

**Rowan University - Department of Writing Arts**  
**Writing Creative Nonfiction Syllabus – Fall 2019**

**Instructor:** Katie Budris

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**Office Hours:** Mon/Wed 11:30am – 12:30pm  
 Tues/Thurs 2:00 – 4:00pm

**Meeting Times:** Tues/Thurs 5:00pm – 6:15pm in Enterprise Center 409

**Course Website:** <http://budriscnf.weebly.com>

**Course Descriptions and Goals:** Addressing craft and ethical concerns, this course introduces students to creative nonfiction. In the study of this “fourth genre” of creative writing, focus is on those elements, e.g., imagery, characterization, diction, that make nonfiction creative. Students will write in a number of subgenres, such as memoir, literary journalism, and the personal essay, and will be exposed to a variety of narrative structures. They will also read and analyze representative professional writing to provide contexts for their own work, which will be critiqued by both the instructor and their peers. Special attention will be paid to the evolution of the student writer’s personal voice.

Throughout this course, students will:

- Acquire strategies for a manageable writing process that recognizes the importance of **revision**
- Continue to develop a **vocabulary** that allows interpretation and evaluation of the work of other writers. This vocabulary may include but is not limited to the following:
  - Elements of **creative nonfiction** such as narrative, characterization, persona, conflict, irony, theme, description, research, narrative distance, meta-cognition
  - Elements typically associated with **fiction**, such as setting, plot, point of view, dialogue, genre, audience, structure, scene
  - Elements typically associated with **poetry** such as symbolism, metaphor, simile, imagery, style, form, rhythm, motif, word choice, figurative language
- Not only define the above terms, but the student will also be able to **apply these techniques** to their own writing.
- **Read a body of published creative works** that illustrate the above elements of poetry and fiction, understanding the importance of reading to their creative development.
- Begin to develop an awareness of **the conventions of particular genres**, the similarities and differences between genres, and the ways in which genres influence each other and recombine to form new genres as literary forms change and develop. In particular, the students will utilize audience expectations arising out of a sense of genre.
- Demonstrate, through **their own writing**, an awareness of how literary and non-literary texts influence each other, not only serving as sources but also providing mimetic patterns.
- **Demonstrate** the above concepts and skills through weekly writing exercises and a **final portfolio** of their own work. This final portfolio will represent revisions in response to comments from the instructor and other students.

**Instructor Information:** Katie Budris has a BA in English from Hope College (Holland, Michigan) and an MFA in creative writing (emphasis poetry) from Roosevelt University (Chicago). Her debut chapbook, *Prague in Synthetics*, was published in February 2015 by Finishing Line Press. The poems contained in this chapbook are largely inspired by her experience with Western Michigan University's Prague Summer Program in 2005, for which she was a John Woods Scholarship Recipient. Prior to joining the Rowan faculty in 2011, Katie taught at six different community colleges throughout Chicago, central New Jersey,

and Philadelphia. Her poems have appeared in journals such as *The Albion Review*, *After Hours Press*, *Border Crossing*, *From the Depths* (Haunted Waters Press), *Philadelphia Stories*, *Temenos*, and *Yellow Medicine Review*, and in the anthology *Crossing Lines* (Main Street Rag). Katie also currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of *Glassworks*, the literary magazine housed in the Master of Arts in Writing program at Rowan University.

**Collegiality:** All of you are unique human beings with unique histories. Therefore, we can learn much from each another as we inquire about the works and topics that we will come to understand as we address and respond to them together in written and spoken word. In this course, you will be responding to one another's creative work in small groups and as a whole class. I hope that when you gather, you will introduce yourselves, and from then on, call one another by name. I hope, in other words, that you will be thoughtful and respectful in all your dealings with each other, taking on your responsibilities as a member of a group—a college. We should not have to earn one another's respect; we should simply grant one another the respect each of us deserves as that wonderful thing called a human being.

