

## English 354 Weekly Modules for Online Course Spring 2020

### Module One      April 6-April 10: Introductions!

**Please complete the following tasks by Wednesday April 8 at noon:**

**1. Assigned Reading:**

- Read the Syllabus and Course Handouts in Files on Canvas. Note any questions you have.
- Read *Tell it Slant*: “Preface to the Third Edition” and “Appendix I: Good Habits for Healthy Writers.”

**2. Response to Assigned Reading:**

Complete the Student Introduction Handout and turn in via Assignments.

**3. Introductions Discussion Board:**

Share something from your Student Introduction Handout, whatever you feel comfortable sharing. If you feel comfortable sharing a photo of yourself, please do! **You could also post your response as an audio or visual file**, using the menu of options on the “reply” page.

**4. Sign up for a “getting to know you” video chat with Brenda and Hannah using Calendar on Canvas** (see Handout *Individual Feedback Sessions* for Instructions on how to access the sign-up page)

**Please complete the following tasks by Friday April 10 at 5 p.m.:**

**1. Small Group Discussion Board: What do you already know about creative nonfiction?**

Have you read a particular book or short piece that, to you, embodies and illuminates the concept of creative nonfiction as you understand it? This can be something you read in school or on your own. It may have been published in print or online. It may have been something you read on Facebook, Instagram, a blog, or on Twitter. It may have been something a family member or friend wrote in a letter or email.

**Please type up a passage from this work (a paragraph or two), cite where it is from, and then answer the questions below (2 or 3 paragraphs):**

- What makes this work memorable?

- What draws you to the writer’s voice?
- What can you learn about the creative nonfiction genre from this piece of writing?
- If you were to emulate (base your own work on) one aspect of this piece—in either the content or the techniques used—what would it be?
- **Come up with a creative writing prompt based on this work.** (If you’re not sure how to word a creative writing prompt, look through the “Try-Its” at the end of the chapters in *Tell it Slant*. These are all creative writing prompts and exercises.)
- Be as specific as possible in your response. Avoid “I like” phrases in favor of “I notice...” Try to figure out how the writer, consciously or not, makes you want to read or keep reading.

**Post your response to your Small Group Discussion Board: “What Do You Already Know About Creative Nonfiction?” by Friday April 10, 5 p.m.**

**2. Have your first “getting to know you” video chat with Brenda and Hannah.**

Brenda and Hannah will meet with you together to match names with faces and get to know you a little bit. The *Individual Feedback Sessions* handout page has instructions on how to access us via Zoom or Skype. Please come prepared to tell us a little about yourself and with any questions you have.

**Please complete the following tasks by Wednesday April 15 at noon.**

**1. Small Group Discussion Board Response-What Do You Already Know About Creative Nonfiction?**

- **Read all the posts** in your small group Discussion Board, and briefly respond to each one. This can be as simple as “thank you for sharing this,” or it can delve more specifically into what you find interesting about the post. You can respond in writing or with an audio or video response.
- **Try one of the creative writing prompts** offered by your classmates on your own as practice (or you can try your own writing prompt). **Give yourself 15 minutes and write for the whole time.** (see the *Writing Down the Bones* excerpt by Natalie Goldberg in the “Readings” file on Canvas to better understand the purpose and practice of timed writing.)
- Keep this writing in a notebook or computer file dedicated to “in-class” writing. You won’t be turning this in yet, but you will be accountable for these “in-class” writings in the future. (See Handout: *In-Class Writing Guidelines*.)

**2. Reading Assignments:**

- Excerpt from *Writing Down the Bones*, by Natalie Goldberg (file in “Readings” folder under Files)
- *Tell it Slant*: Chapter One: The Body of Memory.

**3. Listening Assignment:**

- Listen to the Lynda Barry Interview “Writing the Unthinkable” on the podcast *To The Best of Our Knowledge* (12 minutes):  
<http://archive.ttbook.org/listen/60906>
- See Handout: *Lynda Barry Image Deck* for a more complete description of her writing process. You could try this process on your own, but it is not required (yet!)

