

Instructor: Rowena Chodkowski

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Office Hours: Friday, 10:00AM-12:00PM or by appointment

Course Description:

ENL5NF is an introductory course that will survey a wide variety of forms and styles for prose writing, with a focus on nonfiction writing. Through regular writing exercises and assignments, we'll be generating new work and exploring different approaches to nonfiction, as well as basic craft elements such as setting, imagery and medium. By the end of this course, you'll have new tools to write the type of prose that speaks to you. You'll also have improved your group work skills, practiced constructive criticism, and honed your sense of observation.

This course will be held synchronously, and a strong attendance record is required to pass the class. That said, I understand there may be circumstances that may affect your ability to consistently attend synchronous online lectures. What I will ask of you is this: please communicate with me. Reach out to your instructor if you have a family, medical, or mental health emergency, or if you are concerned about meeting the requirements of this course.

Learning Goals:

Learning goals are transferable skills that will be useful beyond this class.

Constructive Criticism: Give constructive criticism that will highlight what someone is doing well and explore what can be improve. Graciously accept feedback, including negative feedback, without reading it as a personal attack. Improve your project by taking feedback into consideration while remaining true to your own vision.

Compelling Composition: Improving your storytelling and prose skills will help you make more compelling, exciting arguments in other facets of your life, whether it's telling killer jokes at a party, writing a viral think-piece, or spicing up your academic essays.

Observation: Many of the exercises we are doing for this course involve closely observing the strange world around us, attempting to see the world in new ways. Keen observation can be helpful when you are working on a project, writing a paper, or dreaming up a new idea.

Course Delivery:

All links are on the "links" section of our Canvas page

Canvas will be used to hand in all assignments and provide written feedback required for participation in this course. All readings will be posted on, or linked via, Canvas.

Slack will provide an informal space for us to work together and build community online. It'll be a place where we can start informal discussions, share resources, and grow together.

Zoom will be used for open hours, guest speakers and synchronous meetings. Camera Policy: No one is required to turn on their camera. However, if you prefer to keep your camera off, please upload a profile picture to Zoom. It makes teaching a lot easier when we can put a face to a name!

Setmore: I use Setmore to plan one-on-one meetings via Zoom. If you use Setmore to book an appointment, you will find our meeting link on the “Zoom” section of our Canvas page. If the link doesn’t work, wait a minute and refresh; this could be a connectivity issue on my end.

Course Format

We will focus this course around building a “scrapbook” or journal, which will be part of your final project. Over the first four weeks, we will focus on discussion and writing exercises. In the middle of the quarter, you will submit a project proposal and we will meet one-on-one to discuss the format of your proposed project. The final weeks of this quarter will be spend in small workshops, reviewing each others’ work and providing crucial, constructive feedback.

Workshop Format: The class will be divided into two groups of 10-11 students each. You’ll submit your manuscript via Canvas the week before you are workshopped, leaving plenty of time for your group members to read it. Group members will be able to see your manuscript through peer review on Canvas; feedback letters should be submitted as peer review.

Grading:

Journal: 25%

Participation: 25%

Workshop Portfolio/Chapbook (final): 50%

Extra Credit: Up to 10%

Journal /Exercises (25%): Follow along with the in-class assignments and keep up your journal. Remember to date your entries!

Participation (25%): Attend scheduled synchronous sessions, participate in class discussion, and attend your required one-on-one meeting. Submit feedback during the workshop component of the class.

Feedback Guidelines: Feedback will be assigned via the Peer Review function on Canvas. It is a component of the participation grade.

Consider what is working well and why it is effective. Also, what can be improved upon and why? Make sure to pay attention to craft elements. Some things you can comment on include the effectiveness of the work’s beginning/ending, use of details and description, characterization, conflict, setting, dialogue, point of view, use of time, and pacing. You are not limited to these categories, nor must you cover all of them. Choose a few specific things that you think are most important for the piece and most helpful to the writer for the next draft (the revision).

