**Nonfiction Narrative Writing and Editing, English 398R, Fall 2014**

**Pamela Gerhardt**

Every **Tuesday**, all classes meet in the computer lab: **Tawes, 0232**

**1001 (8 am): Thursday EDU 0206**

**1101 (9:30): Thursday SQH 2119**

**1201 (11 am): Thursday ASY 3221**

**Instructor’s Office:** 1206 Tawes. Office Hours: By appointment or email.

**Email**: gerhardt@umd.edu **Course website**: <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com>

**Canvas:** <https://myelms.umd.edu/courses/1089868>

**Texts***On Writing Well*, sixth edition, William Zinsser. You can find this used on the internet for a very small fee or find it here online for free. <https://archive.org/details/OnWritingWell> ISBN: 978-0-0-6089154-1

*Course Packet.* Bookholders- 7417 Baltimore Ave, College Park. Course pack #4

$52.00

*Lucky That Way*, Pamela Gerhardt, ISBN: 0826220045. You can buy this in paperback or the Kindle/Nook versions on Amazon, Barnes&Noble, etc. Please read the whole book. We will discuss it half way through the semester.

**What is nonfiction narrative writing and why are we here?**

This class is geared toward students interested in careers, such as publishing and social marketing, that will involve writing and editing nonfiction narrative. The class will provide students with opportunities to write and edit and expose them to an array of professional opportunities. Goals include creating usable forms of communication for specific audiences, learning professional standards of practice, producing credible, well-crafted texts, and developing professional communication skills.

Nonfiction narrative writing draws its influences from fiction, magazine journalism, memoirs, and personal essays. Writers use many of the same tools as fiction writers, including **scene shifts, dialogue, vivid description, character development, nonlinear structure, and shifts in tense, time and points of view**. However, unlike fiction, nonfiction narrative *strives* to focus on what is real. The author hopes to tell the truth. That is, he or she does not "make things up" and includes research in the form of anecdotes, quotes, interviews, statistics and personal experience. As we will see, the difficult business of truth telling raises many philosophical questions about both the limits and grace inherent in memory, interpretation and human experience.

In this class you will learn to read, appreciate, write and edit nonfiction narrative. You will find that the writing skills you begin to master in the class will prove useful and applicable to nearly all forms of writing tasks you will encounter in your future, both in the workplace and beyond. At its most practical level, this class will teach you how to meet the needs and interests of specific audiences and how to professionally market yourself and get your work published.

**Assignments/Grading**

The requirements for the course include reading, writing and responding to writing. More specifically:

* A 300-word narrative essay with photo (10%). Blog post, Cowbird. <http://cowbird.com/>
* A 2-page analysis of a publisher (10%). This is a group project.
* One query letter (15%).
* A 5-page narrative essay (15%).
* Six written responses to student essays (15%).
* Six written responses to professional essays (10%). NOTE: YOU WILL WRITE APPROXIMATELY 6 RESPONSES TO PROFESSIONAL WRITING AND 6 RESPONSES TO STUDENT WRITING THROUGHOUT THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER. THE RESPONSES ARE DUE ON THE DUE DATES – NOT AFTER. I CAN NOTACCEPT RESPONSES AFTER THE DUE DATE. THE RESPONSES ARE PART OF THE COURSE’S 25 PAGES OF WRITTEN TEXT AND CONSTITUTE A PART OF A YOUR GRADE. BE SURE TO EMAIL YOUR REPSPONSES TO THE STUDENT AUTHORS. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL RESULT IN A MUCH LOWER GRADE.
* A portfolio (10%), handed in at the end of the semester, that includes the following:

1. A revised version of the 5-page nonfiction narrative, **plus graded first draft**.

2. A 2-page reflection essay that discusses your writing and the course.

* Participation (15%).You will be expected throughout the semester to participate in in-class oral discussions about everything you read. Some of these discussions will take place during workshop. **Participation includes homework, in-class work, lab work, coming to class prepared, coming to class on time, (students who do not show up on workshop days will lose 5 points off their final portfolio), participating in class discussions, self-assessments.** We need an open-discussion classroom to enhance creativity, diplomacy and learning. A student who consistently arrives late, for example, or texts on his/her phone will receive a lower grade.

# Class Structure and Deadlines

* I will respond to your writing throughout the semester and grade the blog post, the 5-page essay, the query letter, and publisher analysis. We will workshop most of your work in small, informal groups. Your 5-page essay, however, will be formally workshopped and read by the entire class.
* Each 5-page student essay will receive a formal workshop once in the semester. I will hand out a sign-up sheet. Students will submit their essays electronically for workshop on CANVAS on the due date. The following week, readers can chose to print out the essays or bring in laptops/tablets on workshop days. Either way, readers MUST have a copy of the essay in front of them in order to discuss the essay during workshop.

