



Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) 617

Creative Non-Fiction (Revision 5)

Delivery mode: [Grouped study](#)

Credits: 3

Area of study: Arts

Prerequisites: None

Precluded: None

Faculty: [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#)

Notes: Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

Overview

MAIS 617: Creative Nonfiction is a hybrid course in which students will have a chance to do both literary criticism and creative work. Some assignments will allow students to choose between analytical and creative options. The original version of this course, much of which survives in this current offering, was described by its author, Gordon Morash, as a literature survey course. Recent revisions have made it possible to engage in the course both as a reader and a writer.

Gordon Morash wrote about arts and culture for more than 35 years. He was a feature writer, broadcaster, and columnist in newspapers, magazines, and on radio in Edmonton. As a fiction writer, he was published in magazines and anthologies, and as a teacher he gave courses in fiction, journalism, and food writing. Until his untimely death in August 2009, he worked as a writer, editor, teacher, and writing coach.

Angie Abdou, who revised the course in 2018, has a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from University of Calgary. She has published five books of fiction. Her first book of creative nonfiction, *Home Ice: Reflections of a Reluctant Hockey Mom*, was published by ECW Press in September 2018.

Learning outcomes

Once you have completed *MAIS 617: Creative Nonfiction*, you should be able to:

1. determine why writers adopt creative nonfiction as an approach to expression and storytelling, and why readers are drawn to the genre
2. describe the role of social consciousness and its function in literature and journalism
3. discriminate between the New Journalism, conventional journalism, and conventional storytelling
4. distinguish between memoir and fictive or fictional memoir

5. explain the terminology of the genre—for example, creative nonfiction, literary journalism, literary nonfiction, participatory journalism, subjective nonfiction, New Journalism, gonzo journalism
6. value the role of the genre as a *practical versus artistic* endeavor
7. understand the reader's role: the tension between truth and fiction, and how to read, how to believe, how to interpret
8. recognize and execute the elements of storytelling — the nuts and bolts of execution, writing, and publishing in the genre — characterization, setting, point of view, tension, theme, dialogue, format, and narrative thrust and movement
9. explain why and how a particular piece of creative nonfiction works or fails
10. recognize the flaws and pitfalls in creative nonfiction as a genre
11. create your own original creative nonfiction work

Evaluation

To receive credit for this course, you must complete the following activities and assignments.

Online Participation in Group Discussion

You are expected to participate in the online discussion every week. On each Monday, your course professor will post the week's discussion questions and instructions. You will be expected to respond to the questions posted and to respond to at least one of your fellow students' postings. These postings should demonstrate your knowledge of the assigned readings. After Week 6, you will also be expected to participate in discussions based on your fellow students' presentations.

Book Review

To be handed in by the end of the fourth week of the course, this will be a 1,000-word review that comments upon a book of creative nonfiction, addressing why this work functions as creative nonfiction, and why and how the author has embarked upon this approach to expression, writing style, reportage, and subject matter.

Presentation and Moderation of Online Discussion

On Sunday of your assigned week, you will post a (10-15 minutes, or approximately 2,000-2,500 words) presentation online, and in the following weeks you will moderate discussion around it. Your presentation will, essentially, teach one of the course readings and be responsible for that week's discussion.

Term Paper

Due by the end of the course. You may choose to write an analysis of the work of a creative-nonfiction writer, or you may write an original piece of creative non-fiction. In either case, the paper should be 3,000 to 3,500-words in length.


To receive credit for this course, you must participate in the online activities, successfully complete the assignments, and achieve a final mark of at least 60%. The Master of Arts—Interdisciplinary Studies grading system is available online at the MAIS home page. Please note that it is students' responsibility to maintain their program status. Any student who receives a grade of "F" in one course, or a grade of "C" in more than one course, may be required to withdraw from the program.


The following table summarizes the evaluation activities and the credit weight associated with each evaluation activity. You must achieve at least 60% on each assignment to pass the course.

Activity	Weight
Online Participation in Group Discussion	20%
Book Review	20%
Presentation and Moderation of Online Discussion	20%
Term Paper	40%

Activity	Weight
Total	100%





Materials

Gutkind, Lee. *You Can't Make This Stuff Up: The Complete Guide to Writing Creative Nonfiction from Memoir to Literary Journalism and Everything in Between*. Boston: Da Capo Press/Lifelong Books, 2012.  (Print)

Kerrane, Kevin, and Yagoda, Ben, eds. *The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.  (Print)

Bydlowska, Jowita. *Drunk Mom*. Toronto: Double Day Canada, 2013.  (Print)

Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) 
- › [Focus Areas](#) 
- › [Courses](#) 
- › [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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