

English 225  
Fall 2019  
Professor Jessica Barksdale  
Office Hours by arrangement and by email/online  
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**Required Text:**

*Tell It Slant*, [Third Edition](#), Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola. It is important that you get this new edition, available August 16.

**Required Text: Buy only ONE**

*I Am, I Am*--Maggie O'Farrell  
978-0525436058

*Hunger*--Roxane Gay  
978-0062420718

*Heart Berries*--Terese Maillot  
978-1640091603

*La Bella Lingua*--Dianne Hales  
978-0767927703

*How to Write an Autobiographical Novel*--Alexander Chee  
978-1328764522

*Tell Me How it Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions*--Valeria Lusielli  
978-1566894951

Welcome to English 225, Creative Nonfiction Writing. In this class, we are going to work on nonfiction (stories that are true) and deepen our understanding of the genre—not only by writing our own works but reading others.

You will read, draft, post, comment—and then you will work with each other in groups to get feedback. You will pick a memoir/CNF book to read, and all semester, you will be reflecting on aspects of the book (good and bad) and relating it to your own writing as well as the concepts we are learning.

At the end of the class, you will turn in a final reflection on this book, as well as a finished prose piece, the culmination of all the work we have done.

The formal definition of this class is:

In this course, students analyze classic and contemporary narrative nonfiction writing, including memoir, travel, nature and personal essays, to identify the aspects and strategies of successful creative non-fiction essays. The readings represent the diverse perspectives of African-American, Native American, European- American, Asian-American, and Hispanic writers. Students then employ the identified literary techniques to plan and compose creative nonfiction essays with an emphasis on the strategies necessary to develop an authentic narrative voice. Students present their writing to the class and instructor for discussion, review, and revision suggestions.

### **Student learning outcomes, per official course outline of record:**

- A. Compose, shape and organize creative non-fiction works, appropriately employing strategies of successful narrative expression;
- B. Create balance in narrative expression with effective use of scene and summary, the explicit and the implicit, writing that shows and tells, as well as demonstrating knowledge of the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction;
- C. Interpret the complex themes in nonfiction readings of African-American, Asian American, Mexican-American, Native-American and/or Euro-American authors;
- D. Formulate a narrative identity and voice that embraces a dual perspective, dual via ethnicity, culture, or across time.
- E. Identify strengths in their own and others' writings, offering helpful commentary and constructive criticism when required.
- F. Demonstrate public speaking expertise by reading their essays aloud in class or in public readings;
- G. Apply relevant constructive criticism made by peers and teacher to the revision of creative pieces, thus demonstrating receptivity to readers' responses.

### **Important Dates**

Last Day to Add: 09/08/19  
First Day to Drop: 08/26/19  
Last Day to Drop With Refund: 09/06/19  
Last Day to Drop Without W: 09/08/19  
Last Day to Drop With W: 11/15/19

### **Basic Class Rules:**

- I accept no late stories/poems or assignments. **Please note the Wednesday and Saturday due dates for all assignments. Due Time is 12 noon. Saturday due times are 7 pm.**
- This course cannot be done when you want to do the work. It's not an "at your pace" type of thing. If you miss the due dates, you will miss the points.
- After four cumulative absences (two weeks of not posting or responding), I have the option to drop you. And I usually opt to drop.
- I offer no extra-credit opportunities.
- Plagiarism is work submitted by you that is not yours. If I feel you have done just that, I will drop you from the class and alert the Dean of Student Services.

- Do not ask for grade changes after the semester has ended and your grades recorded, unless you think I have made an addition error.
- Keep track of your grades all semester via the gradebook. If something seems off, email me ASAP.

## Weekly Schedule

You have mostly one full week to post your work and comment to others. **Work and comments are due by the Wednesday due dates at 12 noon (except for a few Saturday due dates -- posting time 7 pm on Saturdays--during workshop weeks).** My advice is that you post early. I will not comment on work posted at the end of the week's time.

**After 10 am on the due date, I will only read and give you points. After 12 noon, you will receive no points.**

You need to get onto the Canvas site by or before the first day of the semester (I will open the class a bit early), which is **Monday, August 26**. But get on the class site. Look around. Pay close attention to the Start Here modules as all the information is provided in detail for each week. Buy your books. **Introduce yourself in the discussion board where indicated.** And then get ready to **post your first entry by August 30<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon.**

The most important aspects of the course compass web site are these:

- **Discussion Boards**—These areas are where you will post your in-class work/homework, the writer write up, and your final pieces.

Here is where people get confused. So I will try to be clear. Not only will you post your work each posting date, but **you will respond twice to other people every posting day.**

**Responding to comments on your own assignment thread does not count in this regard.**

You may respond to more people if you would like—and I know folks like comments. But twice each posting date is all that is required.

- **Workshop groups**—This is the area where you will find your workshop groups and where you will post your stories and poems and respond to each other. The groups will be made available just before workshop date. Click on **People** and then on **Workshop One** and so forth.

- **Documents**—You will find handouts on the discussion boards to augment your reading in *Tell It Slant*.