**The Bottom Line**

To pass this class:

1. Complete all assignments.
2. Attend class regularly (no more than 3 unexcused absences).
3. Come to class on time. This is *essential* for effective participation.
4. Provide feedback for and assist your peers.
5. Read all assignments and be prepared to respond orally or in writing.
6. Participate in class discussions.

NOTE: Not all of you will earn an A in this course. Many of you will earn a B+. This is a rigorous, professional writing course, and it is very difficult to move from a B+ to an A-. Please see the grading rubrics on my website for more detailed information: <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com>

Most employers consider any grade in the B-A range to be superior. In very few job markets will a B+ prevent you from getting a job. Please note that at the end of the semester I cannot negotiate with you over grades. I especially will not answer emails from students who wish to have their grade bumped up from an A- to an A.

**Late Papers**

All assignments will lose 5 points for each day they are late.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism and cheating are serious issues in both academic and professional circles. As required, I will refer any abuse of the honor system to the Honor Council. You can borrow from published sources so long as you mention them in the text and give adequate documentation for them. In short, don’t rip off anyone’s ideas. Penalties for plagiarism include an automatic “F” in this class and possible dismissal from the University.

The University has developed an honor pledge. Every assignment in this class should contain the following hand written pledge: *I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.* Sign your name.

**Attendance**

Please inform the instructor in advance of necessary absences due to religious holidays, medical issues or other obligations. Please send an email documenting the date of the missed class(es) and testifying to the need for the absence. This note must include an acknowledgement that (a) the information provided is true and correct, and (b) that the student understands that providing false information to University officials is a violation of Part 9(h) of the Code of Student Conduct. The university’s policies on medical and other absences can be found at: <http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540>

**Students With Disabilities**

Students with a documented disability requiring special accommodations should see the instructor as early as possible in the semester. It is the student’s responsibility to register with Disability Support Service (DSS) and provide the instructor with a statement from DSS about the accommodation required. (DSS is in 0126 Shoemaker Hall)

**Class Evaluations**

We require **two** evaluations. One, issued by the department, is handwritten on paper during the class. The other, CourseEvalUM, is issued by the University electronically. CourseEvalUM will be open for you to complete near the end of the semester. Please go directly to the website ([www.courseevalum.umd.edu](http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu)) to complete your evaluations.

**Navigating this class:** In general you will find daily homework assignments on my sqaurespace site and in the course packet. The formal writing assignments are on canvas. In the daily schedule (below), “CP” stands for course packet.

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**Schedule**

**Week 1**

**Tues. Sept. 2**

Introduction to the course/syllabus: Squarespace website – syllabus, grading rubrics

* Lecture: What is nonfiction narrative writing and where will you use it?
* Lecture: What is style? (Group work)

Homework:

1. Complete Bob Greene versus Joan Didion assignment

<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/greenedidion.pdf>

2. Read Zinsser, Chap. 1 and 2 and “Video, The Kiss, and On The Couch” <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/video.couch.pdf>

**Thurs. Sept. 4**

**•** How to post to Canvas**.** [**http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/canvasstudentguide.pdf**](http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/canvasstudentguide.pdf)

* Discuss Zinsser, Chapters 1 and 2
* Lecture: narrative arc/tenets of professional writing

1. Discuss assigned readings: Greene and Didion.
2. Discuss “Video, The Kiss, and On The Couch.”
3. Review reflective essay prompt.

Homework: Write a reflective essay that follows prompt #1 <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/PWP_ReflectivePrompts_Fall2013.docx>

**Week 2**

**Tues., Sept. 9 (meet in computer lab every Tuesday in Tawes Hall, 0232)**

* **Reflective essay due to canvas**
* In-class exercise: Is this a narrative? (Student essays: technoskeptic/Prague)
* Discuss upcoming narrative essay assignments.
* Join Cowbird.

Homework: Read Zinsser, Chap. 3, 4, 12. and read at least the first 10 pages and final pages of "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold" by Gay Talese.

[**http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ1003-OCT\_SINATRA\_rev\_?click=main\_sr**](http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ1003-OCT_SINATRA_rev_?click=main_sr)

**Thurs., Sept. 11**

* Discuss Zinsser, Chapters 3 and 4 and 12.
* Student introductions/fill out forms.
* Discuss assigned readings. Frank Sinatra, how to interview, how to include research in a narrative.

Homework: Read very long piece by Joan Didion, “Slouching Toward Bethlehem,” CP pp. 80-105. Work on **Cowbird blog essay**.

