**Application for Course Inclusion as a General Education Course (not including FYS)**

**Course number:** ENG 3316  
**Title:** Creative Nonfiction Writing

**Catalog description:**

Students will read and analyze published nonfiction, including essays, magazine articles, and electronic media, and experiment with form and subject matter. Genres explored will include memoir, literary journalism, and socio-political commentary. Small group workshops will help students revise and edit their own and each other’s writing while learning a variety of editing skills. The emphasis of the class is on in-depth discussion of student work, the assigned readings, and the process of writing.

**Instructor name(s):** (if more than one instructor teaches)  
1. Louise Sullivan-Blum  
2.  
3.  
4.  
5.

**For which area are you requesting your course approval?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written Communication</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Oral Communication</th>
<th>Global Perspectives</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
<th>Ethics and Civic Responsibility</th>
<th>Natural and Physical Sciences</th>
<th>Sustainability</th>
<th>Social and Behavioral Sciences</th>
<th>Arts &amp; the Human Experience</th>
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Please include course syllabi and relevant related course documents to support your request for inclusion.

1. Describe how your course will *advance the overall mission of the GE Program.*

   The purpose of the course is to enable students to find their true voices and true concerns as writers. Creative nonfiction is prose with a strong personal voice. Less formal than academic writing, creative nonfiction is found in magazines, newspapers, anthologies, and in various forms on the web. In this course, students will experiment with different kinds of nonfiction writing, such as the memoir, the interview/profile, and blogging and practice the skills they require, such as close observation, interviewing strategies, and writing for a more popular audience. They will also try out different sentence forms and various revision strategies, and improve their editing ability. Small group workshops will help students revise and edit their own and each other’s writing while learning a variety of editing skills. At the end of the semester, students will create a portfolio of their finished pieces. In this way, the course objectives are consistent with several elements of the general education mission, including fostering an inquiring mind, using various methods of seeking truth and acquiring knowledge, and understanding multiple perspectives. As the work we will be reading underscores, creative nonfiction comes in a wide variety of formats from an equally rich array of cultures and perspectives, thus creating a sense of global connectedness. Finally, the course itself is firmly grounded in the liberal arts.

2. Describe (when appropriate) how the course will *include any or all of the following:* a) substantial opportunities for oral and/or written communication, b) encourage active and participatory learning, or c) promote application of general education knowledge, skills, and dispositions to students’ lives outside of and beyond the university experience.

   a) This class includes substantial opportunities for oral and written communication. In addition to reading, students do extensive journaling about what they read. We use a variety of texts in this class, ranging from anthologies of
published creative nonfiction to electronic media. As students read the assigned texts, they are responsible for noting in their journals the parts that were the most helpful, the most confusing, the most interesting, etc., in preparation for class discussion.

b) Group discussion drives the learning in this course. During class students will share their thoughts on how a reading affected them, on how they learned from its technique and strategies, how it sparked an idea for them in their own work. Students comment on one another’s works in a constructive way, both in class and in formal web-based and face-to-face workshop. Because writing does not exist in a vacuum, sharing of suggestions and comments on one another’s writing is an integral step in the writing process. In addition to writing peer review one-page commentaries, students will comment on a peer’s blog entry each week.

c) Beyond making them better writers and seekers of the truth, this class seeks to enhance their appreciation of the form and content of all literature by giving due consideration to topics such as technique, figurative language, structure, tone, point of view, voice, etc. To that end, students will not only write a good deal of literature, but will also read and discuss numerous essays and articles written by professional writers and fellow writers in the class. They are encouraged at all times to see writing as a process, and revision as a requirement for success. As the culmination of the class, students apply their general education knowledge, skills, and dispositions to their lives outside of and beyond the university experience by producing a portfolio of their finished pieces. They are encouraged to bring their own interests to each of the genres we explore, which include memoir, literary journalism, socio-political criticism, and writing for the web.