Workshop Portfolio/Chapbook (50%): Your final project for this course will be drawn from the journaling work done in the exploratory part of class. **You must submit 10-12 pages of well-edited prose** and a **500-word reflection** about your work in the course.

Portfolio: 10-12 pages of well-edited prose, double-spaced and in Times New Roman or Garamond (12pt font, double-spaced). Your final project can take any form you wish: you could write one long essay, a series of short/flash pieces, or even combine your work in a multimedia format. You'll discuss your approach in your one-on-one meeting.

Reflection: 500 words minimum on the revision process (what was difficult? what was exciting?), any future plans for the work (what would you do in your next draft?) and which reading or writing exercise influenced your work. It should account for the revisions you've made since turning in your original working drafts, and address what it is you've come to understand or wonder about nonfiction.

Extra Credit: Submit your work to literary magazines and contests for extra credit. This can catch you up for 10% of total points. Screenshots of your submission confirmation are required for extra credit.

Resources:

COVID-19: <https://studentaffairs.ucdavis.edu/news/coronavirus-faqs> [Links to an external site.](#)

Plagiarism: <https://cieuniv.ucdavis.edu/student-life/what-is-plagiarism> [Links to an external site.](#)

Academic Code of Conduct: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf> [Links to an external site.](#)

Disability Accommodation: This class is inclusive to all students. If a student requires a disability accommodation, they should request one through the Student Disability Center. If you are still in the process of requesting an accommodation, please contact your instructor. I cannot issue an incomplete grade or give extensions without confirmation from student support services.

Pet Policy: This class has a strict pet policy for Zoom meetings. If a pet is present on the screen, the class will need to take a short break, and the pet's human must introduce their pet to the class! All pets are encouraged to make an occasional Zoom appearance!

Week 1: Soft Launch

Use this time to get familiar with the syllabus, course format, and to post an introduction on our Slack page.

Tuesday, January 5: NO CLASS.

Make an account and an introductory post on Slack.

Thursday, January 7: Synchronous Meeting (4:10-5:15)

Icebreakers and introductions! Let's get to know each other.

Weekend Assignment: Collect 10 photographs from your possession. Get the dates (even if not exact) for each photograph. Two photographs should be from before 2020, and you should take one picture today. These photographs will be an important part of your scrapbook/journal, so please choose carefully—but remember, you can add more photographs or items to your scrapbook at any time.

Week 2: Writing For, and With, Media

This week, we'll be thinking about what it means to write nonfiction in our current multimedia environment. How does that change our approach to writing? What opportunities does it allow us? We won't be having class on Tuesday, January 12 because your instructor has a prior commitment.

Tuesday, January 12: NO CLASS

Required Reading (before Thursday):

Selection from Teju Cole's *Known and Strange Things* (tags: art, photography, international, racial violence, death)

Selection from Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* (tags: French, dense)

Jiayang Fang, "How my Mother and I Became Chinese Propaganda" (tags: death, illness, covid-19, cyberbullying)

Tuesday's Assignment: Share one of the photographs you've found with the class on Slack. Write one or two lines about the reason you chose this photograph. Start a casual conversation!

Thursday, January 14: Synchronous Meeting (4:10-5:15)

Lecture/Discussion: Writing For, and With, Media

Weekend Assignment: Create a Google Doc for your journal and upload the link to the assignment, "Your Evolving Journal." Follow the instructions on the assignment. Paste all of your photographs in the document.

Week 3: In the Details

This week, we'll be honing our senses and thinking about ways to dig exciting details out of the familiar environments around us.

Tuesday, January 19: Synchronous Meeting (4:10-5:15)

Required Reading: Selection from WG Sebald's *Austerlitz* (tags: translation, international, WW2, photography)

Renee Gladman, selection from *Calamities* (tags: introspection, political, art)

In-Class Exercise: Be the Marble, Squidward! Lick the Marble!