**Week 3**

**Tues., Sept. 16**

* Informal Workshop: **Draft of blog essay due, workshop**, **bring two hard copies**.
* Discuss assigned readings. Genre: Social Commentary, Joan Didion.
* Lecture: Real-World editing. Adding sources (391) and signal phrases (398R).
* Exercise: Nominalizations/tight writing/search and destroy/clarifying
* Homework: Read Zinsser, Chapters 5, 6, 7. Work on 2-3 page essay.

**Thurs., Sept. 18**

* **Final draft of blog post is due. Submit to Cowbird AND submit the written part to Canvas.**
* Lecture: Three Appeals/Rhetorical Triangle/Three-Way Editing/classical argument structure**.**
* Discuss Zinsser, Chapters 5 and 6 and 7.
* Audience exercise, Saliva. Video: audience
* Homework: A look **at revision, CP pp. 46-55**. Look at publisher analysis examples: <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/sample.Publisher%20Analysis.doc>

<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/jenny.Publisher%20Analysis.doc>

**Week 4**

**Tues., Sept. 23**

* Discuss how to analyze a publisher. Squarespace: look at examples
* Lecture: Revision, CP 46-55. Group work: discuss Impala
* Form groups for publisher analysis
* Homework: Zinsser, Chaps. 8, 9, 10 and Shilts, CP 106-115. **Submit one page written response to Shilts to Canvas.**

**Thurs., Sept. 25**

* Discuss Zinsser, Chaps. 8, 9 and 10. Grammar review. Student sentences.
* Discuss assigned readings. Genre: Social Commentary. Shilts.
* SIGN UP FOR OPTIONAL CONFERENCE/Form groups for working on your publisher analysis
* Homework: Work on publisher analysis. Look at query letters: <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/excellent.query.letter.doc>

**Week 5**

**Tues., Sept. 30**

* Informal workshop, **draft of publisher analysis due,** bring two copies of your analysis.
* Discuss query letter assignment. Cover letter format/fonts. Look at examples.
* SIGN UP FOR CONFERENCE
* SING UP FOR FORMAL WORKSHOP

**Thurs., Oct. 2**

**CONFERENCES.** No formal class.

Come to conference with:

1. an outline or one-page synopsis that describes what you plan to write about for your 5-page essay. Include a) The general topic, b) format/style/tone, c) intended audience, d) possible publishers.

* **Final publisher analysis due. Submit to Canvas.**
* **Work on query letter**

**Week 6**

**Tues., Oct. 7**

**CONFERENCES**. No formal class.

Come to conference with:

1. an outline or one-page synopsis that describes what you plan to write about for your 5-page essay. Include a) The general topic, b) format/style/tone, c) intended audience, d) possible publishers.

**Thurs., Oct. 9**

* Rough draft of **query letter due**, bring 2 copies of the letter for small workshop
* Discuss how to respond to student writing. SIGN UP FOR WORKSHOP
* Discuss how to submit essays to Canvas for workshop. <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/How%20Students%20upload%20docs%20for%20workshop.doc>

Homework: Work on query letter, read Zinsser Chapter 14.

* Read Jeannette Walls (CP pp. 164-175) and Mary Karr (CP pp. 116-126 and 164-175) and **complete memoir work sheet** that accompanies Karr and Walls.
* Remember to read Lucky That Way

**Week 7**

**Tues., O ct. 14**

* **Final query letters due. Submit to Canvas.**
* In-class exercise: Complete worksheet <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/Memoir.doc>
* Discuss assigned readings. Walls and Karr.
* Discuss Zinsser, Chapter 14.

Homework: Look at CP pp 1-26. Read Tisdale. **Submit one-page response to Tisdale piece to Canvas.** <http://www.realweb.ifastnet.com/articles/weabort.html>

**Thurs., Oct. 16**

**• Workshop volunteers: Drafts of 5-page essay are due. Submit to Canvas. The three authors who signed up must post their essays to CANVAS by or before 5 pm. Critics who signed up should read the essay and type up a response– AFTER WORKSHOP, email one copy to the author and post one for the instructor (post as an assignment for instructor). All students, including those who are not critics, must respond orally to the essays during workshop. All students must bring in to workshop either a printed copy of the essays to be critiqued or a laptop/tablet. We need to have the essay in front of us in order to properly discuss it.**

* Lecture: Getting Published, Part I and II, CP pp. 1-26.
* Discuss assigned readings. Genre: Social Commentary, Sallie Tisdale.
* Homework: **Lucky That Way. Read the entire book. You will do an exercise on Tuesday.**

**Week 8**

**Tues., O ct. 21**

* Discuss Lucky That Way
* Written Lab exercise: questions about process, writing a book-length memoir
* Homework: Read and respond to student essays for workshop.

