
Description

Sometimes the best stories are true. To help you turn your personal experiences, anecdotes from everyday life, and family stories into compelling narratives, this workshop teaches beginning writers the basic elements of good storytelling. You learn how to excavate memories and discover fresh or unexpected facets of your life stories. Through weekly exercises, you generate new material and learn an array of fictional techniques to tell your nonfiction story, including how to play with voice, focus on a small unit of time, and describe landscape and character. By the course's completion, you will have in hand a series of short sketches or a draft of a nonfiction piece.

Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to

- Understand the difference between fiction and nonfiction
- Identify basic elements of nonfiction, including elements of fiction
- Implement in their writings the elements and strategies covered in this course
- Employ reading like a writer, writing frequently, and revision as part of their creative writing process
- Participate effectively in workshops

Materials

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

Writing the Memoir: From Truth to Art, 2nd Edition, by Judith Barrington. The Eighth Mountain Press

Evaluation

Your course grade will be based on the following criteria: Participation in and thoughtful contributions to weekly class discussions and workshops, improvement in your writing skills and understanding of creative writing and workshopping, effort in discussion and writing assignments, completion of all assignments as assigned--including meeting deadlines, and maintaining a positive attitude throughout the quarter.

60 points total possible: 10 points each week.

60-54 points: A+ - A-

53-48 points: B+ - B-

47-42 points: C+-C-

41-0 points: F

Credit Status: *I must give you the type of grade you signed up for.*

Course Policies

For six weeks, we'll come together as a supportive and kind creative writing community to express yourselves creatively in writing, share our ideas, and learn from each other. You'll develop your writing skills and story ideas, and have some discoveries along the way. With corazon, I will guide you and share as much of my expertise as possible in this short quarter.

At the same time, this is a formal, college level course with policies, procedures, deadlines, and requirements that everyone must follow. Please attentively read the following. When you participate in this course, you agree to follow the guidelines below and to conduct yourself in a manner that fosters a supportive and positive environment.

A. PROCEDURES, REQUIREMENTS, AND POLICIES

In the Modules, you will find the weekly lessons and assignments and the forums for discussions, workshops, the salon, and questions discussed below.

- **Weekly Lessons and Assignments are posted on Wednesdays, by 11p, PST.**
- **Discussion and Sketches are due on Wednesdays, by 11p, PST.**
- **Responses to two classmates' discussions and feedback on two classmates' sketches are due on Fridays, by 11p, PST.**

Specific dates for weekly deadlines will be in the weekly lessons.

Check the Announcements: Whenever you log into the class, please check the announcements page for updates, reminders, and notices.

Weekly Lessons and Assignments: Each week you will read a document that contains my lessons, page numbers for assigned readings in the text, and any links to one or more published works by established creative nonfiction writers. The published works serve as examples of the craft techniques we're covering and the variety of writers' styles and approaches to writing nonfiction. Following the lessons will be the discussion and writing assignments based on the weekly lessons. I encourage you to print these documents and closely read them. You will need to refer to them throughout the course.

Discussions: Most weeks, in response to a prompt I assign, you will write a brief discussion. You will also respond to at least two of your classmates' discussions. The purposes of the discussions each week are to enhance your understanding of the topics covered in class and to engage as a community of writers.

Some prompts will involve "reading like a writer" one or more published works. Rather than analyzing published works like a literary scholar or a book reviewer, you will Read like a Writer, focusing on *how* the author uses craft to weave a vivid, engaging story. I emphasize reading like a writer in my classes, which includes reading widely and broadly, because reading and analyzing good literature are the best ways to learn how to write well-crafted work.

By the assigned deadline, you will respond to at least two classmates' discussions. The purpose of engaging in these discussions will enhance your understanding of the craft techniques covered, of creative writing, and our community interaction.

Drive-by discussions and responses will receive no credit. Drive by means quickly responding to meet the number required, but not making thoughtful contributions.

Writing/Workshops This course is exercise driven. Most every week, you will be assigned to write short piece, using first-person point of view (I / me), in a response to a prompt I give based on the weekly topic covered. These writings are referred to as "sketches." Your sketches will be posted in the weekly workshop forum for feedback. Be sure to stick to the prompt and submit your sketch on time, or your sketch might not be accepted. See below for the workshop policies and procedures.

