
CREATIVE NONFICTION: CRAFTING PERSONAL NARRATIVES in Fall 2019 (CL3300)

Course Code	CL3300	Professor(s)	Daniel Gunn
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-111
Class Schedule	W: 13:45-18:15 in G-207	Office Hours	Monday and Thursday 10h00-10h30
Credits	4	Email	dgunn@aup.edu
Semester	Fall 2019	Office Tel. Ext.	576

Course Description

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This workshop explores what goes into what we call “personal narrative”. It is designed for students who wish to work on the question of what “personal” means exactly, and how far memoir and autobiography are distinct from fiction.

Must the personal necessarily be written in the first person? Assignments are aimed at helping students to judge if first person is inevitably the best way to stay personal, or if there are potential advantages to third-person narratives, and, even, to second-person. The course explores narrative structure, description, characterisation, dialogue, atmosphere, under- and over-statement, and the very important question of *context* (and how context can be moulded).

Some of the recent and contemporary authors who will be read may include: Paul Auster, Roland Barthes, Samuel Beckett, Sylvia Brownrigg, Sophie Calle, Lydia Davis, Marguerite Duras, Alison Leslie Gold, Adam Gopnik, and Georges Perec. Invited writers will run masterclasses, and trips may be made, where relevant, to see writers talk in Paris.

This workshop accommodates students who are new to creative nonfiction writing or have taken workshops before but wish to continue developing their skills in the discipline. A final portfolio includes all weekly assignments and one long piece.

Course Learning Outcomes

To develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the art of literary nonfiction through practice and analysis
To develop skills in editing and writing strategy
To recognize and practice fiction techniques for literary nonfiction
To study and practice different genres within literary nonfiction, i.e. travel, nature, memoir, etc

General Education

Course Outline

PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE FOR CREATIVE WRITING:

CRAFTING PERSONAL NARRATIVES

FALL 2019

Wednesday 4 September

Introduction to work methods and expectations

Writing of self through grammar questions

Wednesday 11 September (Week 2 on Blackboard)

Discussion: developing a voice

Read: Vivian Gornick: *The Situation and the Story*; Lydia Davis, selected stories; Kafka, selected stories; Sophie Calle, selected stories

Writing assignment: Write of your immediate environment in a way that turns it magical *and* real: the infraordinary

Submit to me by Sunday 8th at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 18 September (Week 3 on Blackboard)

Discussion: Distancing the self, achieving neutrality that is also appealing; third-, second-, and first-person narrative

Read: Beckett, *Company*; Perec, *A Man Asleep*; Gunn, *Almost You*

Writing assignment: Write of your intimate self using the second person

Submit to me by Sunday 15th at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 25 September (Week 4 on Blackboard)

Discussion: the epistolary form / humour

Read: Geoff Dyer, *Essays*; Davis Sedaris, *Essays*

Writing assignment: Write humour – the difficulty of being funny

Submit to me by Sunday 22nd at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 2 October (Week 5)

Discussion: Addiction/Obsession

Read: Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (extracts); Alison Leslie Gold, *Found and Lost*; view *Trainspotting* (the movie)

Writing assignment: How to write addiction/obsession?

Submit to me by Sunday 30th at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 9 October (Week 6)

Presentation with the author

Read: Alison Leslie Gold, *Found and Lost*; Roland Barthes, *Mourning Diary* (extracts)

Writing assignment: writing grief and mourning

NB: Submit to me by Sunday 6th at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 16 October (Week 7)

Discussion: the epistolary form

Read: Lydia Davis, *Angry letters*; Kafka, "Letter to his Father"

Writing assignment: Write to other in a way that says more of self

Submit to me by Sunday 13th at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 23 October (Week 8 on Blackboard)

Presentation with the author

Read: Sylvia Brownrigg, *Work in Progress*; Paul Auster, *The Invention of Solitude*; Georges Perec, *Essay*

Writing assignment: writing historically of family

NB: Submit to me by Sunday 3rd at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 30 November: Toussaint holiday

Wednesday 6 November (Week 9)

One-on-one discussion of large-scale project. Come prepared: 20 minutes each student.

Wednesday 13 November (Week 10 on Blackboard)

Discussion: love and sex and how to write it without sounding cheesy/embarrassing

Read: Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*

Writing assignment: story of initiation

Submit to me by Monday 10th at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 20 November (Week 12 on Blackboard)

Discussion: Tourism

Read: Adam Gornick, *Essays*; Geoff Dyer, *Essays*

Writing assignment: the experience of being a tourist

Submit to me by Sunday 17th at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 27 November

Read: Open Week: topic to be decided

Submit to me by Sunday 24th at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Wednesday 4 December (Week 14 on Blackboard)

Discussion: The site-specific self (in space and time)

Read: Sophie Calle, from *And So Forth*; Georges Perec, site-specific essays

Writing assignment: staging the self: site-specific exercise

Submit to me by Monday 1st at 14.00h at dgunn@aup.edu

Exam Session:

Discussion: the full-length essays produced by students during the semester.

Submit to me online by Friday 6th at dgunn@aup.edu and bring a copy to class on the day of final exam session.

Textbooks

Title	Author	Publisher	ISBN	Required
The Lover, Wartime Notesbooks, Practicalities	Marguerite Duras	Everyman	9781841593807	Yes
Found and Lost	Alison Leslie Gold	Notting Hill Editions	9781910749593	Yes

Attendance Policy

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Excessive absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student's absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and *especially during the exam periods*. Students may not miss the final exam period, and must make their arrangements accordingly.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STATEMENT: As an Anglophone university, The American University of Paris is strongly committed to effective English language mastery at the undergraduate level. Most courses require reading and formal written and oral presentations in English, and AUP students are expected to strive to achieve proficiency in English in all domains as part of their course work. To that end, professors include English proficiency among the criteria for course evaluation, often referring students to the university Writing Lab where they may obtain help on specific assignments. Proficiency in English is monitored at various points throughout the student's academic career, most notably during admissions and advising processes, while the student is completing general education requirements, and

accomplishment of degree program courses and senior theses.

Grading Policy

GRADING:

In class participation and performance: 35%

Portfolio comprising 8 in-class assignments and

final long piece (minimum of 3,000 words) and an abstract/commentary 65%

Other