**4. Reading/Listening Response:**

On your new **Small Group Discussion Board “Working with Writing Prompts and Memory”** please post a response that addresses the following:

- What are your main “take-aways” from *Writing Down the Bones* and from the Lynda Barry interview “Writing the Unthinkable?” (please also read/respond to

the handout *Lynda Barry Writing Prompt* to understand her writing process). Be specific. How might you use this information in your own writing process? What does Lynda Barry mean by “writing the unthinkable?” Is there anything that makes you resist this kind of process? Or what do you look forward to trying? Is this the way you already generate material or is it new for you?

- What interests you the most from Chapter One in *Tell it Slant*? What concepts are you interested in exploring further?

**Please complete the following tasks by Friday, April 17 5 p.m.**

**1. Reading Assignment:**

- “First” by Ryan Van Meter in *Tell it Slant* anthology
- “dark loud” and “milk” from *House Built on Ashes* by José Antonio Rodríguez (Canvas file--there are several excerpts in the file, but you need to read just the two specified here.)

**2. Reading Response Due via Assignments** (See Handout *Reading Responses* for details).

**3. “In-Class” Writing: Using the Senses in Your Writing (“Imagistic Endurance”)**

- On page 17 of TIS Chapter One: The Body of Memory you’ll see the “Try-It” section with several writing exercises.
- Please try your hand at Try-Its #1 and #2. Give yourself at least a half-hour of focused writing time, writing for the whole time, curious about where your writing mind will take you.

**4. Small Group Discussion Board Post—“Working with Writing Prompts and Memories”**

- Please share a brief summary of what you wrote for the Reading Response Assignment.
- Please share your experience of the “in-class” writing with early memories. You don’t have to share what you wrote (though you could share a few lines, if you like) but talk to us about what you noticed about the process. What senses do you normally use in your writing? Which are left out? Did anything unexpected come up in this memory? What theme or idea or emotion seemed to come through as you wrote this scene? Might you be able to follow this theme further?
- Please respond to at least two other postings in this Discussion Board. What are you learning from other people's posts?

## Module Three

## April 20-24: Writing the Family

**Please complete the following tasks by Wednesday, April 22 at noon.**

### 1. Creative Writing Assignment

- **Turn in a piece of writing** (about 1.5-3 pages double-spaced) based on one of your in-class writings from week one or two, or based on another exercise from the Try-Its in Chapter One of *Tell it Slant*. This piece doesn't need to be finished, but it should be revised and/or expanded from its original in-class writing.
- Include a small reflection on your piece: Which prompt did you use? What surprised you about it? Would you expand this further? If so, where might you expand it?

### 2. Reading Assignments:

- *Tell it Slant*: Chapter Two: Writing the Family
- “The Fine Art of Sighing” by Bernard Cooper in TIS Anthology
- “The Night My Mother Met Bruce Lee” by Paisley Rekdal in TIS Anthology

### 3. Reading Response Due via Assignments (See Handout “Reading Responses” for details). Respond to either Bernard Cooper or Paisley Rekdal’s essays, or compare the two. How do these authors also continue our exploration of writing with the senses? How do they display “imagistic endurance”?

### 4. Small Group Discussion Board Post #1

- What concepts or ideas from Chapter Two in *Tell it Slant* interest you the most? What in this chapter seems most relevant for your own writing?
- Please share a brief summary of what you wrote for the Reading Response Assignment (Response to readings by Cooper and/or Rekdal).
- What interesting questions did these readings bring up for you? What did you address in your reading response? What questions do you still have? Did anything surprise you from these readings? What concepts are you interested in exploring further?

**Please complete the following tasks by Friday, April 24 at 5 p.m.**

**1. “In-Class” Writing: Writing the Family**

- Please try your hand at Try-It #3 or # 7 from TIS Chapter Two: Writing the Family (page 31).
- Give yourself a solid 15-30 minutes for the raw writing portion of this exercise and extra time for research, if you do #3. You will likely need to find a handful of sources to get a more complete idea of who the person you’re writing about was before you knew them.

