

# Creative Critical Writing Workshop

IML 585 | 2 units | SCI 209

Fall 2016

Thursdays, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

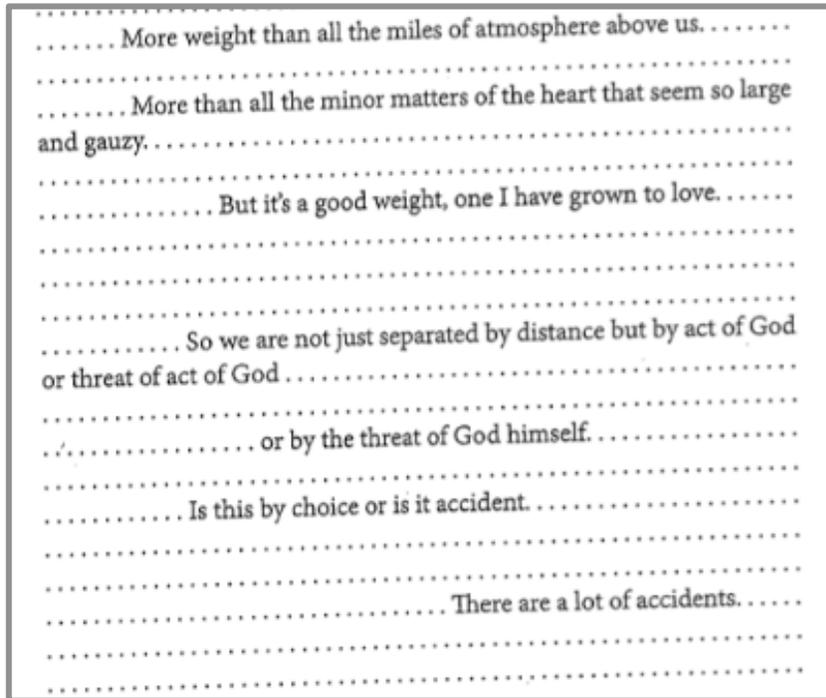
<https://mapwiki.sca.usc.edu/wiki/>

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*Creative Critical Writing Workshop* is a craft-based exploration of techniques for writing about – or alongside, next to, or near – film, video, still images, sound, and other media forms. Moving beyond the conventions of scholarly writing, the course explores forms that have been variously dubbed creative nonfiction, the hybrid essay, memoir, the fourth genre, the lyric essay, the video essay, and poetic or vernacular criticism; and it considers writers who have contributed often stunning examples to the form, including Susan Sontag, Joan Didion, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Maggie Nelson, Gary Indiana, Hollis Frampton, Susan Howe, and more. In the class, students will have the opportunity to read/view work by these authors, and others; to explore the rich history of alternative writing techniques; and to experience work that might be situated within the context of media studies but which deviates from the tradition of the thesis-driven scholarly article or book. However, the emphasis on the course will be on writing.

With regard to writing, participants are invited to experiment with their own process through a series of short exercises, and to craft at least one complete essay or media project for publication or exhibition/distribution. We will explore voice, language, form, structure, and rhythm. We'll be attentive to the ways in which we might adopt techniques of the cinematic arts – awareness of space, time, motion, framing, mise-en-scene, for example – in our writing and making. We will also explore “designed writing,” which plays with the boundary between reading and viewing, and we will explore media-rich writing and the video essay. The course will introduce a variety of new writing platforms that encourage the integration of images, sound, and video where appropriate.

With regard to structure, this is a writing workshop and during each session, we will write, discuss craft, analyze the work produced by members of the writing group, and respond to exercises, provocations, and writing prompts. Each participant will determine his/her goals for the workshop and tailor the assignments with these goals in mind. However, all participants should be prepared to write and to experiment.

## READINGS

### Required Text

*The Situation and the Story*, by Vivian Gornick

### Required: Choose One of the Following:

*Bluets*, by Maggie Nelson

*Citizen: An American Lyric*, Claudia Rankine

*Humanimal*, Bhanu Kapil

### Essays Posted to Course Wiki

### Recommended Text

*The Next American Essay*, edited by John D'Agata

## TOOLS

Scalar

Scrivener

Zotero

Medium

Svbtile

Marquee

Adobe Premiere

Audio recording tools

## COURSE PROJECTS

In-class Writing / 20% / engaged weekly

Participants will engage in a series of writing exercises and short provocations undertaken in class but ungraded.

Workshop Comments / 15% / due during class sessions

As workshop participants share their short essays, class members will write comments.

Four Short Writing Exercises / 25% /

September 8; September 22; October 6; and October 27, 2016

These writing exercises explore four specific forms: memoir, the lyric essay, the portrait, and the visual essay.

Notebook of Tactics / 20% / November 10, 2016

Participants are asked to create a "notebook of tactics" based on techniques observed in the writing of others. This notebook can be as idiosyncratic, and as long or short as desired; it can be written, drawn, taped or any other manner of output. The goal is to prompt active reflection on the practices and techniques of others in a way that is useful to the creator.

Final Project / 20% / Due Tuesday, December 13, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

An essay or "essay," mediated essay, memoir, profile or video related to creative critical writing. Projects will be shared during the class final exam time.

### Optional Writing

Class participants will receive myriad writing prompts designed to provoke a regular writing practice. Write, or don't write. If you do write, you're welcome to workshop these pieces.