Tuesday, January 21: Synchronous Meeting (4:10-5:15)

Lecture/Discussion: Looking for the Details

In-Class Exercise: Browsing for Details, Part I

Weekend Assignment: Complete Part II of Browsing for Details (in your Google doc)

Week 4: We're Going to Disney!

This week, we'll be reading two essays about visiting Disney theme parks. We'll be using these as a way to understand how to write about time and place, and also how to think about writing *your* perspective.

January 26: Synchronous Meeting (4:10-5:15)

Required Reading: Umberto Eco, selection from *Travels in Hyperreality* (tags: essay, consumerism, hyperreality)

Jeannine Capo Crucet, selection from *My Time Among the Whites: Notes from an Unfinished Education* (tags: race, immigrant experience, American)

January 28: Synchronous Meeting (4:10-5:15)

In-Class Exercise: Where Are We Going Again? Part I

Weekend Assignment: Part II of Where Are We Going Again?

Week 5: Writing the Political/Meetings for Week 7 Workshop Participants

Tuesday, Feb 1: Synchronous Meeting (4:10-5:15)

Required Reading: Mahmoud Darwish, selections from *Memory for Forgetfulness* and *A River Dies of Thirst* (tags: international, translation, political, death, war)

Claudia Rankine, selections from *Just Us - Daughter, Lemonade* (tags: American, political, race, parenting)

In-Class Exercise: Journaling Exercise

Thursday, Feb 3: Synchronous Meeting (4:10-6:00)

Lecture/Discussion: Writing the Political

Meetings with Week 7 Workshop Participants:

Friday, Feb 4:

Office Hours! Meetings with Week 7 Workshop Participants:

Weekend Assignment: Project Proposal. Using the Google Forms survey, write (and submit) your proposal. After you complete this survey, you will get a confirmation code. Please type the text of the code into the assignment on Canvas.

Week 6: Workshop is beginning Soon! /Meetings for Everyone Else

This week, we'll be meeting individually (during class time or office hours) to discuss a roadmap for your final project. Now that you have collected all these scraps...what do you want to do with them? **Expect each meeting to last about 20 minutes or so.**

Tuesday, Feb 9: Individual Meetings

Bonus Content Upload: Better Sentences

Writing Exercise: Part II of Where are We Going Again?

Due: Group 1, Week 1 Workshop Manuscript:

Thursday, Feb 11: Individual Meetings

Bonus Content Upload: Memoir/Personal Writing

Writing Exercise: TBA

Due: Group 2, Week 1 Workshop Manuscript:

Weekend Assignment: Read the manuscript and write a 250-word feedback letter.

Week 7: Workshop in Full Swing

Tuesday, Feb 16: Workshop Group 1 Synchronous Meeting (4:10-5:45)

Due: Group 1, Week 2 Workshop Manuscript:

Thursday, Feb 18: Workshop Group 2 Synchronous Meeting (4:10-5:45)

Due: Group 2, Week 2 Workshop Manuscript:

Weekend Assignment: Read the manuscripts and write a 250-word feedback letter.

Week 8: Last Week of Workshop

Tuesday, Feb 23: Group 1 Final Workshop Meeting (4:10-5:45)

Thursday, Feb 25: Group 2 Final Workshop Meeting (4:10-5:45)

Weekend Assignment: Work on your final project! Make sure it's ready for editing next week.

Week 9: Wrapping it Up!

Tuesday, March 2: Group 1 Hands-On Editing Session (4:10-6:10)

Thursday, March 4: Group 2 Hands-On Editing Session (4:10-6:10)

Week 10: Celebration!

Tuesday, March 9: No class. Open/Drop-in Hours!

Thursday, March 11: Celebration! Select 1-2 paragraphs from your work and get ready to read and share with the class. Celebrate your progress and all the writing in your future!

Final Project will be due at the beginning of finals week--date TBA