

Creative Nonfiction for Beginners @ Hugo House

Instructor: Beth Slattery

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Meets: Mondays 5-7 p.m.

5/22, 6/5, 6/12, 6/19, 6/26, 7/3 (Note: No class on Memorial Day)

Course Description & Objectives:

Whether you have dreams of crafting memoir, publishing personal essay, or recording your memories for posterity, this course will give you the basics you need to write more satisfying and richly developed prose. We will look at examples from literary nonfiction that highlight the issues we will be studying, such as narration, description, dialogue, scene, etc. Students will generate 15-20 pages, which will receive extensive instructor feedback.

Level: Introductory

Week 1:

- Introduction to instructor, course, and class members.
- Discussion of the types of Creative Nonfiction with some examples.
- Generative writing activity to help students locate topics to write about or enhance topics they have already chosen.
- Discussion about truth and our responsibility to the people who inhabit our nonfiction.
- Workshop schedule organized.

Week 2:

- Description discussion (place, activities, people, etc.)
- Discussion of weekly reading. Be sure you have read:
 - excerpt from Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Island* (provided)
 - Joan Didion's "Goodbye to All That" available:
 - <http://essaysspring13.qwriting.qc.cuny.edu/files/2013/04/Joan-Didion-Goodbye-to-All-That.pdf>
- Writing activity focused on description.
- Workshop:

Week 3:

- Character & Dialogue discussion (including narrator persona)
- Discussion of weekly reading. Be sure you have read:

- examples of dialogue (provided)
- excerpt from Dave Eggers *A Heart Breaking Work of Staggering Genius* (provided)
- excerpt from David Mura's *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei*
- Phillip Lopate. "Writing Personal Essays: On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character." *Writing Creative Nonfiction* ed. Carolyn Forché & Philip Gerard. Cincinnati: Story Press, 2001. Available online:

<http://www.unm.edu/~gmartin/Essays/Writing%20Personal%20Essays%20-%20Turning%20Oneself%20into%20a%20Character.pdf>

- Writing activity focused on character.
- Workshop:

Week 4:

- Scene, structure & pacing discussion.
- Discussion of weekly reading. Be sure you have read:
 - Joanne Beard. "Out There." *Creating Nonfiction* ed. Becky Bradway & Daniel Hesse (provided)
 - Jeanne Marie Laskas "Sink of Swim" available: <http://www.jeannemarielaskas.com/columns/significant-others/#swim>
- Writing activity on scene.
- Workshop:

Week 5:

- Style discussion (point of view, rhythm, metaphor, sentence structure, etc.)
- Discussion of weekly reading. Be sure you have read:
 - Eula Biss. "No-man's-Land." *The Believer* Feb 2008. Available: http://www.believermag.com/issues/200802/?read=article_biss
- Writing activity.
- Workshop:

Week 6:

- Revision discussion.
- Discussion of weekly reading. Be sure you have read:
- Revising activity (be sure to bring your manuscript).
- Concluding thoughts.
- Workshop:

Jeanne Marie Laskas. "Underworld." *GQ* 1 May 2007.

<http://www.gq.com/story/coal-mines-underground-economy?printable=true>