## SCHEDULE

### **Week 1 || August 25, 2016**

#### **Introduction to the Course and Context**

Distinguishing among the scholarly essay, journalism, the nonfiction essay and memoir. An exploration of forms and historical precedents. Cinécriture and camera-stylo. Ekphrasis and vernacular criticism. Forms, genres, categories, and the open expanse of creative critical writing. Developing a writing practice,

### **Week 2 || Thursday, September 1, 2016**

#### **The Essay 1: Voice, stance and point of view**

Reading for this session:

- "A Sort of Leaning Against: Writing With, From, and for Others," Maggie Nelson (wiki)
- "Introduction," *The Situation and the Story*, Vivian Gornick (wiki)

### **Week 3 || Thursday, September 8, 2016**

#### **Due: Short Writing Exercise #1**

#### **The Essay 2: Form and Formal innovations**

Reading for this session:

- "The Essay," in *The Situation and the Story*
- "Taking Yourself Out of the Story: Narrative Stance and the Upright Pronoun," Philip Gerard (wiki)
- "36 Holes," Brenda Miller (wiki)

### **Week 4 || Thursday, September 15, 2016**

#### **The Essay 3: The lyric essay**

Reading for this session:

- "The Glass Essay," Anne Carson (wiki)
- "Morphology of the Hit," Leslie Jamieson (wiki)

### **Week 5 || Thursday, September 22, 2016**

#### **Due: Short Writing Exercise #2**

#### **Focus on the Lyric Essay**

Reading for this session:

Choice of *Bluets*, by Maggie Nelson; *Citizen: An American Lyric*, by Claudia Rankine; or *Humanimal*, by Bhanu Kapil.

### **Week 6 || Thursday, September 29, 2016**

#### **The Memoir 1: Bodies and Memory**

Reading for this session:

- "The Memoir" in *The Situation and the Story*

Examples (all available on the wiki)

*Testo Junkie*, excerpts, Beatriz Preciado  
"Against Ordinary Language: The Language of the Body," Kathy Acker  
"Portrait of My Body," Phillip Lopate  
"This Old Man," Roger Angell  
"The Body," Jenny Boully  
"Autopsy Report," Lia Purpura

**Week 7 || Thursday, October 6, 2016**

**Due: Short Writing Exercise #3**

**The Memoir 2: Writing / Speaking + Revising**

Writing dialogue and scenes in nonfiction. The very short piece.

Reading for this session (choose two from the wiki):

"Burl's" Bernard Cooper  
"The Journey Home," Colum McCann  
"My Father's Noose," Grace Talusan  
"Manhattan" Chang-Rae Lee  
"The Old Dictionary" Lydia Davis

**Week 8 || Thursday, October 13, 2016**

**The Memoir 3, and Revision**

Reading for this session:

"Material," Lucy Corin (wiki)

**Week 9 || Thursday, October 20, 2016**

**The Profile 1: Writing About Other People**

Reading for this week (pick at least one from the wiki):

"All the Rage," Gary Indiana  
"John Wayne: A Love Song," Joan Didion  
"Forty-one False Starts," Janet Malcolm  
"Frank Sinatra Has a Cold," Gay Talese

**Week 10 || Thursday, October 27, 2016**

**Due: Short Writing Exercise #4**

**The Profile 2:**

Reading for this session:

"Sorting Facts; or Nineteen Ways of Looking at Marker," Susan Howe (wiki)  
"Impromptus on Edward Weston: Everything in its Place," Hollis Frampton (wiki)

**Week 11 || Thursday, November 3, 2016**

**Visual Essay 1: Writing With Images**

Reading for this session:

"Designed Essay (Design as Essay)," Ander Monson (wiki)

"I Have Been Thinking About Snow," Ander Monson (wiki)  
"The Body," Jenny Bouly (wiki)

**Week 12 || Thursday, November 10, 2016**

**Due: Notebook of Tactics**

**Visual Essay 2: Text and Typography**

**Week 13 || Thursday, November 17, 2016**

**Conceptual Writing**

Citatoriality, uncreativity, and borrowed forms: leaning on and stealing from others

Reading for this session (choose at least one from the wiki):

"Unoriginal Genius," Marjorie Perloff

"The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism," Jonathan Lethem

"It's Not Plagiarism. In the Digital Age, It's 'Repurposing,'" Kenneth Goldsmith

*Reality Hunger*, excerpts, David Shields

**Week 14 || Thursday, November 24, 2016**

**Thanksgiving / No Class Meeting**

**Week 15 || Thursday, December 1, 2016**

**Grants, Contests, Fellowships and Retreats**

Overview of funding sources; courses, workshops, and retreats; and grantwriting strategies.

Presentation of work. Where to submit? The cover letter; formatting; readers; resources.

Presentation of works-in-progress.

**Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity or to the Department of Public Safety. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources.

**Support Systems**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared

emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

### **Disruptive Student Behavior**

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

### **Citation Practices**

Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. Media Arts + Practice seeks to apply a reasonable working definition of fair use that will enable students and instructors to develop multimedia projects without seeking authorization for non-commercial, educational uses. Four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

All projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. There are several different citation styles and practices; please ask your professor(s) what style manual s/he would prefer. Below you'll find some online resources for the most popular options.

### **Style Manuals**

American Psychological Association (APA)

Purdue OWL: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Modern Language Association (MLA)

Purdue OWL: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/>

Chicago Manual of Style

Purdue OWL: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/12/>

PLEASE NOTE: FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX.

*(Image on page one is from Ander Monson's "I Have Been Thinking About Snow")*