

English 253: Creative Nonfiction

Spring 2022 - Lyon, France - Five Credits

Theme: Travel and Food Writing



“Like most humans, I am hungry...our three basic needs, for food and security and love, are so mixed and mingled and entwined that we cannot straightly think of one without the others. So it happens that when I write of hunger, I am really writing about love and the hunger for it.” - MFK Fisher

Welcome!

I am excited to have you in this class and to experience Lyon with you. The first thing you need to know is that you belong here, just as you are. What you say, think, and write has value and deserves to be taken seriously.

Now, let's get into what this class is and how it will work.

Place and Time

When: TBD

Where: TBD

Professor Check-in Hours: TBD

What to Expect in ENGL 253?

This course will focus on memoir, travel writing, and food writing. You will keep travel journals and participate in regular writing activities as they reflect on your time in Lyon. Writing activities will encourage you to engage with the city of Lyon, exploring and writing about Fourvière Hill, Parc de la Tête d'Or, and Vieux Lyon. As you write, you will also learn creative nonfiction craft.



Why Study Travel Writing?

Travel writing is at once a satisfying and complicated way to engage with a new place. On the one hand, you document your experiences and interactions with new people and places. Travel writing can help you process, learn from, and understand difficult moments and miscommunications. On the other hand, travel writing has a history of privilege and colonialism. Questions arise about who gets to travel and who tells the official and “authentic” story of a place. Through studying and practicing travel writing, I hope you can document your time in Lyon while interrogating your positionality as a traveler and a writer.



ENGL 253 Bellevue College Course Description

Focuses on the craft of short essays (memoir, travel essay, autobiography). Covers narration, characterization, dialogue, scene, voice, and tone. Students write and critique short essays and read the work of established non-fiction writers. Suitable for beginning or experienced writers. Prerequisite: ENGL& 101 placement or higher.

ENGL 253 Course Learning Outcomes

After completing this class, students should be able to:

- Identify distinguishing characteristics of creative nonfiction

- Control sentence structure, length, and word choice to create a particular mood, tone, and narrative persona
- Identify subjective and objective perspectives in creative non-fiction
- Apply literary devices to personal experience to develop a theme
- Apply literary devices to personal experiences/perspectives to create narrative veracity
- Explore subjects and themes using variations of subjective and objective perspective
- Critique, revise and edit works in progress



How to Approach 253

- **Check Canvas daily** (Monday-Friday) and arrive to class each day fully present and ready to learn.
- **Practice due diligence.** Read the instructions on all assignments, read the assigned readings, and read all the week's canvas pages before coming to your instructor for help. That way, we're all using our time as efficiently as possible.
- **Ask questions.** If you're uncertain about something, chances are, someone else is also feeling that way. Questions help me know what I need to explain or reframe so that I can help you.
- **Be forgiving to yourself and others**—mistakes are natural and essential parts of learning.
- **Create the best experience possible.** You control your experience in this course. If you seek out opportunities to learn and grow, you will. If you approach the course negatively, your experience will also be negative, perhaps, others' experiences.
- **Aim to take risks** and try something new, even if it's uncomfortable.

- **Embrace difference.** We all come from different backgrounds and prior experiences. We enter this course with different strengths and weaknesses. Consider the online course as an avenue to address your weaknesses while providing your strengths to others.
- **Practice kindness.** Difference is at the center of learning and this course. You don't have to shy away from disagreement, but you can be kind while you do it.
- **Use your resources.** You have an immense amount of support even though we are abroad. If you feel like you're struggling, please communicate with me, and I can find the best resources for you.



Instructor: Professor Morris



Name: Caitlin Morris

Pronouns: She/Her

Email: Please use the Canvas Inbox to message me. I check my email daily and stop at 5 p.m. I usually do not check my email on weekends.

