

WRITING INTENSIVE: NONFICTION

Junior-Senior Honors Seminar

2019-2020

Teacher: John Copenhaver
Office Hours: 2:30-3:30, English Cubes
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Course Description

To understand how an engine works, a mechanic must take it apart, examine its components, and reassemble it. Learning to write well functions in the same way. In this course, students will read, write, and analyze different forms of creative nonfiction and journalism to better understand how personal essays and news features can inform, persuade, and move readers—a skill set essential in crafting compelling communication of all types. Students will learn to read great works of creative nonfiction and journalism with a writer's eye so that they can emulate and explicate these mentor texts. They also will select a mentor author to research, analyze, and present on. By the end of the course, they will have written various forms of creative nonfiction, journalistic articles, and craft analyses, culminating a polished portfolio. Along with their reading and writing, they will continue to expand their vocabulary and develop a mastery of the conventions of Standard English.

Learning Objectives

Skills:

- [Grade Level Goals: Honors Junior-Senior Seminars](#)
- [Specific Creative Nonfiction and Journalism Writing Skills](#)

Course Material

Texts:

- *Tell It Slant: Creating, Refining, and Publishing Creative Nonfiction, 2nd Ed*, Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola, ([ISBN: 978-0071781770](#))
- *The Field Guide to Writing Flash Nonfiction: Advice and Essential Exercises from Respected Writers, Editors, and Teachers*, Ed. Dinty W. Moore ([ISBN: 978-0984616664](#))
- *We The Animals*, Justin Torres ([ISBN: 978-1328639073](#))
- Podcast: [S-Town](#)
- Selected essays provided by the teacher

Scope and Sequence

Unit 1: Journalism (Three Weeks)

What's the difference between reportage and opinion?

How are they employed for different purposes?

How do we achieve objectivity in writing?

How do we craft opinion responsibility?

What are the best methods for interviewing?

- Content: "Reportage and Opinion"
 - Hard news and feature reporting
 - Opinion writing
 - New Journalism
- Writing:
 - *Craft Analysis:*
 - Analyzing ledes
 - Inverse Pyramid
 - Interviewing
 - Integrating Quotations
 - Feature Article (400-600 words)
 - Editorial (400 words)
- Revision strategies (the role of editors)

Unit 2: Principles of Creative Nonfiction (Five Weeks)

What are the purposes of a personal essay?

What's the difference between emotional and factual truth?

How do we understand ourselves in relationship to our subject matter?

How do we balance humility and honesty when writing from the 1st person?

What are the basic elements of a personal essay (detail, scene, exposition, dialogue)?

- Content: "Personal Essay"
 - Flash Essay
- Writing:
 - *Craft Analysis:*
 - Memory (Emotional Truth v Factual Truth)
 - 1st Person Narration
 - Sensory detail
 - Scene v. exposition
 - Dialogue
 - Setting
 - Two flash essays (400-500 words each)
- Workshopping Strategies

Unit 3: Forms of Creative Nonfiction (Five Weeks)

How (and why) do you choose a specific form for content?

How (and why) do you use motifs to create unity?

How do you craft sentences to create different effects?

- Content: “Forms of the Personal Essay”
 - Memoir v. novel
 - Lyric
 - Braided
 - Hermit Crab
- Writing:
 - *Craft Analysis*:
 - Rhythm and sentence structure: loose, periodic, run-on, fragment.
 - Imagery and metaphorical motifs
 - Hermit Crab Essay or Braided Essay (1000-1500)
- Revision Strategies

Unit 4: Research and New Mediums (the podcast) (Three Weeks)

How do you develop a nonfiction “character”?

How can research inspire creativity?

How do you use research to broaden and deepen your essay/podcast?

- Content: “Research”
 - Podcast
- Writing:
 - Craft Analysis
 - Character development
 - Integrating research
 - Personal Essay (1000-1500) or Podcast Story (5-10 minutes) incorporating research.