In order to benefit from the lessons and expand your creative writing skills, the sketches you workshop in class will be one or a few scenes, not complete works. (However, outside of class, you are free and encouraged to write drafts of complete pieces This will be further discussed in the Week 1-2 Lessons.) There will be assigned word limits. If your sketch exceeds the word limit, submit the beginning of your sketch up to the word limit. Write, "To be continued" at a logical stopping point. Please, *never* cut details necessary for us to understand your sketch just to meet the word requirement; your writing will be weakened and confusing, you won't benefit from the writing assignment, and your grade will be adversely impacted. To be further discussed in class.

Some, if not all, of your sketches will evolve into your Final Portfolio: A revised and polished draft of the first 1,200 words of a creative nonfiction work or a series of sketches or scenes that total no more than 1,200 words combined. While your portfolio might contain new material needed to develop and flesh out your

piece, your portfolio must be developed from a sketch or sketches originally developed in our class. Final Portfolios that do not meet these requirements will not be accepted. To be further discussed at a later date.

Participation: In order for everyone to benefit from the course, including you, your participation is needed. This is a college level formal course. Please be mindful and attentive. Students are expected to check for announcements and updates every 48 hours, complete assignments as assigned and by the deadlines, and engage in and make thoughtful contributions to the discussions and workshops. The more you participate, the more you will benefit from this course.

Writers' Salon: You are encouraged to have lively, lengthy conversations in the Salon in the Modules. Let us know about upcoming literary events; recommend books and share websites; discuss writing related topics of interest; or just chat. I will also post relevant information and event announcements. Participation in the Salon is not required, but it is a great way to build community and get informed about creative writing beyond what's covered in the course.

Questions for the Instructor: Post your questions about procedures and assignments in the appropriate forum/page in the weekly Modules. I check it every day, Monday through Friday. Answers to students' questions are often in the syllabus or weekly lesson. Please first check these documents before posting a question.

B. ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES

Whether you're taking this course for pleasure, to get practice in creative nonfiction, or to improve your writing skills, please keep in mind that this is a formal, college level course with deadlines and requirements that we're all required to follow.

COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS AS ASSIGNED: Sketches, feedback, discussions, and final portfolios that do not follow the requirements, including meeting the deadlines, will earn a zero. I do not give feedback on sketches and final portfolios that do not follow the requirements. Even if you are not taking the class for credit, you must follow the requirements in order to receive credit and feedback from me on your sketches and final portfolio.

LATE WORK: Please plan your schedule accordingly. This course requires at least 6 hours a week. You are responsible for submitting your work on time. Assignments posted after the deadline will receive no credit, and I might not be able to give your work feedback. For example, I download all sketches shortly after the deadline and begin reading and writing feedback. Because of my busy schedule, I often don't have time to follow up on late assignments.

It's understandable that life circumstances might make it difficult for a student to meet the deadlines one week. Therefore, students may submit late assignments one time and without penalty if all requirements are completed by the date arranged with me. The student must contact me to make arrangements with me no later than 48 hours after the deadline; it's best if you contact me ahead of the deadline when possible. However, no other late assignments are permitted.

The last week of class NO extensions are permitted except under extreme circumstances, such as a debilitating illness, and arrangements are made with me no later than 48 hours after the deadline. Official verification might be required.

CODE OF CONDUCT: If you choose to remain in this course, you are agreeing to follow the policies, requirements, and procedures on this syllabus and in the assignments, and to conduct yourself in a manner that fosters a supportive and positive environment. You are also responsible for the policies in the UCLA Extension Code of Student Conduct and the Writers' Program Code of Conduct. We are a community during this six-week journey, and it's important that everyone follow the guidelines in order for everyone to benefit from and thrive in this course.

In addition:

- Respect everyone's time, including the instructor's, and meet the deadlines.
- Be kind and respectful to everyone, including yourself.
- Respect everyone's privacy. Everything shared in this room stays in this room.
- I recommend that you keep a hardcopy of the contact information in "UCLA Extension Learning Support" below in case you have trouble accessing the course.

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- Be clear and specific in your posts, so we understand what you mean.

C. WORKSHOP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

“A writing workshop is, in its ideal sense, a community of writers trying to help each other accomplish their best writing. Its first level of value is in its being a community, a gathering of people whose company nourishes each person's writing life.”~ David Huddle

“The hardest part of being a writer in a workshop is to learn this: Be still, take everything in, and don't defend.”~ Author unknown

Active participation in each workshop is one of the most important and valuable aspects of this course. In addition to reading like a writer and writing on a regular basis, critiquing your classmates' work and watching it evolve over the quarter are excellent ways for to learn about the craft of writing and how to improve your own work. Furthermore, a workshop is a community. The students' feedback is just as important as the instructor's.