Additionally, sharing creative work is often a very personal endeavor. This is particularly true in Creative Nonfiction. For this class to be successful, we must be at all times mindful of this when responding to each other's work. We must make this a safe space and agree that whatever is shared within this classroom stays within this classroom. We will work to encourage one another in our strengths and offer constructive criticism to help improve in our weaknesses. Please be mindful of your language when offering criticism. In a creative writing class, you have an obligation to be critical and honest, but at the same time, must remain kind and thoughtful.

**Technology:** Students are expected to check their Rowan email and course website regularly. Any changes to assignments or the course schedule will be posted on the course website. I will post all assignments and readings on the course website. You are expected to bring assigned reading to class for discussion. You are welcome to view these on a laptop or tablet during class, but not on a cell phone. I *strongly* suggest you print all readings instead so you can make notes of your reactions as you read. Use of technological devices for any non-coursework will not be tolerated and will result in an absence and/or reduction to your participation grade.

Due to privacy concerns, any email communication with the professor regarding grades, academic progress, and/or assignments must be done using your Rowan account, not a personal email address.

**Grading:** Please be advised that I will not grade students based on what I, or anyone, would consider "good" literature. It is not our goal to produce work that ranks as "good," but rather to learn technique and develop a work ethic that helps us contribute to writing as an art form. I expect you to attend, contribute, respond to the assignments, and take some risks in your writing. Many of you are new writers, and as such, you may be asked to try writing techniques you haven't tried before, aren't comfortable with, or aren't sure you like. I simply ask that you give everything in this course a try. If you put forth this effort, attend class, participate thoughtfully, and work to apply feedback and techniques to improve your writing, you should do well in this course. At the same time, this course should not be viewed as an easy A. I do expect intense effort and care on your part in all aspects of this course, and your revisions should demonstrate your understanding and application of the concepts we are learning in class.

Your final course grade will be determined on the basis of attendance, participation, in-class writing exercises, and all activities including giving written peer responses, self-reflections, and major writing assignments, particularly concerning revision. While you will receive letter grades on major writing assignments, these are intended to hold you accountable for meeting assignment criteria and to give you an idea of where you have room for growth. Final grades will be assigned holistically based on your effort, improvement, and contribution to the class as a whole. Students who get bad grades often do not complete a significant portion of the work or submit it late. Students are welcome and encouraged to check in at any point during the semester to find out where they stand in terms of grading.

**Course Assignments:**

- *Workshops:* Regularly, the class will converge into a writing workshop wherein students will share creative work and will receive criticism and commentary from their professor and fellow classmates. When a workshop is scheduled, the student must submit a creative work. The writing to be discussed must be distributed by the student to participants on time and as instructed (sometimes on paper, sometimes online). Often this means distributing your work before the date of workshop so that classmates have time to read and react to the piece. If you miss your workshop day or fail to distribute copies as required, you forfeit the opportunity to workshop your piece and will not be guaranteed peer feedback.
- *Workshop Commentary:* Each student will be responsible for providing written feedback to students presenting during workshop. This means that criticism and commentary must be written in the margins and as end notes for *every* piece of literature *before* arriving for the workshop. You may add to your commentary during the workshop process, but should not plan to write all your comments during class. I will grade this commentary based on the thoughtfulness of the suggestions and use of literary terminology and method as presented in class.
- *Reflective Writing:* After receiving feedback on each major writing assignment, you will submit a self reflection that discusses the strategies used and provides self-assessment. Being reflective about your writing is an important part of being a writer. These reflections should demonstrate understanding of concepts discussed in class, and may also make connections to assigned readings and/or the core values of the Writing Arts program. They should be written in such a way that writers and professors outside of our class could read and understand your reflections.
- *Participation:* Your success in this course is largely based on effort and participation. Students are expected to attend class regularly, read and take notes on all assigned literature, and speak up in class discussion. Reflecting on and responding to published literature is part of how we grow as writers. Similarly, responding to your peers' writing in workshop will help make you a more effective writer. If I rarely or never hear your voice in class, it is difficult for me to assess whether you understand the concepts we are discussing and whether you are putting forth the effort to grow as a writer.
- *Writing exercises:* Shorter writing activities will be given to you in addition to the major assignments. The number and points for these exercises will vary, some in-class and some take home. These will be scored on a complete/incomplete basis.
- *Final Project:* At the end of the semester, each student will submit an electronic portfolio demonstrating process and revision. I expect the portfolio to be constructed professionally and for it to show your evolution as a creative writer over the course of the semester. **Do not throw anything away!** You will need to include scanned copies of several drafts and revisions with comments as well as additional self-reflections in this portfolio. More details will be given later in the semester.