**2. Small Group Discussion Board, “Writing The Family,” Post #2**

On your new Small Group Discussion Board “Writing the Family” please post a response that addresses the following:

- Please share your experience of the “in-class” writing with Try-It #3 or #7. You don’t have to share what you wrote (though you could share a few lines, if you like) but talk to us about what you noticed about the process. What did you re-imagine or remember about a family member(s)? If you did Try It #3, what kind of research did you do to learn about the person you imagined? Did you look at photos, documents, journals, or other items? Were you surprised by what you imagined? Did it differ from your research minimally or greatly?
- Please respond to at least two other postings in this Discussion Board. What are you learning from other people's posts?

## **Module Four**

**April 27-May 1**

### **“The Basics of Good Writing” and “Taking Place: Writing the Physical World”**

**Please complete the following tasks by Wednesday, April 29 at noon.**

#### **1. Creative Writing Assignment #2**

- **Turn in a piece of writing** (about 1.5-3 pages double-spaced) based on one of your in-class writings from week three, or based on another exercise from the Try Its in Chapter Two of *Tell it Slant*. This piece doesn't need to be finished, but it should be revised and/or expanded from its original in-class writing.
- Include a small reflection on your piece: Which prompt did you use? What surprised you about it? Would you expand this further? If so, where might you expand it?

#### **2. Reading Assignments**

- *Tell it Slant*: **Chapter 12: The Basics of Good Writing in any form**
- Brent Staples, “**The Coroner’s Photographs**” in TIS Anthology.
- Also **review all the creative nonfiction pieces** you’ve read so far: Van Meter, Rodriguez, Cooper, Rekdal, and possibly the author you chose for your “What Do You know About Creative Nonfiction” discussion board.

#### **3. Reading Response Due via Assignments**

- Make note of the different concepts outlined in Chapter 12.
- Choose at least two concepts that are most interesting to you right now and/or that seem to be most relevant for your own writing.
- Apply these concepts to Brent Staples and at least one other writer you’ve read for this class so far. How do they exemplify these aspects of good creative nonfiction writing? What can you learn from these writers for your own work?
- Your response should be about 2-3 double-spaced pages and use specific quotes from the authors you choose.

#### **4. Whole-Class Discussion Board—The Basics of Good Writing**

- Share a summary of your Reading Response on the whole-class Discussion Board-“The Basics of Good Writing.” You don't need to respond to each other (it will be a lot to read), but please do get a sense of what your classmates picked up from the reading.

**Please complete the following tasks by Friday, May 1 at 5 p.m.**

### **1. Reading Assignment**

- *Tell it Slant*, Chapter Three: Taking Place: Writing the Physical World
- E.B. White: “Goodbye to 48<sup>th</sup> Street” (Canvas file; there are a few pieces in this file, but you only to have read “Goodbye to 48<sup>th</sup> Street.” You might also be interested in his thoughts on the essay form in the preface, though it is a bit “dated” in its language.)

### **2. Viewing Assignment**

- view this short video about E.B. White, to get a sense of his personality and voice (You may know E.B. White from his children’s books; he wrote *Charlotte’s Web* and *Stuart Little*): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xU6nbdhuUR8>

### **3. Brief Reading Response due via Assignments**

- What interests you the most in Chapter Three?
- What did you think of E.B. White’s essay? Anything from his style/content you might want to try?
- This response can be about a half-page to a page long

### **4. “In-Class” Writing: “Taking Place”**

- Choose any of the Try-It’s in Chapter 3 to do on your own. Give yourself a good half-hour of writing time. (If you’re inspired by E.B. White’s piece, do Try It #7)

### **5. Small Group Discussion Board—“Taking Place”**

- Please share a summary of your Reading Response to Chapter 3 and E.B. White, as well as your experience of the “in-class” writing with the Try-It you chose from Chapter 3. Why did you choose this one? What did you end up writing about? You can share some of the writing you did, if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Please respond to at least two other postings in this Discussion Board. What are you learning from other people's posts?