**Thurs., Oct. 23**

* **First formal workshop.**
* **Next round of Workshop volunteers: Drafts of 5-page essay are due. Submit to Canvas.**
* Homework: **Please complete self assessment #2. Submit to Canvas.** <http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/PWP_ReflectivePrompts_Fall2013.docx>

**Week 9**

**Tues., Oct. 28**

* Discuss Lucky That Way
* Exercise: Create a scene from your life
* Homework: read and respond to essays for workshop.

**Thurs., Oct. 30**

* **Formal Workshop**
* **Workshop volunteers: Drafts are due. Submit to Canvas.**
* Homework:Read Anthony Swofford, "Jarhead," CP pp. 176-192 and James Frey, “A Million Little Pieces,” CP pp. 158-163**.**

**Week 10**

**Tues., Nov. 4**

* Discuss Lucky That Way: write a one-paragraph elevator pitch
* Discuss assigned readings. Genre: A Vivid Sense of Place, Swofford and Frey
* Editing exercise: Sammy’s
* Homework: Read and respond to essays for workshop.

**Thurs., Nov. 6**

* **Formal Workshop of a five-page student essay.**
* **Workshop volunteers: Drafts are due. Submit to Canvas.**
* Homework: Zinsser, Chapter 13 and 16.

Mike Tidwell, CP pp. 134-140. Andre Dubus, "Railroad Sketches."

<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/andres%20dubus%20railroad%20sketches>

**Week 11**

**Tues., Nov. 11**

* Discuss Zinsser, Chapter 13 and 16.
* Travel Writing: Discuss Tidwell and Dubus.
* Editing exercises: Domino’s and AOL, based on Chapter 16
* Homework: Read and respond to essays for workshop.

**Thurs., Nov. 13**

* **Formal Workshop of a five-page student essay.**
* **Workshop volunteers: Drafts due. Submit to Canvas**

**Week 12**

**Tues., Nov. 18**

**Conferences**

**Thurs., Nov. 20**

* **Formal workshop of five-page student essay**
* **Workshop volunteers: Drafts are due. Submit to Canvas. READ ESSAYS FOR TUESDAY NOV. 25 WORKSHOP.**

**Week 13**

**Tues., Nov. 25 NOTE: THIS WORKSHOP IS ON A TUESDAY**

1. **Formal Workshop of five-page student essays.**

**Thurs., Nov. 27**

**NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING.**

**Week 14**

**Tues., Dec. 2**

* Class recap to help students write final reflection.
* Create a LinkedIn account.

**Thurs., Dec. 4**

* **Revised 5-page essay and final reflection due. Submit to Canvas.**
* Resume workshop. Ya Know? Cats on FB. LinkedIn.
* Evaluations.
* Homework: Read “Robbed in PG County” and Jim Brady.
* <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/13/AR2006011302301_pf.html> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/11/AR2006021100840.html>

**Week 15**

**Tues., May 9**

* Discuss Brady and Robbed in PG County and Blog Rage.
* Getting a Job: squarespace links
* Evaluations: online and on paper

**Thurs. May 11**

Conferences.

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**You will find many electronic documents/essays on my squarespace site. In case you have trouble locating the links, here are most of them:**

**The Chase, by Annie Dillard.** <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~tbayindi/chase.pdf>

**Railroad Sketches, by Andre Dubus.**

<http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/andres%20dubus%20railroad%20sketches>

**Memoir work sheet that accompanies Karr and Walls.** [**http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/Memoir.doc**](http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/Memoir.doc)

**Karr, How I Told My Friends I Was Writing About…**

[**http://www.slate.com/id/2162744/**](http://www.slate.com/id/2162744/)

**Robbed in PG County.**

[**http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/13/AR2006011302301\_pf.html**](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/13/AR2006011302301_pf.html)

**Joan Didion and Bob Greene style discussion.**

[**http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/greenedidion.pdf**](http://gerhardt.squarespace.com/storage/greenedidion.pdf)

**Video, The Kiss, Still on the Couch**

**C:\Documents and Settings\Gerhardt\Local Settings\Temp\foreverwar-2.xxfiles**

**Sallie Tisdale, We do Abortions Here**

[**http://www.realweb.ifastnet.com/articles/weabort.html**](http://www.realweb.ifastnet.com/articles/weabort.html)

**Frank Sinatra Has a Cold**

[**http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ1003-OCT\_SINATRA\_rev\_?click=main\_sr**](http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ1003-OCT_SINATRA_rev_?click=main_sr)

**Please note: there are many wonderful essays in the course packet that might not be on this semester’s schedule. Feel free to read all of them or as many as you like. For humor, you might especially like Sedaris and/or Eggers, for example.**