(3) There are a number of goals of the GE Program (see instructions). Which will your course will promote? The following will be promoted, some to a greater extent than others:

- **Acquire knowledge of**
  - western culture and its relationship to non-western cultures
  - the foundations and characteristics of educated discourse
  - the unity and diversity of humanity
  - fine arts and aesthetics
  - the intricate complexities of life on the planet
  - the approaches of the liberal arts disciplines

- **Exhibit skills in**
  - critical and analytical thinking,
  - effective written and oral communication
  - inquiry and research, including
    - posing thoughtful questions
    - gathering relevant information
    - evaluating multiple viewpoints
    - constructing cogent arguments
    - weighing evidence

- **Develop dispositions to**
  - form a coherent, independent philosophy of life
  - make socially responsible and personally fulfilling life choices
  - value knowledge and continuing growth
  - form opinions and modify positions based on evidence
  - reason ethically and act with integrity
  - promote social justice and peace.

(4) Describe how your course meets the relevant course objectives for the chosen area (these can be found in the middle column of the General Education Plan on pages 6 – 21).

a) This course examines the ways in which culture influences visual and artistic forms of communication through the use of a variety of texts, including but not limited to creative nonfiction writing from magazines, newspapers,
anthologies, the internet. We will examine the both the rise of the so-called fourth genre of creative nonfiction prose and its changing face through the progression from print to the web.

b) The course emphasizes student creativity, expression, and production through the instructor’s pedagogy, combining active student-led discussion and peer workshop groups in every class and in online discussion forums, through student interpretation of published texts and of one another’s work, and through the writing and revising of a collection of creative nonfiction pieces.

c) This course contextualizes an aesthetic movement within an historical and cultural context by examining trends in creative nonfiction writing throughout recent history, exploring and discussing not just the published piece of literature, but also its background: the writer’s experiences and influences, the time period in which it was written and published, and what was happening in contemporary culture at the time. This course will introduce students to the remarkably diverse genre of creative nonfiction. Through course readings and discussions, we will examine the development of the genre, which his less a linear evolution than a branching and re-branching of forms—from immersion journalism to narrative nonfiction to memoir to personal essay to lyric essay and other experimental structures. At the same time, we will investigate what all these different forms share—a faithfulness to “fact”—and explore the ways in which writers select, manipulate, alter and possibly even invent facts as they morph life into art.

d) The course integrates current knowledge of design and/or performance with the history and development of a particular art form. Students will first examine and then seek to master the elements of each genre of creative nonfiction, studying the evolution in the genre and learning to situate their voice within or apart from it.

e) This course will also require the creation of an art work and involve students in the practice of a specific art medium, namely creative nonfiction writing. As a culmination of the course, students will create a final portfolio of finished pieces.

(5) Describe the types of activities and assignments students will complete to demonstrate the relevant desired student learning outcomes (e.g. in-class discussion, reflection paper, homework assignments, exam, etc). In other words, how will you be assessing students’ competencies in the relevant learning outcomes?

Students will:
• articulate or demonstrate the role of aesthetic and creative activities in effective communication or expression (evaluated in the final portfolio)
• describe the roles of aesthetic and creative activities in separate cultures and in a global community (evaluated in the final portfolio)
• recognize the techniques, methods, and/or forms used in artistic expression (evaluated in the final portfolio)
• observe and evaluate artistic expression utilizing cognitive and aesthetic processes (evaluated in the final portfolio)
• express themselves effectively through visual presentations and/or varied art forms (evaluated in the final portfolio)

______ **Approved** by GES  ______ **Approved** by GES, **pending** minor change  ______ **Not Approved** by GES

**Recommendation Dates and Signatures:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department:</th>
<th>Signature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen’l Education Subcomm.</td>
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<td>Academic Affairs Committee:</td>
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<td>University Senate:</td>
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<td>President:</td>
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______ **Approved** by GES  ______ **Approved** by GES, **pending** minor change  ______ **Not Approved** by GES
Sample Syllabus: ENG 3316: CREATIVE NONFICTION WRITING