**Please complete the following tasks by Wednesday, May 6.**

**1. Creative Writing Assignment #3-- Due by noon on Wednesday May 6.**

- Turn in a piece of writing based on any of the writing prompts in Chapter 3 (2-3 pages, double-spaced), turned in via Assignments.
- Write a short reflection on this piece: why did you choose this prompt? What possibilities does the writing hold for future work? How do you see your writing improving in the last few weeks? What kind of feedback will be most useful for you right now?

**2. Viewing Assignment**

Please view the following videos:

- **Ted Talk:**

[Jacqueline Woodson, What Reading Slowly Taught Me About Writing](#)

- **The Moth: True Stories Told Live**

The Moth is a storytelling podcast, with short true stories told without notes to a live audience. As you listen to this story, think about *how* she structures her story, the details she includes, and how you might translate her verbal techniques into writing on the page. (You may find yourself hooked on listening The Moth; it's a great way to learn more about the art of storytelling!)

[Jennifer Hixson, Where There's Smoke](#)

**3. Viewing Response, Small Group Discussion Board *(Note the two deadlines)***

- Please come up with at least two Discussion questions (at least one for each video) and post those to the discussion board by noon. These questions should reflect what you found most interesting or relevant about these videos for your writing, and/or for the art of writing creative nonfiction, and/or the value of writing in general.

**Due by noon on Wednesday May 6**

- Please answer at least two questions posed by your group members (at least one each from two different group members). Your answers should reflect your own engagement with the videos and what you can take away from them.

**Due by midnight on Wednesday May 6**

**Please complete the following tasks by Friday, May 8 at 5 p.m.**

**6. “In-Class” Writing: Reviewing Where We’ve Been**

- Go back to the Try-It sections of Chapters 1, 2, and 3.
- Choose three more writing prompts to try that you haven’t already done. You can choose these all from one chapter, or you can choose from among the chapters.
- Spend about 20 minutes to a half hour (time yourself) with each prompt, writing quickly.

**7. In-Class Writing Assignment, due via Assignments**

- Please turn in a reflection on doing these intensive in-class writings. Which three prompts did you choose? What drew you to those prompts? What kind of material emerged?
- What’s fun about writing to the prompts in timed increments? What’s challenging about it?
- Share the writing you did for at least one of the prompts (you don’t need to revise, but you can if you want to).
- What do you like about this writing so far?
- Where might it go, if you were to work on it further?

## Module Six

## May 11-15: Gathering the Threads of History

**Please complete the following tasks by Wednesday, May 13 at noon.**

### 1. Reading Assignments:

- *Tell it Slant*: Chapter Four: Gathering the Threads of History
- “Leap” by Brian Doyle in TIS Anthology
- “Because, the Ferguson” by Ira Sukrungruang in TIS Anthology

### 2. Reading Response Due via Assignments (See Handout “Reading Responses” for details). Respond to either Brian Doyle or Ira Sukrungruang’s essays, or compare the two. How do these authors incorporate historical threads in their essays? How do they speak to individual experience and historical moment at once?

### 3. Whole Class Discussion Board – The Historical Events of Your Lifetime

- Brainstorm a list of historical events or phenomena that have big in your lifetime or for your generation. This could be an event, but it could also be a popular artist, an important invention, a trend, etc.. Come up with a list of at least ten historical events/phenomena.
- Respond to 3-4 of your classmates’ lists. Did something on their list spark a memory for you? Did you think of any common events?