Office hours: TBD

Google Voice Phone Number: (413) 248-6254 Yes! You can call or text me. 😊

About me: Born and raised in Seattle, I've lived in six different places, including Lugano, Switzerland; Boston, Massachusetts; Saint Paul, Minnesota; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

I write fiction and creative non-fiction, and I have worked in the journalism, communication, and publishing industries. I received my MFA in Creative Writing from Western Washington University and was awarded a fellowship in teaching college composition. My favorite thing about teaching is getting to know all my students.

I, too, have studied abroad as a student and participated in educational travel. I completed my last two and a half years of my undergraduate degree at Franklin University Switzerland, a dual accredited Swiss and American university located in Lugano, a city in southern Switzerland along the Italian border. During that time, I even visited Lyon!

In addition to living in Switzerland, I took part in five two-week-long academic travel trips to Namibia, Greece, Scotland, Germany, and Croatia.

My approach to teaching in Lyon is influenced by my time abroad. It was a positive and life-changing experience. I hope your time abroad will be as well.

I'll aim to offer support outside of academics through optional outings and field trips. More to come!

Outside of school, I love any kind of movement, whether it's traveling to new places, walking my dog, or doing yoga at home. My guilty pleasures are listening to podcasts, reading cozy mysteries, and playing trivia games. I co-host a women's history podcast called [Special Lady Day](#).

When I'm teaching in Washington, my cats Winston and Sophie and my dog Domenico help me grade homework. I can't wait to get to know all of you!

Favorite Place to Travel: Italy or Thailand (have I mentioned I like to eat pasta and noodles?)



Units Overview

Unit 1: Getting Started - Reading and Writing Creative Nonfiction - April 4-18

We'll spend the first three weeks of the quarter orienting ourselves to each other as well as the creative nonfiction genre. In this unit, we'll attempt to define creative nonfiction before figuring out our writing practices. Finally, we'll read an example of creative nonfiction, focusing on reading as writers. These first weeks will prepare us to begin writing our pieces of creative nonfiction.

Unit 2: Essay 1 - Theme Structure - April 19-May 2

In this unit, we'll write a theme-structured essay, using prompts from Tell It Slant to begin our drafts. Then, we'll have our first writers' workshop, in which we'll practice helping each other edit and refine our work.

Unit 3: Essay 2 - Collage Structure - May 3-23

In this unit, we'll write a collage-structured essay, using prompts from Tell It Slant to begin our drafts. Then, you'll participate in our second writers' workshop, in which we'll continue to practice helping each other edit and refine our work.

Unit 4: Beyond the Classroom - Submissions Portfolio - May 24-June 2

We'll close out the quarter by preparing our creative nonfiction to submit to literary journals. You will be required to submit one or both of your essays to at least three literary publications of your choice. You will also submit your travel journal. We'll close out the quarter with a reading and celebration.



Grading

Assignment	Due Date	Out of 100%
Writing Prompts	Weekly	20%
In-Class Participation and Conduct	Daily	10%
Essay 1: Theme Structure	May 2	15%
Essay 2: Collage Structure	May 23	15%
Travel Journal	Weekly	20%
Submissions Portfolio	Thursday, June 2	20%

Attendance Policy

You are required to come to class:

- awake and ready to engage in the material;
- with your phone and all other devices turned off and put away; and
- with all homework and reading completed; and
- to stay until class is over. If you leave early, I will count you as absent.

When you're in class, you're:

- free to use the restroom without asking;
- expected to stay in class for the whole class period; lengthy disappearances without explanation will count as absences.

Maximum Absences

You are allowed a maximum of four absences to ensure your progress in the course. If you miss more than four classes, you will not pass the course. That said, participation points tie your absences to your grade. If you miss a class, you will receive a zero in participation points grade for that day.

Please note that if you miss classes frequently, you may have difficulty catching up. It is not my responsibility to re-teach you any material you miss. Of course, occasionally, some circumstances make it impossible to attend class.

Be wise and take care of yourself. Please communicate with me so we can figure out what works best for you and your coursework.