ENG 3316: CREATIVE NONFICTION WRITING [semester]  Prof. Louise A. Sullivan-Blum
[Meeting Time and Location] Office: BH 207-C, ext. 4597
Office Hours: [days and times] lblum@mansfield.edu

Course Description: This course is intended for students interested in creatively writing about real people, places, and actual events, both in their own personal experiences as well as those beyond themselves. Creative Nonfiction finds its place along the continuum of various genres, swinging left to borrow fictional elements of craft and storytelling while, at the same time, swinging right to remain loyal to the facts of reality so important to good journalism. Through readings, discussion and practice, students will work to define the parameters of this genre in order to produce their own original pieces.

Two primary goals of the course are to help students see their memories, experiences, and movement through the world as material for meaningful stories and to practice the skills of creative writing to best tell those stories. This course is grounded in the assumption that good writing is borne out of revision; therefore, significant revision is expected of any piece students may ask others to critically engage. Because of this, a majority of the student’s grade will be determined by a final portfolio, of at least fifteen pages, which is expected to have been revised and polished substantially based on personal, peer, and instructor comments.

Since this class meets on Mondays and Wednesdays, readings will inform the first half of each week, providing discussion on how the pros handle various techniques of craft; Wednesdays, then, will give students the chance to put to practice those techniques through weekly blogs responding to a variety of prompts. Class sessions run primarily on discussion of readings and personal writings as well as in-class writing activities.

Classroom Conduct: All students are expected to show respect to the instructor and the rest of the class. Please be conscious of how your behavior affects other people. This course is largely a discussion course, so please listen to each other and allow everyone a chance to participate in the discussion. Do not talk privately, even quietly, during the class except when you are engaged in group workshopping. Do not talk to others during freewriting. It irritates other students and breaks everyone’s concentration. Just as it is rude to talk while someone else is talking, it is rude to use an electronic device during class or to get up and walk out while class is being conducted. Please leave your cell phone, iPod, or other devices off and in your bag during class and take care of all personal business during the breaks between classes.

Required Texts:
Pollack, Eileen: Creative Nonfiction

Student Learning Outcomes/General Education Learning Outcomes:
This course is approved as a Global Perspectives: Arts & the Human Experience course in the New General Education Program. Upon completion of this course, students will have demonstrated that they can:

- articulate or demonstrate the role of aesthetic and creative activities in effective communication or expression (evaluated in the final portfolio)
- describe the roles of aesthetic and creative activities in separate cultures and in a global community (evaluated in the final portfolio)
- recognize the techniques, methods, and/or forms used in artistic expression (evaluated in the final portfolio)
- observe and evaluate artistic expression utilizing cognitive and aesthetic processes (evaluated in the final portfolio)
- express themselves effectively through visual presentations and/or varied art forms (evaluated in the final portfolio)

General Education Assessment: The final portfolio may be used to help the university assess the extent to which the General Education program meets its stated learning outcomes.

ENG 2254 Course Outcomes:
- Successful students will demonstrate an informed appreciation of short fiction as a literary and artistic practice
Successful students will demonstrate the ability to think critically about how literary value is defined and accorded to artistic works

Successful students will demonstrate a greater awareness of writing and collaboration

Successful students will demonstrate an ability to produce a portfolio of revised short fiction

**English Program Learning Outcomes:** In addition, ENG 2254 is a course that may be taken by English BA majors to fulfill an English program degree requirement. As such, this course includes outcomes consistent with several of our English degree program learning outcomes. Students who successfully complete this course will

- demonstrate their ability to interpret texts critically;
- demonstrate their ability to situate literature in various contexts, including literary, cultural, and/or historical;
- demonstrate their ability to understand writing as a process, to assess rhetorical contexts, and to revise written work effectively;
- demonstrate their ability to conform to the prescriptive rules of standard written English;
- demonstrate an understanding of and ability to use the structure of the English language.