**Please complete the following tasks by Friday, May 15 at 5 p.m.**

### 1. “In-Class” Writing Assignment: Gathering the Threads of History

- For this week’s In-Class Writing, please try one of the two exercises listed below. You’ll submit the results of the exercise you choose to the Historical Writing Exercise assignment on Canvas. This is still an exercise, so don’t worry about submitting something polished.
- Option 1: Try your hand at the Time Capsule exercise. This exercise is about what you want to communicate to the future about this moment and what you’re witnessing in it.
- Option 2: Return to the whole class discussion on important events you’re your lifetime. Select 1 or 2 events from your own list or a classmates’ list and

write about your experience as a witness to those events. Try to create a scene out of this. This exercise is about the past and what you have witnessed in it.

**2. Small Group Discussion Board Post – Gathering the Threads of History**

On your new Small Group Discussion Board “Gathering the Threads of History” please post a response that addresses the following:

- Please share your experience of the “in-class” writing. You don’t have to share what you wrote (though you could share a few lines, if you like) but talk to us about what you noticed about the process. Which prompt did you use? Did you write about a past event or the current historical moment we’re living through? What about this exercise surprised you? Did you make any connections that caught you off guard?
- Please respond to at least two other postings in this Discussion Board. What are you learning from other people's posts?

**Please complete the following tasks by Wednesday, May 20 at 5 p.m.**

**1. Reading Assignment**

- Read **Chapter Five** in TIS: “The Body of Identity”
- Read “**Math 1619**” by Gwendolyn Wallace in TIS Anthology. This essay is in the form of a Math quiz, utilizing a structure we call “The Hermit Crab Essay”. (For more info on this kind of form, you can read about it in TIS Chapter Nine: “Innovative Forms,” pgs. 127-130.)
- Read: “**Sir, Ma’am, Sir: Gender Fragments**” and “**Letter to a Young Butch**” by Kate Carroll De Gutes (Canvas File; this file contains several of Kate’s pieces, but you just need to read those two)

**Optional:** Here is the link to the *Brevity* issue on Race referenced in TIS: <https://brevitymag.com/category/issues/fall2016/> Brevity was the first online literary journal dedicated to short-short creative nonfiction forms; it’s a great resource. All pieces are fewer than 750 words.

**2. Viewing Assignment**

Here is a link to Kate’s website, which contains a **video of Kate reading an excerpt from “Sir, Ma’am, Sir: Gender Fragments”**: <https://www.katecarrolldegutes.com/> Scroll down the home page to “Audio & Videos”; it’s the video in the middle, from “the Lammy’s” (a literary award)

**3. Reading Response Due via Assignments**

- Which concepts in Chapter Five seem most relevant to you for your own writing? Why?
- Respond to either the Gwendolyn Wallace essay, the Kate Carroll De Gutes essays, or compare them. You might notice the way these readings are using different kinds of forms to tell their stories. How does the form enhance the content? And/or you can use the guidelines in the Reading Response handout, choosing a question from “Reading as a Writer” in the TIS Anthology.
- Your response should be about 2-3 double-spaced pages and use specific quotes from the authors you choose.

**4. Small-Group Discussion Board: The Body of Identity**

- Please share a summary of what you wrote about in the Reading Response for this week (Chapter 5 and Assigned Readings).

**Please complete the following tasks by Friday, May 22 at 5 p.m.**

**1. In-Class Writing: Choose one option (or more!)**

- Option One: Choose a Try-It from the end of Chapter 5. Write for at least twenty minutes and see where it goes.
- Option Two: Based on “Math 1619,” try putting your story about identity into an unusual form and see what that does for your content.
- Option Three: Based on “Sir, Ma’am, Sir: Gender Fragments,” write a couple of flashes of memory that stand out to you about when you became aware of your own identity and/or how your identity was perceived by others.
- Option Four: Based on “Letter to a Young Butch,” write a letter to your past self, expressing what you wish that younger self could know about their identity with the benefit of hindsight.

**2. Second Post to Small-Group Discussion Board-The Body of Identity**

- Please share what you chose to do in your in-class writing and how it went. You can share some of the writing if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Respond to **ALL** the members in your group, either to their reading response post, their in-class writing post, or both.

