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Wednesdays, 8.00 – 9:45 a.m.
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Fall 2026: The Craft of Nonfiction

Course Description: What shapes and sizes can the personal essay take? How might we responsibly tell stories about our communities? Where does nonfiction end and fiction start? How can we claim our experiences in time and space through writing? What are the stories that no one else can tell, and how do we do them justice? Through a project-based curriculum, students will critically engage with a range of creative nonfiction texts, including epistolary essays, profiles, and personal essays and produce a portfolio of original work riffing on those forms. By the end of the semester, students will be able to process and analyze personal experiences, current events, and community knowledge through a variety of creative nonfiction forms.

❖ Week I: August 19

Classroom norms, writing games, idea generation, daily reflections, and setting ourselves up for success this semester.

UNIT ONE: LETTERS FROM MINNESOTA

❖ Week II: August 26

Read LitHub letters from MN. Start jotting down memories from the year so far.

❖ Week III: September 2

Read essays/excerpts from children reflecting on political turmoil.

❖ Week IV: September 9

Guest talk?

❖ Week V: September 16

Work period for Assignment #1.

Assignment #1 is due Sunday, September 20.

UNIT TWO: PROFILES

❖ Week VI: September 23

Choose an iconic profile to read in a group and fill out an exit ticket.

❖ Week VII: September 30

Interview a classmate and write a short profile of them.

❖ Week VIII: October 7

Choose a member of your community to profile during MEA days. Select three primary or secondary sources to research and incorporate into your profile.

❖ No class (MEA Days): October 14

❖ Week IX: October 21

Work period for Assignment #2.

Assignment #2 is due the night of Sunday, October 25.

UNIT THREE: ESSAYS

❖ Week X: October 28

Read list essays (e.g., “Notes on Camp”) and generate one.

❖ Week XI: November 4

Read fragmented essays.

❖ Week XII: November 11

Read another kind of experimental essay. Choose an essay topic.

❖ Week XIII: November 18

Work period for Assignment #3.

❖ No class (Thanksgiving break): November 25

Assignment #3 is due the night of Sunday, November 29.

UNIT FOUR: EXPERIMENTS IN REVISION AND REIMAGINATION

❖ Week XIV: December 2

Alphabetization, blackout poetry, etc.

❖ Week XV: December 9

Choose one of your three assignments from the semester to creatively revise.

❖ Week XVI: December 16

Share-out

Summative Assessment Rubric

	Meets the standard	Approaches the standard	Does not meet the standard
Foundations	The majority of the comma, em-dash, semicolon, quotation mark, and period usage in the assignment adheres to the conventions we have discussed in class, demonstrating a solid understanding of punctuation style and usage. <i>(+10 points)</i>	Although some punctuation usage in the assignment adheres to the conventions we discussed in class, a significant proportion of the punctuation marks are placed incorrectly and therefore distract the reader from the content of the story. <i>(+ 5 points)</i>	The majority of the punctuation is placed incorrectly, creating a confusing experience for the reader. <i>(+0 points)</i>
Create	The assignment fluently employs its chosen approach to the essay (i.e. standard, epistolary, or fictive) to construct a personal narrative with literary elements relevant to its goals and medium. <i>(+10 points)</i>	The assignment incorporates elements of its prescribed techniques but does not demonstrate a fluent and unfragmented understanding of its chosen technique's stylistic conventions as discussed in class. <i>(+ 5 points)</i>	The assignment does not employ the techniques of the personal essay, the epistolary essay, or the fictive essay. <i>(+0 points)</i>
Present	In a supplement to their essay submission, the student can accurately identify three literary devices they have employed in their work and articulate <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> they believe these devices help to construct and convey the specific mood they aim to create for their reader. <i>(+10 points)</i>	The student is able to identify three literary devices and describe why they chose them, but the selected devices are not accurately employed in the essay they have submitted. <i>(+5 points)</i>	The student does not identify their chosen devices and/or their reasoning for employing their chosen devices. <i>(+0 points)</i>
Respond	The assignment clearly engages with and responds to a current event, issue, or topic by fluidly incorporating research findings into its narrative and creating a rhetorical balance between description, explanation, and analysis.	The assignment appears to be inspired by a current event, but there are few specific details about the subject incorporated into the narrative, making the stimulus incidental. <i>(+ 5 points)</i>	The assignment has no clear basis in a current event, issue, or topic. <i>(+0 points)</i>

	(+10 points)		
Connect	The assignment includes either a full bibliography of research sources in MLA style or footnoted sources in Chicago style. (+10 points)	Links to research sources are included at the end of the assignment. (+ 5 points)	No research sources are cited. (+0 points)

Daily Check-In Rubric

	Meets the standard	Does not meet the standard
Foundations	The student treats their peers and teacher with respect by taking off headphones, ceasing side conversations, and lowering classroom devices to listen while they are sharing with the classroom community	The student ignores their peers and/or teacher by using devices, wearing headphones, and/or maintaining side conversations while they are sharing with their classroom community.
Create	The student attempts to complete in-class assignments with guidance and direction from their teacher.	The student does not attempt in-class assignments.
Present	The student attends class with an open mind, mutual respect for their classroom community, and a willingness to work.	The student does not attend class or brings a disrespectful, close-minded, and apathetic attitude into the classroom.
Respond	The student submits their completed exit ticket before the end of the school day.	The student does not submit a completed exit ticket before the end of the school day.
Connect	The student refrains from using their personal devices apart from designated phone breaks and emergency situations if given special dispensation from their teacher. The student only uses laptops for writing and research related to their writing.	The student uses personal devices outside of designated breaks and emergencies and/or uses classroom devices for purposes unrelated to their writing.

Text ideas:

- “Warrior Pose” (Turfah)
- Something by Annie Dillard
- One of the [Lithub letters from MN](#)
- “Notes on Camp” (Sontag)
- [“Dril is Everyone”](#) (Rogers)
- [“Frank Sinatra Has a Cold”](#) (Talese)
- [“Michael Jordan Has Not Left the Building”](#) (Thompson)
- Aragon on Matisse