In the workshops, you will comment on your classmates' writing and receive comments from them on your writing. After you have met the deadlines for the week, you will receive feedback from me, typically on the techniques covered that week and in previous weeks. The critiquing process can sometimes be overwhelming for new and seasoned writers. Therefore, following are policies and procedures for giving useful, constructive feedback and to establish a positive critiquing environment. By taking care to apply these guidelines, our workshops will be positive and productive.

For Writers and Those Giving Feedback:

In order to maintain an objective perspective when discussing a classmate's sketch, do not address the writing as though it is autobiographical. Say, “Narrator;” “the grandmother;” “the son.” Do not say, “You” or “your.”

Do not ridicule or degrade your work or others. We must respect our work at any draft stage.

Don't share your classmates' work with others.

Avoid comparing your work to others in the class or others to yours. You can only gauge your growth as a writer by your own work. Instead, be inspired by your classmates and the readings.

Drive-by discussions and responses will receive no credit. Drive by means quickly responding to meet the number required, but not making thoughtful contributions.

When you workshop your sketches :

-While being mindful of meeting the deadline, unless it's absolutely unavoidable, wait until at least Tuesday to post your sketch. Time is needed for your sketch to evolve and for you to revise it and make corrections. Take time to experiment, play, and revise with fresh eyes. Do your best to flesh out your work and clean up errors before posting it in the workshop so it reads as you intended. Sketches may not be reposted. Reposts will be deleted.

-Submit your sketches attached in a Word or rtf doc, in the appropriate workshop forum in the Modules. Follow these guidelines: Your sketch must be double-spaced with one-inch margins all around and Times Roman or Arial 12 pt. font. In the header, on the left or right, include your first and last names and the page number. Title your document with your first initial and last name, so I can identify it in my files: Example: I gonzalez.doc. This is a standard manuscript format. I have posted a template of this format in the Modules under Week 1-2.

-When you post your sketch in the workshop module, click reply to my original post to start a new thread specifically for your sketch. Check back in a few hours, or late morning if you posted it at night, to make sure we were able to access your file.

-Do not explain, defend, or apologize for your sketch. These are inappropriate and will not be permitted in our workshops.

-Save all feedback for your future reference.

-When reading feedback on your sketches, keep in mind that our feedback is given in good will. We are doing our best to nourish your writing, but we are not necessarily right. You also might receive contradictory comments. Accept criticism that is applicable, and consider incorporating it into your revision.

-Wait at least 48 hours before responding to feedback, and reread it before responding. Feedback takes a while to digest. A comment that stung when you first read it often makes good sense a few days, or a few weeks, later. In addition, consider the mood you're in when reading feedback. You want to be as objective as possible.

-When responding to feedback, do not explain or defend your poem. Ask for clarification or an example of what the person meant. Examples of appropriate responses to feedback:

- Thanking your classmates' for their feedback
- Stating which feedback was helpful and why.
- Asking for clarification or an explanation: "You said the image of the oak tree in the second stanza is striking. Please explain why."
- Asking for an example: "You said that my description of the kitchen could be more detailed. Could give me an example of what you mean?"

Feedback Requirements and Process:

-You're required to give feedback on two or three of your classmates' sketches each week, even if you are not taking the class for credit. Your effort in and attention to giving feedback are needed in order for everyone to benefit from the class, including you.

-When posting feedback on a sketch, click "reply" on the sketch so your post is directly connected to that sketch. In the body of the post, always begin by addressing the writer by first name, like you would in a letter. When grading, I can't tell which sketch you're addressing unless you include the writer's name.

-It's understood that you are not a professional editor or expert on writing. Your stance should be that of a careful and interested reader. You're making observations the writer can take into the next draft or into other work.

-Do your best to first give feedback on sketches that have received no or little feedback, so that everyone receives feedback from at least two classmates. Two fulfills the weekly requirement, but you may, and are encouraged to, respond to as many of your classmates' sketches as you wish.

-Before posting feedback, read the sketch several times, taking note of where you are engaged, where you were taken out, and why. Focus on the techniques we've covered. Be as objective as possible. Keep an open mind when the content differs from your personal values or beliefs, and do not let it interfere with your response. If you're not the audience for a sketch, you can still discuss the craft we've covered.