**Please complete the following tasks by Wednesday, May 27 at Noon.**

**1. Creative Writing Assignment Due via Assignments**

- Turn in a piece of writing based on **Chapter Five: The Body of Identity**. This can be the exercise you did for last Friday, or a different exercise. (1-2 pages)

**2. Reading Assignment**

- Read **Chapter 11** in TIS: “The Particular Challenges of Creative Nonfiction”
- Read “**Perhapsing: The Use of Speculation in Creative Nonfiction**” by Lisa Knopp, online at Brevity Magazine: <https://brevitymag.com/craft-essays/perhapsing-the-use-of-speculation-in-creative-nonfiction/>

**3. Reading Response Due via Assignments**

- Which concepts in Chapter 11 seem most relevant to you for your own writing? Why? What is your personal sense of ethics in creative nonfiction writing?
- What is your main takeaway from Lisa Knopp’s essay on “Perhapsing?”
- Try the Writing Exercise at the end of Lisa Knopp’s essay. Review the in-class writings and assignments you’ve done and try a bit of speculation in one of them. Let us know what you did and what effect it had.

**4. Small-Group Discussion Board: The Particular Challenges of Creative Nonfiction**

*Note Two Deadlines: One for posting and one for responding to others*

- **By Noon:** Please share a summary of what you wrote about in the Reading Response for this week (or you can post your whole response).
- **By Midnight:** Please respond to at least two of your classmates’ posts.

**Please complete the following tasks by Friday, May 29 at 5 p.m.**

### **1 Reading Assignment**

- Read the **Final Project Assignment** handout (Canvas File)
- Read **Chapter 13** in TIS: “The Writing Process and Revision”

### **2 In-Class Writing Exercise**

- In Chapter 13, “The Writing Process and Revision,” do **Try It #1—just bullet points 1 and 2**—with a piece of your own writing you’ve done for this class so far. What is this writing *really* about? Any broader themes that emerged from the scene? Why did you feel drawn to write this particular memory? What images feel the strongest to you?
- Then continue with **Try It #2** in Chapter 13. How might you expand this piece into a more substantial essay?
- *Optional:* You could do this process with more than one of your creative writing pieces, to give yourself a variety of options to work with.

### **3 Writing Response via Assignments**

- Let us know what you did for the In-Class Writing Exercise and how it went. Do you have a sense of what you want to work on for your Final Project? Any questions about the Final Project?

### **4 Sign up for Individual Feedback Session with Brenda and Hannah**

- Sign up for a feedback session this week and/or next week via the Calendar. We will work with you on your final project essay.



**Please Complete the Following Tasks by Wednesday June 3 at noon.**

**Meet with Brenda and Hannah at least once this week to receive feedback and guidance on revision. There will be slots available every day Monday through Friday.**

**1. Reading Assignment:**

- Review Chapter 12: “The Basics of Good Writing in Any Form.” Choose at least two of the craft elements in this chapter to guide you as you develop your final essay.
- Review Chapter 13: “The Writing Process and Revision,” especially “Three Quick Fixes for Stronger Prose” on pgs. 197-199. Once you have the bulk of your essay written, go through it with these “fixes” in mind.

**2. Writing Assignment:**

- Complete a draft of your final essay.
- Write a reflective letter addressing these questions:
  - What elements did you choose from Chapter 12 to guide the development of your essay?
  - How did the “Three Quick Fixes” exercise go for you?
  - What author(s) are you using for models in terms of structure?
  - What do you like about your essay so far?
  - Where are you challenged in completing this essay to your satisfaction?
- Turn these in, as one file, via Assignments.

**Please Complete the Following Tasks by Friday June 5 at 5 p.m.****1. Optional Discussion Board: Sharing your Final Essay.**

I will create a whole-class discussion board where you can share the draft of your final essay, if you feel comfortable doing so. You can state whether you just want to share it, or if you want some specific feedback from your peers.

**Finals Week**

**Your Final Portfolio will be due via Assignments on Tuesday June 9 by midnight.**

The portfolio will consist of your revised essay and a reflective letter. Details in “Final Portfolio” handout.