## Grade Scale/Points

Posting Work (12 x 25)	300	1050-945	A
Commenting (12 x 25)	300	944-840	B
Workshop (2 x 100)	200	839-735	C
Final Piece	50	734--630	D

Reflections (6 x 25)	150	629 below	F
Final Reflection	50		

Please note that the *Tell It Slant* editors refer to essays, which are collected for you at the end of the text. I recommend reading as many as possible to inform your own writing as well as your reading of your long form CNF selection.

**Due August 30 by 12 noon—**

Week One, Module One

Introduction

List of Twenty Things. Comment to two people.

**Due September 4—**

Week Two, Module Two

Reflection One--Why you picked the memoir you did. See discussion board for further details.

All mentioned chapters here are from *Tell it Slant*. Read The Basics of Good Writing in Any Form, **Third Edition**. Read The Body of Memory. Pick one exercise to write to. Post. Comment to two people.

**Due September 11—**

Week Three, Module Three

Reflection Two--How does your writer use the body in his/her work? See prompt.

Read The Writing Process and Revision. Read Writing the Family. Pick one exercise to write to. Post. Comment to two people.

**Due September 18—**

Week Four, Module Four

Read Taking Place: Writing the Physical World. Pick one exercise to write to. Post. Comment to two people.

**Due September 25—**

Week Five, Module Five

Reflection Three--How does your writer grapple (or not) with issues of family?

Read The Power of Writing Communities. Read the information included for you in the weekly assignment. Pick an exercise. Post. Comment.

**Week, Six, Workshop One, Week One, October 2/5**

Post your first piece to workshop in your group by October 2 at noon. Comment to ALL group members by Saturday, October 5 at 7 pm.

### **Week Seven, Workshop One, Week Two, October 9/12**

Post your piece to workshop in your group by October 9 at noon. Comment to ALL group members by October 12 at 7 pm

### **Due October 16**

Week Eight, Module Eight

Reflection Four--What aspects of craft do you see in your writer's work? Sentences, character building, storyline, structure? Now that you have participated in workshop, how can you more keenly evaluate the writing?

Read Writing the Arts. Pick an exercise. Post. Comment

### **Due October 23**

Week Nine, Module Nine

Read Gathering the Threads of History. Pick. Post. Comment

### **Due October 30**

Week Ten, Module Ten

Reflection Five--How does history effect/enhance/figure in the story that you are reading. How does the writer use history?

Read The Body of Identity. Pick. Post. Comment.

### **Due November 6**

Week Eleven, Module Eleven.

Read Glorious Facts: Research and the Research Essay. Read The Tradition of the Personal Essay. Pick. Post. Comment.

### **Due November 13**

Week Twelve, Module Twelve

Reflection Six--Does the research show in the memoir you are reading? Does the writer mention research? Does the writer not do enough? Comment on this aspect of the memoir you are reading.

Read Innovative Forms: The Wide Variety of Creative Nonfiction.

### **Due November 20**

Week Thirteen, Module Thirteen

Read *Publishing Your Creative Nonfiction. The Particular Challenges of Creative Nonfiction*. Read prompt on the site. Post. Comment.

### **Due November 27/30**

Week Fourteen

Workshop Two, Week One

Post your final reflection on your memoir.

Post your first piece to workshop in your group by November 27 at noon. Comment to ALL group members by Saturday, November 30 at 7 pm.

### **Week Fifteen, Workshop Two, Week Two**

Post your piece to workshop in your group by December 4 at noon. Comment to ALL group members by December 7 at 7 pm.

### **Due December 11**

Week Sixteen

Final piece due in BOTH the Discussion Board (for your classmates) and in Assignments (where I will read and comment). Comment to two people.

### **In no particular order, helpful hints, suggestions, and requirements for this class.**

- Your comments to each other should be full of detail and specifics. No, “Wow! That was great! I loved it! Keep up the good work! Send it right out” Of course, nice to read about one’s work with so many exclamation marks, but what about “There is a lot of conflict here between the whale and the shark. I see the beginning, middle, and maybe the end—you might want to focus on the part where they both become land-living animals and walk on two feet. But the dialogue as they walk across the desert? Totally believable. I love your use of language, especially the words *autumn* and *lugubrious*. I’m not sure everyone will know what lugubrious means, though. Maybe a way to convey without it? Most readers won’t know what a lugubrious whale is, but I have a feeling you can use more specific description to convey that notion.”
- I don’t comment to work posted after 10 am—though you get credit. I don’t comment **nor** do I count work posted after 12 noon.
- Technical difficulties, random snow storms or floods, freak accidents, and irreverent roommates who like to hide computers will happen. My advice? Do your work early in the day. The class is open to you 24/7. Use that to your advantage.
- But don’t decide (or think) you can post work for the entire class in one quick week. I don’t want to click onto the site to see that “Drusilla” has posted for 16 weeks in advance. For your Wednesday due date, you have from the moment a week closes to 12 noon to post. Again, refer to that time between 10-12. But don’t post 16 weeks ahead of time. That’s not do-able.
- Please read as much of *Tell it Slant* as you can. I wasn’t able to assign it all, though you really need all the great information within.

- If you miss two classes, that's when we start worrying about drop dates. Not posting one night is an absence.
- The workshops have additional Saturday due dates. Pay attention to the syllabus.
- Pay attention to the entire board. Not just the discussions. Syllabus, announcements, email inbox.