-In your feedback, always begin with two or three comments about where you were pulled into the sketch and explain why. Then discuss only one or two areas where you were taken out of the sketch and explain why. Strive to offer new insights, and avoid repeating what a classmate has said. Be specific and concrete; feedback is most helpful when specific points are made. Refer to specific examples in the sketch.

-Be careful not to discuss how you would write it; you are not the writer of the sketch. In addition, do not address typos, grammar, or mechanics. If a piece is illegible, I will address it privately with the student before the class meets. We respect everyone's voice.

-The following two examples of feedback are useful because they are detailed, thorough, specific, explained well, and focused on specific aspects of craft, letting the writer know what is and isn't working (at least for one reader). This type of feedback will earn credit:

"I was pulled into the scene when Kerry is getting dressed up. The specific details let me know that she is expecting something positive to happen between them, which added tension and forward movement. I was eager to keep reading to find out what happens next. The scene flows smoothly and it convincingly built up to the devastating moment; everything is believable. However, the tense abruptly changes, which confused me. For example, the beginning of the scene is in present tense, half way through, it changes to past tense."

"The description of the narrator falling down the stairs is so vivid that I experienced her pain. The scene also develops her character; readers understand the connection between her emotional and physical pain. I was pulled out after the fall because she didn't let readers know her response to the fall. I wondered what went through her head. For example, when she looked up at her new boyfriend, did she wonder why he didn't run to help her?"

The examples of feedback below are not useful to the writer because they do not give the writer anything specific to work on. This type of feedback will not earn credit, and you will be asked to elaborate with specific details and examples:

"I really love the images. I love the characters." *Feedback is not a review of a writer's sketch. To benefit the writer, the classmate needs to discuss where, specifically, they were pulled in/engaged and taken out and explain why.*

"I really relate to this. I've been this place and had an experience like this there." *Feedback is supposed to be objective and focus on the sketch. If it's well described, the critic needs to go beyond personal experience and explain what is effective and why.*

Feedback is supposed to be supportive and constructive. Destructive feedback (and destructive communication in general) will not be tolerated. See UCLA Extension's and the Writers' Program's codes of conduct for more information.

Examples of destructive feedback include: Reviewing the sketch like a harsh critic, stating negative judgments about the content or writer, basing feedback on what the critic personally dislikes, or their personal values.

By taking care to apply these guidelines when giving feedback, our workshops will be positive and productive.

Institutional Policies

Student Conduct

Students are subject to disciplinary action for several types of misconduct or attempted misconduct, including but not limited to dishonesty, such as cheating, multiple submission, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University; or theft or misuse of the intellectual property of others or violation of others' copyrights. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with policy provisions which proscribe these and other forms of misconduct at:

<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentConduct.jsp>

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Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, UCLA Extension provides appropriate accommodations and support services to qualified applicants and students with disabilities. These include, but are not limited to, auxiliary aids/services such as sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices for hearing-impaired individuals, extended time for and proctoring of exams, and registration assistance. Accommodations and types of support services vary and are specifically designed to meet the disability-related needs of each student based on current, verifiable medical documentation. Arrangements for auxiliary aids/services are available only through UCLA Extension's Service for Students with Disabilities Office at (310) 825-7851 or by email at access@uclaextension.edu (<mailto:access@uclaextension.edu>). For complete information see: <https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentswithDisabilities.jsp> (<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/studentswithDisabilities.jsp>)

Incompletes

Your instructor may post the interim grade *Incomplete/I* if at the end of the class your overall work is of passing quality but a portion could not be submitted for understandable reasons (e.g. illness). It is your responsibility to petition your instructor for permission to submit work late and to provide an explanation, and it is his or her sole decision whether to accept the explanation. If permitted, the *Incomplete/I* grade will be posted and a time frame defined for you to submit the missing work, ranging from one to twelve weeks. *Incomplete/I* grades that remain unchanged after twelve weeks will lapse to *F*, *NP* or *U*. Receiving an *I* grade

entitles you to submit only the missing work your instructor has agreed to accept late, and does not allow other work to be retaken or oblige UCLA Extension to provide continuing access to course materials via Canvas. The *Incomplete/I* grade is not an option for courses that do not bear credit, such as 700, 800, or 900-level courses. For complete information, see: <https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/grading.jsp> (<https://www.uclaextension.edu/pages/str/grading.jsp>)

All Grades are Final

No change of grade may be made by anyone other than the instructor, and then, only to correct clerical errors. No term grade except Incomplete may be revised by re-examination. The correction of a clerical error may be authorized only by the instructor of record communicating directly with personnel of Student and Alumni Services.

