Never Do Again</i>
• Walls, Jeanette	<i>The Glass Castle</i>
• Walker, Alice	<i>In Search of Our Mother's Gardens</i>
• Welty, Eudora	<i>One Writer's Beginnings</i>
• Westoll, Andrew*	<i>The Chimps of Fauna Sanctuary</i>
• White, Evelyn	<i>Alice Walker</i>
• Winchester, Simon	The Professor and the Madman
• Winchester, Simon	Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded
• Wolfe, Tom	Electric Kool Aid Acid Test
• Wolfe, Tom	The Right Stuff
• Wolff, Tobias	This Boy's Life

• Wright, Evan	The Killer Elite
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\* Canadian title

## 2. End Notes Essay

Complete a 1,500-word narrative End Notes essay, explaining the research, writing, ethical and other issues related to the development of your project.

As nonfiction writers, we sometimes reconstruct scenes and/or incorporate dialogue we didn't personally witness. Unlike daily journalists, we don't always attribute every fact or source of information within our text since, to do so, would slow down the narrative. And, unlike academics, we also prefer not to footnote every scrap of information within the text.

So how can readers decide whether to trust that the information we have presented as nonfiction is as accurate as we can make it? Many nonfiction writers use "End Notes" to explain how they've handled their research and attribution. Was that scene reconstructed from participants' journals or contemporary news accounts? In cases where recollections of events differ, how did the writer decide which view was more credible? Am I basing dialogue on available transcripts, or a report in the newspaper, or interviews with the participants, or my own recollections? Is material in quotation marks reproduced verbatim from interviews, court records or other documentation?

End Notes allow you to focus on the narrative flow in your storytelling while still providing those readers who want to know more about how and why you did what you did with transparency about your sources of information and the choices you made.

Many End Notes sections begin with an essay-like overview to explain the writer's general approach followed by specific end notes for sections or chapters in the manuscript.

What I'm looking for in this assignment is that overview — 1,500 words explaining your effort to tell the truth as best you can. I know, your manuscript isn't complete. Work with what you've done. You'll likely incorporate some or all of this assignment into the End Notes section of your book.

To give you a better sense of the kind of essay I'm looking for, check DropBox to find introductory sections of End Notes for published books, as well as some completed assignments by former students.



**Deadline: November 15, 2019**

**Words: 1,500**

**End Notes Assignment Rubric (40 per cent)**

<b>Criteria</b>	Exceptional "A"	Acceptable B	Failure <B-
<b>Content (60)</b>	Provides the reader with clear, comprehensive, detailed information on the sources of all facts and information not otherwise obvious from the text itself.	Provides the reader with information on the sources of most facts and information not otherwise obvious from the text itself.	Fails to provide the reader with useful information on the sources of all facts and information not otherwise obvious from the text itself.
<b>Writing style (30)</b>	Despite the fact-heavy content, the writing is compelling. It hooks the reader and sustains interest throughout.	The writing is generally engaging, but has some dry spots. In general, it is focused and keeps the reader's attention.	The writing has little personality. The reader quickly loses interest and stops reading.
<b>Grammar, Spelling, Writing Mechanics (10)</b>	The writing is free or almost free of errors. Follows <i>Chicago Manual of Style</i>	There are occasional errors, but they don't represent a major distraction or obscure meaning. Style inconsistent.	There are so many errors that meaning is obscured. The reader is confused and stops reading.

### 3. Responses to End Notes Essays

Read five of the essays submitted by your fellow students, then respond to each one in 300 words, primarily as a reader. Address the following questions:

- Does the essay make clear how the writer gathered and evaluated key information used in the book and/or the writer's approach to any factual issues raised by the book?
- Is the essay written in an engaging way that goes beyond simply providing information about sources?
- Does reading the essay intrigue you enough that you'd like to read more.

Given that most readers come to End Notes *after* they've read the book, we're — me too — at a disadvantage reading these as standalone essays. There's nothing to be done about that, except to acknowledge reality and do our best to be helpful to the writer by raising any questions we think readers might have.

**Logistics:** Nested several layers deep in the “Dropbox” folder, there is a folder entitled “Submit EndNotes responses here.” Inside that you'll find folders with each student's name on it. Save your response inside the appropriate folder using the following file-naming convention:” [Yourlastname] on [Writer'slastname]'s essay”.

**Deadline:** November 29, 2019

**Words:** 300 each

#### 4. Assignment: Op-Ed/Commentary

Publishers encourage – make that expect – authors to write and publish op-eds and commentaries based on their books, to help with promotion and to showcase the author's expertise and writing style.

**Assignment:** Write a 700-word op-ed/commentary based on your book project or a related subject or issue (samples will be posted in DropBox).