About Late Work

Since studying abroad can be challenging and developing a new routine can take time, I want to ensure that you have the space and freedom to complete your homework without fear of penalty. To do that, **you have a 72-hour grace period before I count your homework as late.**

Within those 72 hours, you don't need to get any approval for your late work or provide an explanation. That grace period is your time to complete your work. After 72 hours, please reach out to me, and we can plan together. If we don't hear from you, we will deduct one point per day for five days. After that, you will receive zero. The key to success for all is communication. We are here to help!



Participation and In-Class Conduct Points

I expect you to treat me and each other with courtesy and respect. That does not mean we have to agree--far from it! That said, I expect that we can both process disagreements with kindness and respect.

Additionally, I also expect that you will fully participate in in-class activities and discussions. Participation means trying out the in-class writing assignments and participating in conversations to the best of your abilities. Even if you're confused or struggling, an attempt to clarify and understand the subject matter counts as valuable participation and is vital to your learning experience.

I will give you two participation and in-class conduct points per class to ensure a harmonious and productive classroom environment. If you're doing the work and treating your peers and professors humanely, you will receive those two points without issue. However, I will remove points for lack of participation or disruptive and disrespectful behavior. Your total course grade will reflect the quality of your homework and your contribution to the classroom.

About Writing Check-ins

Check-ins with your professor are an often-underused resource available to college students. In check-ins, students can talk one-on-one with professors about their progress, assignments, and questions.

I say this often, but our best teaching occurs when I give a student one hundred percent of our attention. That kind of individualized instruction takes place during office hours.

Even further, students frequently discover the benefits of chatting with their professor too late in the quarter and miss out on valuable instruction.

In the first nine weeks of class, I will require you to check in with me at least once to discuss your writing.

Books and Materials Required

- *You Can't Make This Stuff Up* by Lee Gutkind
- *Tell it Slant* by Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola
- *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*
- *A Movable Feast* by Ernest Hemingway

Other materials:

- A planner to organize your assignments and to-do lists
- A notebook to hold handouts and papers
- Paper for notes and in-class projects
- A couple of pens to have on hand
- Optional: Highlighters and multi-colored pens
- Optional: Post-it notes



Learning Atmosphere

Instructor's Expectation

I will work with you to cultivate a classroom where we can dialogue respectfully and feel safe sharing our perspectives and ideas. To do that, we must treat each other with kindness, no matter whether we agree with each other or not. Please enact grace and courtesy as a member of our classroom community.

Affirmation of Inclusion

WCCCSA is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination.

We value our different backgrounds at WCCCSA, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators treat one another with dignity and respect.

College Anti-Discrimination Statement (Title IX)

WCCCSA does not discriminate based on race or ethnicity; color; creed; national origin; sex; marital status; sexual orientation; age; religion; genetic information; the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability; gender identity or veteran status in educational programs and activities which it operates.

Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity

Cheating, stealing, and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive classroom behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at WCCCSA. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to, talking out of turn, arriving late or leaving early without a valid reason, allowing cell phones/pagers to ring, and inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates. The instructor can refer any Student Code of Conduct violation to the Dean of Student Success for investigation. In the case of plagiarism, should a student plagiarize, they will fail the assignment and, possibly, the course. Specific student rights, responsibilities, and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct at bellevuecollege.edu/policies/2/2050_Student_Code.asp.

Religious Holidays

Students who expect to miss classes, examinations or any other assignments due to religious observance should be provided with a reasonable alternative to complete such academic responsibilities. It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent, preferably at the beginning of the term. Students absent on days of examinations or class assignments should be offered an opportunity to make up the work without penalty (if they have previously arranged to be absent) unless it can be demonstrated that a makeup opportunity would constitute an unreasonable burden on a faculty member. Should a disagreement arise over what constitutes an unreasonable burden or any element of this policy, the parties involved should consult the department chair or dean.

