

English 2817-WDE: Writing Across Genres – Nonfiction Prose

Instructor Dr. Scott Pound (RB 3037, 343-8298, spound@lakeheadu.ca)

Office Hours T & Th 10:30-12:00 and by appointment via Google hangout app

Description

A course in nonfiction storytelling focused on the use of literary devices and techniques to create factually accurate narratives.

Course Website

Desire2Learn (or myCourseLink)¹

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify parts of speech, parts of the sentence, and types of sentences
- Recognize, use, and combine appropriate genre conventions
- Identify and distinguish literary modes
- Plan and execute a composition strategy through the stages of brainstorming, researching, drafting, and rewriting.
- Produce unified, engaging compositions that are free from errors in grammar, usage, and punctuation, that exhibit effective structure (lead, middle, ending) and that employ literary devices (plot, setting, point of view, characterization, figures of speech, and theme).
- Transform facts, memory, experience, data, testimony, and observation into narration, exposition, description, and argumentation.
- Read like a writer (i.e. be able to discern and evaluate the stylistic, syntactic, and rhetorical decisions of other writers)
- Discuss and evaluate the work of contemporary authors
- Offer constructive criticism on the writing of fellow class members

Assignments and Evaluation	Worth	Due Dates
“This I Believe” Assignment (500 words)	5	Jan. 20
Reading Log	25	Feb. 14 / April 3
Short Weekly Assignments and Exercises	25	Friday of each week
Formal Analysis (500-1000 words)	5	Jan. 27
Personal Essay (1500-2000 words)	15	Feb. 24
Major Composition Pitch (250-500 words)	5	March 2
First Draft of Major Composition (optional)	5	(bonus) March 20
Major Composition (2000-2500 words)	20	April 3

¹ <https://mycourseslink.lakeheadu.ca/d2l/home>

“This I Believe” Assignment – a statement of personal belief in narrative form. Detailed guidelines provided.

Reading Log – a record of your required and independent reading for the course with annotations and responses. Minimum one entry per week.

Short Weekly Assignments and Exercises – a compendium all of your assignments and exercises. Minimum two per week.

Formal Analysis – formal analysis of “[Hiroshima](#)” or “What is Code?” Detailed guidelines provided.

Personal Essay – a short work (2000 words) of autobiographical nonfiction that uses literary devices and narrative to speak to a broad audience about a distinctive and significant experience, event, or idea.

Major Composition Pitch – a short persuasive description of your story idea for the major composition prepared as if for a professional editor. Detailed guidelines provided.

Major Composition First Draft – a complete (in that it has a beginning, middle, and end) first draft of your major composition

Major Composition – a longer work of narrative nonfiction that tackles a distinctive and significant issue, topic, experience, event, or idea.

Assignment Policies

- All assignments are individual assignments and cannot be completed collaboratively.
- If you require an extension, you must ask for one before the due date.
- Unless you ask for (and receive) an extension, late essays will be penalized by 2% per day (to a maximum of 20%).
- All assignments must be in MLA format, double spaced, with 1" margins, and in 12-point font.
- Exceptions to these policies are allowed only with a doctor's note or other appropriate documentation.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you've submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean, who is responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. It might also be subject to more severe academic penalties. See the [Student Code of Conduct](#)².

University Policies

² <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-conduct>

- Students in this course are expected to conform to the Student Code of Conduct - Academic Integrity³.
- **Accommodations:** Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code⁴. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the course. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS)⁵ and register as early as possible.
- This course outline is available online through the English Department homepage⁶ and/or the Desire2Learn or My CourseLink¹ site for the course.

Archive

Save copies of all work produced for the course in the event of retrieval mishaps.

³ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-conduct/academic-integrity/node/51239>

⁴ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>

⁵ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>

⁶ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english>

Schedule	Topics	Required Reading
Week 1 (Jan. 6-10)	Introduction to the Course Imitation	Jerome Bruner, " Life as Narrative "
Week 2 (Jan. 13-17)	Nonfiction Modes and Genres Diction Parts of Speech	Henry M. Peyre, " Nonfictional Prose " Writers on Words Overused and Tired Words Parts of Speech Diction
Week 3 (Jan. 20-24)	The Four Cardinal Virtues (of Writing) Phrases and Clauses Sentences The Personal Essay	John Hersey, " Hiroshima ," Identifying Independent and Dependent Clauses " Write with Clarity " Personal essays page at longform.org
Week 4 (Jan. 27-31)	The Writing Process	Audre Lord, " The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action " George Saunders, " What Writers Really Do When They Write " George Orwell, " Why I Write "
Week 5 (Feb. 3-7)	Plot & Structure	John McPhee, " Structure " Sam Anderson, " The Mind of John McPhee " On Paragraphs " Exposition " How to Structure a Story "
Week 6 (Feb. 10-14)	Rhetoric I	Leslie Jamison, " On Running and Drinking " Rhetoric " Kairos " Rhetorical Appeals "
Feb. 17-21	Reading Week	

Week 7 (Feb. 24-28)	Rhetoric II	Zadie Smith, " Dance Lessons for Writers " " Style " " Figurative Language " " Colloquial Language "
Week 8 (Mar. 2-6)	Setting	Sarah Manguso, " The Cure " " Use Concrete Sensory Language " " Describing "
March 6		Last Day to Drop Without Academic Penalty
Week 9 (Mar. 9-13)	Characterization	Oliver Sacks, " An Anthropologist on Mars " Claudia Rankine, " The Meaning of Serena Williams "
Week 10 (Mar. 16-20)	Image & Lyricism in Prose	Patricia Lockwood, " How Do We Write Now? " Joan Didion, " On Self-Respect " " Euphony "
Week 11 (Mar. 23-17)	Voice	Paul Ford, " What is Code? " " The Writer's Voice "
Week 12 (Mar. 30 – Apr. 3)	Simplicity, Unity, & Theme	Nora Ephron, " A Few Words About Breasts " " Simple vs. Simplistic " Zinsser on Simplicity and Clutter