Sexual Harassment

The University of California is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the community should be aware that the University prohibits sexual harassment and sexual violence, and that such behavior violates both law and University policy. The University will respond promptly and effectively to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and will take appropriate action to prevent, to correct, and when necessary, to discipline behavior that violates our policy.

All Extension students and instructors who believe they have been sexually harassed are encouraged to contact the Department of Student and Alumni Services for complaint resolution: UCLA Extension, Suite 113, 10995 Le Conte Ave., Westwood; Voice/TTY: (310) 825-7031. View the University's full Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence at <http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000385/SHSV> (<http://policy.ucop.edu/doc/4000385/SHSV>).

☰ Additional Items

About Your Online Course Materials

Please note the following about online course components at UCLA Extension:

- Students must have basic computer skills, including the use of word processing software, email, and the ability to use internet browsers, such as Safari, Firefox, or Chrome.
- Students are responsible for meeting the technical requirements of Canvas and familiarizing themselves with the Canvas Learning Management System.
 - What are the basic computer specifications for Canvas? <https://guides.instructure.com/m/4214/l/82542-what-are-the-basic-computer-specifications-for-canvas> (<https://guides.instructure.com/m/4214/l/82542-what-are-the-basic-computer-specifications-for-canvas>)
 - Which browsers does Canvas support? <https://guides.instructure.com/m/67952/l/720329-which-browsers-does-canvas-support> (<https://guides.instructure.com/m/67952/l/720329-which-browsers-does-canvas-support>)
- Students are responsible for keeping a copy of all assignments and work submitted, and to be aware of all assignments, due dates, and course guidelines.
- Students are encouraged to keep and/or download a local copy of their assignment files, as **access to the online environment of a specific course is limited to 30 days after the final course date**, as listed in the course catalog.

If you need assistance downloading student materials from your course, please contact Canvas Support or the UCLA Extension Learning Support Team.

UCLA Extension Learning Support

Email: support@unexonline.zendesk.com (<mailto:support@unexonline.zendesk.com>)

Phone: Toll-free at (866) 269-7289 (US only) or (310) 206-4563.

Monday - Friday, 7am to 6pm (Pacific Time).

Website: <http://support.uclaextension.edu> (<http://support.uclaextension.edu/>)

The UCLA Extension learning support team assists both students and instructors with Canvas-related technical support, as well as general administrative questions.

For additional support on using Canvas or addressing a technical issue:

Click on the "Help" button on the lower left corner of the screen from within the Canvas system, where you can chat live with a technical support agent or submit a ticket for assistance.

Schedule

Weekly Schedule and Deadlines

-Weekly lessons and assignments are posted on Wednesdays by 11p, PST. Specific dates for weekly deadlines will be in the weekly lessons.

-Discussion and Sketches are due on Wednesdays by 11p, PST.

-Responses to at least two classmates' discussions and feedback on at least two classmates' sketches are due on Fridays by 11p, PST.

For example, let's say I post the lessons and assignments on Wednesday, February 7.

Your discussion and sketch are due the following Wednesday, February 14 by 11p, PST.

You responses to two classmates' discussions and feedback on two classmates' sketches are due on Friday, February 16 by 11p, PST.

I post my feedback after you've met the requirements.

FOLLOWING IS AN OVERVIEW. SPECIFIC DETAILS FOR EACH WEEK'S ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE POSTED IN THE WEEKLY IN THE WEEKLY MODULES.

This schedule might change to fit the needs of the class. Be sure to check the modules for updates.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1-6	Schedule	WtM= Writing the Memoir Week 1-2: Introductions, Course Overview, Getting Started See the Week 1 Module for more specific, detailed instructions and assignments due on the first day. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions of the instructor and students.• Overview of the course.• Lessons and Assignments: Gathering ideas and Some Basics• Week 2-3: Place and The Narrator's Perspective: The First Person Is You Week 3-4: Vivid Characters and Natural Dialogue Week 4-5: Scene, Summary, and Narrator's Reflection Week 5-6: Revision and Final Projects