Student Responsibilities

- Arrive punctually every day with the required course material.
- Participate in meaningful and civil class discussions.
- All cell phones should be turned off and stored in your backpacks.
- Keep laptops closed in “clamshell” mode unless given explicit permission to open them; when laptops are open, only use them for the assigned classroom activity (i.e. note-taking, freewriting, or essay writing).
- Submit cellphones and other personal electronic devices to me during assessments.
- Cooperate with other members in the class, especially in small group settings.
- Accept constructive criticism of one’s own writing from both your fellow students and me; with my guidance, offer constructive criticism of classmates’ writing.
- Maintain an organized and complete folder (hardcopy and/or digital), including work in progress, handouts, and graded assignments, and take detailed notes during lectures.
- Actively read your texts.
- Hand in all assignments on time.
- Find a study partner in class who can collect information in your absence. Absent students are still responsible for all course material, including handouts and notes.

Determining Grades

Most assignments carry publicized point values. You can determine how well you are doing in the course by dividing the number of points you have earned in the grading period by the number of possible points you **could have** earned in that grading period. (See the standard grading scale in the FHS parent-student handbook for translating percentages into letter grades.) You must save all your returned assignments in your English binder and/or digital folder so that you can monitor your own progress.

Methods of Evaluation

- **In-class/Miscellaneous Exercises (5-15 pts)**
- **Literature, Writing Style, and/or Vocab Quizzes (5-15 pts)**
- **Socratic Seminars and Independent Reading Group Shares (20 points)**
 - These will occur on a periodic basis to help re-enforce good discussion/participation habits.
- **Workshop Participation (20 points)**
 - You will need to play an active role in giving and receiving feedback from your peers.
- **Flash Essays (400-600 words) (30 points)**
- **Alternate Forms Essay (1000-1200) (40 points)**
- **Final Essay/Final Podcast (1500-1700) (80 points)**
 - You have the choice of writing a creative nonfiction essay of your choice or creating a podcast.

Independent Reading Initiative

As a new initiative at Flint Hill this year, we will be implementing an independent reading program. The goals and purposes behind this new program are many, but among the foremost of them is to nurture a love of reading and to give students the opportunity to explore their own interests and passions through reading in a low pressure environment by providing them dedicated time and a place to do so. Studies have shown a direct correlation between academic and post-academic success and regular independent reading, and independent reading has also been shown to reduce stress and anxiety.

With those goals in mind, we will set aside **at least 20 minutes per A-F letter day cycle** to read independently in class.

To help get the most out of this program, there are several guidelines for independent reading time as well as independent reading texts that we will follow (this includes me, since I will be reading at the same time you are!):

1. Texts *must* be either in print or on an eReader. No laptops, phones, or other screens will be allowed during independent reading time. You may listen to audiobooks on headphones so long as you are also reading along with the text.
2. All kinds of fiction, nonfiction, short stories, poetry, plays, magazines, newspapers, or graphic novels are acceptable. That said, the text you choose must be appropriate for a school setting and it may not be a text that you are or will be reading for a class. **This is not a time to do homework or classwork.**
3. The text you choose may not be something you have already read unless you get my approval first.
4. The text you choose must be close to or above your grade-level reading ability.
5. Reading progress will be tracked by each student individually.

Occasionally, either once per quarter or semester, we will take time to share some of the highlights about what we have read with each other in class. This will be done in order to celebrate our own reading and also learn about other things we might be interested in reading from our classmates.

Membean

You will continue to use this interactive program on your own to build your vocabulary. It provides guided, self-paced instruction that adapts to your individual needs. Every few weeks, you will take a brief quiz, so you can measure your progress.

Revisions

All revisions, voluntary or not, are due within **one week** from the day original essays are returned. Late revisions are returned unread.

Revising is more than simply correcting misspellings and mechanical mistakes. Revising is re-thinking and re-writing. **I will not raise your grade just because you “corrected” your essay.** There must be the sense that you’ve truly re-thought your original work and implemented those new, more sharply honed ideas. I will never lower your original grade even if your revision is inferior to the previous version.

When submitting your revision, whether on paper or electronically, please highlight what constitutes new or modified material, write a brief note in the margin explaining why you made the changes that you did, and make sure that I have access to the original essay with my comments on it. **If you don’t give me your revision with highlighted portions and explanations, I won’t accept it.**

Attitude

I always expect you to be courteous to your classmates and to me. I want you to engage in class conversations and always feel free to ask relevant questions. I expect you to arrive at class dressed appropriately and to have disposed of food, gum or drink before you enter. Also, use the bathroom between classes. Don’t leave the classroom mid-discussion to use the bathroom unless it’s an emergency.