**Deadline:** December 6, 2019

#### Op-Ed/Commentary Assignment Rubric (10%)

Criteria	Exceptional “A”	Acceptable B	Failure <B-
<b>Analysis and Relevance to Student's Project and Expertise (50)</b>	Provides the reader with a clear, thoughtful analysis of an issue or subject related to the student's book project.	Provides the reader with an acceptable analysis of an issue or subject related to the student's book project.	Fails to provide the reader with a clear analysis of an issue or subject related to the student's book project.
<b>Writing Style and Readability (50)</b>	The writing is compelling. Hooks the reader and sustains interest throughout.	The writing is engaging, but has dry spots. In general, it keeps the reader's attention.	The writing has little personality. The reader quickly loses interest and stops reading.

## 5. Residency Participation

The Summer Residency is a unique opportunity for students to engage intensely with faculty, mentors, guest presenters and each other about the art and craft of creative nonfiction.

We recognize individuals engage in different ways: asking questions or questioning assumptions during presentations, participating in organized events like micro-readings, having one-to-one discussions with guests at the end of their events, discussing a point over beer during study hall, emailing to follow up on an issue that was raised ...

We also recognize participation includes other aspects of interaction: showing up on time, focusing on presentations rather than social media feeds, etc.

We assume you know and understand all this, so your participation mark starts at A-. That's the benchmark. Those whose participation goes above and beyond will earn extra points, those who don't live up to expectations will see their mark reduced.

If we notice anyone slipping below the benchmark during the first week, we'll point it out privately so the student has a chance to rectify — or respond — before the end of the residency. If you have concerns about participation, please don't hesitate to discuss them with me.

### Course Texts

Friedman, Jane, *The Business of Being a Writer*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Hart, Jack. *Storycraft: The Complete Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Rabiner, Susan and Fortunato, Alfred. *Thinking Like Your Editor*. Norton. New York, 2003.

### Suggested Texts

Gutkind, Lee. *The Art of Creative Nonfiction: Writing and Selling the Literature of Reality*. New York: Wiley, 1997.

Kidder, Tracy, and Richard Todd. *Good Prose: The Art of Nonfiction*. Toronto: Random House Canada, 2013.

Kramer, Mark and Wendy Call. *Telling True Stories: A Nonfiction Writer's Guide from the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University*. New York: Plume, 2007.

Curtis, Richard. *How to Be Your Own Literary Agent: An Insider's Guide to Getting Your Book Published*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

Gutkind, Lee. *Keep It Real: Everything You Need to Know About Researching and Writing Creative Nonfiction*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.

## Academic Performance

The course uses the following grading scale:

A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	77-79
B	73-76
B-	70-72
F	<70

Students must achieve a minimum grade of B- in all classes. Disputes over academic performance and assessment will be dealt with according to the Academic Regulations of the School of Journalism and the Dalhousie University Faculty of Graduate Studies. For more information, see the King's calendar and the Dalhousie University Graduate Calendar.

### Accommodation

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests, quizzes and exams should make their request to the Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation (OSAA) prior to or at the outset of each academic term. Please see [www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca](http://www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca) for more information and to obtain Form A - Request for Accommodation.

A note taker may be required to assist a classmate. There is an honorarium of \$75/course/term. If you are interested, please contact OSAA at 494-2836 for more information.

Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.

### **Academic Integrity**

The School of Journalism vigorously enforces the highest standards of academic integrity.

Plagiarism is the duplication in whole or in part of work created for another purpose. This can be work done by another student, published work or even a student's own work that has been re-purposed for a class. Plagiarism can be reflected in actual language, or in the duplication of an idea or a sequence. Do not cut and paste information from the Internet. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, consult your instructor. All cases of suspected plagiarism will be dealt with according to the policy.

Academic integrity issues will be dealt with by the Academic Integrity Officer of the University of King's College, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Dalhousie Senate, as outlined in the King's calendar and the Dalhousie University Graduate Calendar.

As well, the School of Journalism has a statement of ethics and professional standards that must be followed. It can be found at <http://ethics.kingsjournalism.com>. Please read this material carefully.

### **Grammar and Style**

Proper usage and grammar are an expectation for all written work in this course. Although this course is offered through the School of Journalism, the publishing content is intended primarily for book content. As a result, we will follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* for all written work.

### **Submitting Written Assignments**

Written assignments should be submitted as email attachments using Microsoft Word.

- The file name should include your name and a one- or two-word description of the assignment. "smith book report 1.docx."
- The document should include, at the top:  
Name:  
Date:  
Subject:
- Please use page numbering and/or a header.

### **Deadlines**

Deadlines are crucial in the publishing industry. Learning to meet deadlines is a

necessity for writers. So working to deadlines is a part of this course. Please email all assignments by the stated deadlines. If allowance is needed – for health or other reasons – please email or phone to request more time.