Note: The final fiction portfolio for this course may be used to help the English Program assess the extent to which the program is meeting its stated learning outcomes.

**Desire2Learn (colloquially and fondly referred to as D2L):** Copies of the course syllabus and assignment sheets will be made available on the D2L site for our course. If I must cancel class, I will communicate with you via your MU email account, and I will post instructions on our D2L site as soon as possible. Please continue to keep up with all the reading assignments, even if class is cancelled.

**Academic Integrity:** All students are expected to turn in original work. Dishonesty in academic work, including cheating, academic misconduct, fabrication, or plagiarism is unacceptable. When information from outside sources is used, proper credit must be given to the original source. Students should consult the undergraduate catalog, which is available online on the MU web page, and outlines the procedures faculty will use to initiate disciplinary action in cases of academic dishonesty.

**Plagiarism:** You have plagiarized when you represent someone else's words or ideas as your own. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. If you plagiarize in this class, your offense will be reported to the Provost's Office. The student handbook, *The Mountie Manual* for upperclassmen, or *The Student Planner* for freshmen, outlines the procedures faculty will use to initiate disciplinary action in cases of plagiarism. Consequences may range from failure of the course to expulsion from the university.

**Exceptionalities:** If you have a documented psychological or learning disorder or other significant medical condition, please consult with the Department of Academic and Human Development (141 South Hall, 662-4798) to make sure your professors are properly notified of your situation.

**Attendance:** Attendance is crucial to your success in this course. I expect you to attend every class meeting. Because circumstances sometimes prohibit your attendance, however, you are permitted to miss one class (the equivalent of one week of the semester) without penalty. **If you accumulate more than three unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered one-half letter grade for each unexcused absence.**

If you must miss class due to documented illness or other excusable absence (illness, bereavement, sanctioned university events, etc.), you must do the following:

1) inform me before the class, if possible, but no later than the first class after the excused absence
2) provide me with a copy of the signed excuse (the original must be available for my review)*
3) make up missed work as soon as possible
Course Requirements:

Essays: All essays should be double-spaced, titled, and written in MLA style. All first drafts are worth 10% each.

- Essay 1—Memoir: Write a narrative that explores an event in your life, and through storytelling techniques such as precise details, characterization, setting, scene development and action, reveal how this experience changed you and/or your worldview in some way. Successful memoirs interpret, analyze, and seek meanings beneath the surface of your experience. The story’s meaning, i.e. your theme, should imply a reflection not on what happened, but on what it means that it did happen.

- Essay 2—Personal Essay: Whereas in memoir, theme and meaning is largely derived from an examination of the self, the personal essay uses the self to speak to a larger social context or idea. Or, put another way, the memoir meditates on the self while the personal essay may use the self to help meditate on an idea or thing. For this essay, you will choose a concrete object—a hat, abandoned shopping carts, a bird of paradise, etc.—and using personal experience as well as outside research, write an essay that explores your object with an intent to discover its larger meaning or relevancy to our lives.

- Essay 3—Literary Profile: Using journalistic techniques of interviewing and observation, write an essay that creatively captures a person, place, or event of your choosing. Your role, the “I,” will be minimized as you utilize interviews, observations, and outside research to capture the story of an external subject, such as a particular person or place. While all of this may sound a bit like the aims of traditional journalism (it comes the closest out of all three subgenres) it differs from journalism in that the writer is allowed to bear her personal opinion on the piece as well as employ creative techniques of structure, characterization, detail, setting, and dialogue to convey a story and not simply report facts.

Final Portfolio: The final portfolio consists of at least fifteen pages of original work that may include one or all essays, depending on which pieces you feel best represent your work. Revision and polish is crucial to the success of your portfolio as it will be evaluated holistically, taking into account the drafting process. Thus, the portfolio must include both the original draft and peer comments that accompany the final draft(s) being turned in.