**Format:** All take home writing must be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins using 12pt Times Roman font. Title all creative works. Use the following heading in the upper left hand corner:

**Your Name**

**Prof. Budris**

**Writing Creative Nonfiction**

**Date**

**Word Count: #**

**Late assignments:** Students are expected to meet the announced deadlines. Unexcused late work or missing work is unacceptable and will not receive credit. All work will be due at the beginning of class on the date listed on your course schedule. In particular, late creative work will not be accepted for workshops, and your participation and portfolio grades will suffer as a result.

**Attendance:** Attendance is important, encouraged, and appreciated. Please be on time. Because the success of writing courses results, in large part, from the establishment of learning communities in which all members participate, the Department of Writing Arts has established the following attendance policy: You are expected to attend class every day. You cannot earn credit for this class if you miss more than the maximum number of permissible absences, including excused and unexcused absences. **The maximum number of permissible absences for our course is six (6).** If you exceed the maximum absence limit, you should consider withdrawing from the course. **If you have not completed an assignment or are otherwise unprepared for class, do not compound the problem by avoiding class and taking an absence.** I do use RSN/Starfish to take attendance, but it is your responsibility to keep track of your absences. If you arrive late, check in with me after class to be sure you have not been marked absent. RSN/Starfish sends an automatic email warning if you miss three or more class meetings. No warning will be given for repeated late arrivals, but a pattern of lateness will affect your final grade.

Being present for class does not just mean showing up; it also includes being awake, attentive, and focused. Please turn off or silence your cell phones before class begins. If you are sleeping in class or using your cell phone/iPad/laptop during class for unapproved activities, you will be counted absent. Students are expected to behave in a mature and respectful manner at all times toward your professor and classmates. If you become a distraction or disruption, you will be asked to leave and will be counted absent.

**Academic Integrity (Plagiarism):** The integrity of academic programs is imperative to Rowan University's mission. While acknowledging the social and collaborative nature of learning, the University expects that grades awarded to students will reflect individual efforts and achievements. All members of the Rowan community are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty; upholding academic integrity standards and encouraging others to do likewise; and knowing the procedures, rights and obligations involved in the Academic Integrity Policy. Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated. Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary sanctions up to and including expulsion from the university.

If the professor has any reason to suspect your work is not your own, appropriate action will be taken. Do not turn in work done for other classes or from previous classes - without express permission from both the previous and the current professor, this is also considered a form of plagiarism. Plagiarism is unacceptable and is grounds for failure of the assignment, or in repeated or extreme cases, the failure of the course. All violations will be reported to the university.

Please familiarize yourself with the detailed policies concerning academic integrity:  
[http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/documents/2009\\_AcadInteg\\_policy.pdf](http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/documents/2009_AcadInteg_policy.pdf)

**Accommodation Policy:** Not all students learn the same way. The federal government, through the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, tries to ensure that all students have a fair chance at being successful. If you have a documented disability that may have an impact upon your work in this class, please contact me.

Additionally, students must provide documentation of disability to the Academic Success Center in order to receive official University services and accommodations. The Academic Success Center can be reached at 856.256.4234. The center is located on the third floor of Savitz Hall. The staff is available to answer questions regarding accommodations or assist you in your pursuit of accommodations and looks forward to working with you to meet your learning goals.