Office Hours

If you are struggling in class or feel anxious about a grade or don’t fully understand an assignment, please don’t be afraid to ask for clarification. If you need to have a longer, more in-depth consultation about a reading assignment, essay, or project, make an appointment with me for the afternoon consultation period or for one of my free periods during the day. However, I will ask that you schedule an appointment at least one day in advance. If you just drop by without an appointment, I may not be able to meet with you, and I’ll request that we set up a time to meet. Both teachers and students have very busy lives so let’s respect each other’s schedules and plan ahead.

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT POLICIES

LATE WORK POLICY

The English Department fully expects that all work will be turned in on time. Deadlines are a fact of life and extensions are not granted except in cases of genuine emergency.

Excused Absences

If you are away from school all day with an excused absence on the day the work is due, you may submit it without penalty, **by 8:00 a.m. on the first day you return to school**. If you are away with an excused absence for part of the day but in school for any portion of the day work is due, you must turn it in on time (or upon arrival, if your excused absence requires you to be away from school until after work is due). When you schedule make-up work, you must honor the new due date you establish with your teacher, and if you're late for that new date, your grade will be penalized.

Technology Problems

Technology problems (broken printers, slow networks, etc.) will **not** excuse late work. Assignments must be turned in on time in order to avoid the late penalty. An email of the document serves only as a placeholder; the final copy must be submitted in the proper format as designated by the teacher.

Students in English III and IV (Junior-Senior Seminars): Late work loses 20% per day. Assignments turned in after the required time ("start of class," "by 3:00," etc.) are considered one day late even if they are turned in on the same day. If the assignment is not completed after three days, the zero in the grade book will remain and the assignment cannot be made up.

Un-submitted work will earn 0% credit.

EXTRA CREDIT POLICY

Extra credit is **not** offered as a way for individual students to improve their averages or their grades on particular assignments. The best way for a student to keep a high average is by completing the reading when it is assigned and to turn all work in on time. Students who are unhappy with their grades at the end of a quarter will **not** be offered a special opportunity to change their grade through an extra assignment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM POLICY

Practice integrity, respect, and honesty; take pride in your own work; value intellectual property. To that end:

- Make every assignment the product of your own work.
- Acknowledge all ideas, arguments, wording, editing, proofreading that originate outside yourself.
- Submit newly composed work for each assignment.
- Understand the principles and practices of academic integrity. Webster's New World Dictionary describes plagiarism as "literary theft" involving the use of others' words, arguments, and ideas as if they were the writer's own. When materials are derived from outside sources – including family, friends, books, printed study guides (such as Cliff's Notes), magazines, the Internet (such as SparkNotes and other online resources), etc. – you can and must acknowledge them appropriately. You are expected to adhere to this policy in all assignments, including such major written work as literary analysis essays or relatively minor assignments such as the preparation of homework notes for a daily study guide.
- Your English teacher will review the accepted conventions for acknowledging outside sources and will provide a policy statement outlining any specific ways in which outside sources may or may not be used in your particular class. You are responsible for adhering to these departmental and class-specific policies, and for consulting your teacher or department chair about any questions you may have before beginning an assignment.
- As a guideline, there are several types of plagiarism:
 - DIRECT: quoting from a particular source without indicating that source and without placing them directly quoted work within quotation marks;
 - INDIRECT: (a) taking the ideas or arguments of another person without acknowledging the sources of those ideas or arguments; (b) paraphrasing a source without crediting that source;
 - PATCHWORK: altering or omitting words or phrases in material from a source, without acknowledging that source.

If you are ever in doubt about what is or is not plagiarism, please consult your English teacher. Plagiarism is an HONOR OFFENSE. Should you be found guilty of plagiarism by the Honor Council, you must:

- redo the assignment in question (not simply edit the offending passages!)
- meet the deadline for re-submission as outlined by your teacher

Resubmitted work, depending on the quality of the work, will earn a grade of no more than 50% of the earned value of the assignment.