Peer Reviews: Each of you will be assigned to a workshop group whom you will work with all semester. In addition, during workshop weeks, you will comment on drafts being reviewed that week. While writing on the drafts is certainly encouraged, more formally, you must turn in a one page, single-spaced, commentary for each draft you read. Your critiques should strive to empower the writer to make the best choices for his or her essay. Constructive feedback guidelines will be provided early in the semester. The consistency and quality of your peer responses will count significantly towards your participation grade.

Weekly Blogs: Every Thursday (excepting workshop weeks) we will train our writing muscles by posting blogs based off of provided prompts. Not only does this encourage good writing habits of consistency and pattern, it provides us a friendly space to put into practice the techniques we’re discussing in class as well. You must post your blog to the main webpage no later than one hour prior to class but are encouraged to do so sooner. I will evaluate your blogs on process, not product; in other words, consistency and sincere effort, not a polished product, is our intention.

We will discuss as a class both how to do this, and how public we want our blog pages to be.

Participation/Attendance: Group discussion drives the learning in this course. During class, I hope to hear your thoughts on how a reading affected you, on how you learned from its technique and strategies, how it sparked an idea for you in your own work. Likewise, I expect each of you to comment on one another’s works in a constructive way, especially during workshop weeks. Because writing does not exist in a vacuum, sharing of suggestions and comments on one another’s writing is an integral step in the writing process. In addition to your peer review one-page commentaries counting towards your participation grade, I expect for you to comment on a peer’s blog entry each week. I’ll show you where and how to do this.
Grading Process:
First Drafts: 30%
Final Portfolio: 30%

Ten Weekly Blogs: 20%
Participation/Attendance: 20%

Schedule: See following page
### Schedule (sample):

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; day of class</td>
<td>Read Hughes (attachment); O’Brien “How to Tell a True War Story” (online) Blog #1: In class</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Read “Knoxville” (CNF 15), “Shooting an Elephant” (CNF 43), “Cracking Open” (handout) “Death of a Pig” (60), “Big Boy” (online), “First” (online)</td>
<td>Blog #2</td>
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<td>Read “My Body…” (CNF 214) “The Death of the Moth” (online), “The Bone Road” (online)</td>
<td>Blog #3</td>
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<td>Memoir Draft Due in class; Read “I'm Just Getting to the Disturbing Part” (online)</td>
<td>Blog #4</td>
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<td>Piece #1 Due: Memoir (Saturday by midnight) / Workshop #1</td>
<td>Workshop #1 Cont’</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Read “No Wonder..” (CNF 139), “Testing Bloodhounds” (CNF 142), “Joyas Voladoras” (online); “Becoming Adolf” (online)</td>
<td>Blog #6 Class Meets in Library</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Read “An Insider’s Guide to Jailhouse Cuisine” (online), “On Pests” (online); “The Sultan’s Scissors” (attachment)</td>
<td>Read student essays; Blog #7</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>3/27 Spring Break</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Piece #2 Due: Personal Essay (Saturday by midnight) / Workshop #2</td>
<td>Workshop #2 cont.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Read “Frank Sinatra Has a Cold” (online), “The Stunt Pilot” (CNF 176), “Underworld” (GQ.com)</td>
<td>Blog #8</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Read “Round Trip” (CNF 382), “Taking Heat” (online); “George” (attachment)</td>
<td>Blog #9</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Read “Difficult Decisions,” “A Boy of Unusual Vision” (online); “American Man at Age Ten” (online)</td>
<td>Blog #10</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Piece #3 Due: Profile (Saturday by midnight) / Workshop #3</td>
<td>Workshop #3 Cont.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Final Day of Class</td>
<td>Final Exam Time: Final Portfolios Due &amp; Class Reading</td>
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