

CRN 81807, Section 01: Tuesday, 6:30 – 9:15, English Building 231

*Our Hearts Make a Path:
Creative Nonfiction as Pilgrimage*

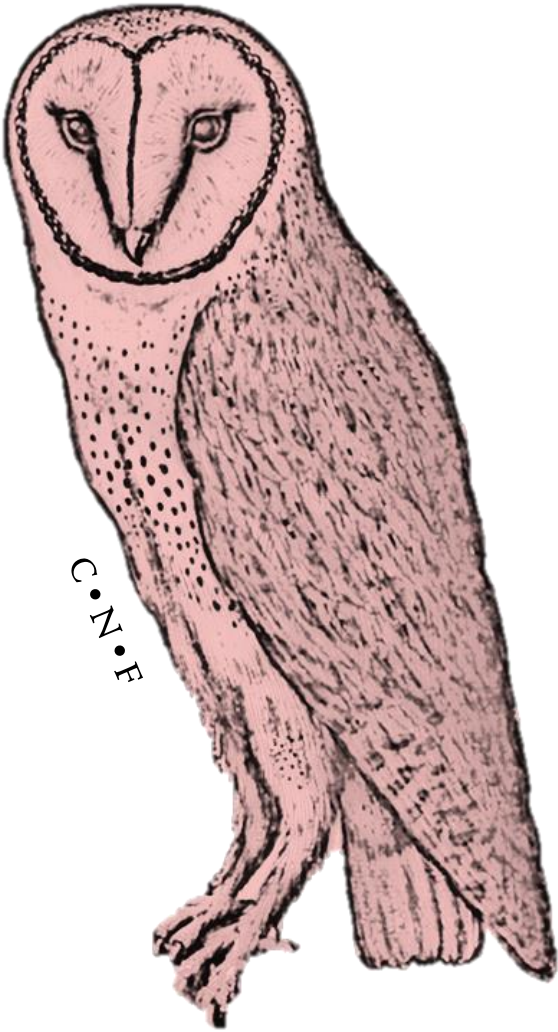
INSTRUCTOR: [Christopher Martin](#), MAPW | Lecturer of English

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OFFICE: English Building 139

COURSE GUIDE WORDS: Sincerity, curiosity, creativity, complexity, and empathy are our guiding principles. If you consider them and apply them to everything you do in our time together, you will, as [Thoreau said](#), “meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is a course in writing creative nonfiction, including readings from the genre, with emphasis on the personal essay and memoir. We will also give attention to the history and development of creative nonfiction, its subdivisions, and its publishing markets. The course will be highly generative with drafting, workshopping, peer review, and conferencing forming its core. Prerequisite: Admission to the MAPW Program or permission of the graduate program director.



MATERIALS: You'll need a composition notebook or journal and other standard materials/organizational system for a writing class. Please bring these materials beginning the second day of class.

TEXTS: You'll need the following texts by the beginning of the third week of class; e-book/Kindle versions are fine if they exist. We'll also access various online texts and resources throughout the semester.

- [The Book of Delights: Essays](#) | Ross Gay
- [Cosas: Folk Art Travels in Mexico](#) | Linda Niemann
- [Crazy Brave: A Memoir](#) | Joy Harjo
- [Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions](#) | Valeria Luiselli

OFFICE HOURS: Generally, I'll be available in EB 139 on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00 – 11:00 AM and 1:30 – 2:30 PM and Tuesdays from 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM. These times aren't guaranteed, so it's best to send a quick message if stopping by, especially if you're not already near. I'm happy to schedule in-person and online meetings at other times.

INSTRUCTOR COMMUNICATION: I prefer direct GroupMe messages to email, but both are welcome. If emailing, in the subject line, please include your name, CNF, and anything else that's applicable. I'm responsive to messages and emails and make it a point to be accessible outside of class, but please be as specific as possible when writing with a question. If you're absent, please don't use messaging or email to check in on what you missed. Meeting me in person is best for that. I can't guarantee immediate or quick responses to messages or emails sent on weekends or at odd hours. If writing about a grade, please use your KSU email rather than GroupMe. Please don't message through D2L.

TECHNOLOGICAL INFORMATION

- **Online component:** Because this course is designed as a weekly studio with significant in-person collaboration and workshopping, online requirements (aside from online readings) will be minimal. That said, I will open up online options for submitting course portfolios; portfolio submission through hard copy or email will also be acceptable. I will also open optional discussion threads to facilitate collaboration outside of class. We'll determine as a class the best method for submitting workshop materials. Details forthcoming.
- **GroupMe:** I use GroupMe to facilitate communication, share updates/reminders, and to give you an easy way to reach out to me through text. Joining our class GroupMe is optional. I can't discuss grades via GroupMe. Please see me or check your KSU email for GroupMe access.
- **KSU student email:** You should check your KSU student email daily to stay updated on all KSU matters.
- **PDF and Microsoft Word:** If you'll be submitting portfolios in formats other than PDF or .doc/.docx files, please confirm that I'll be able to open what you send well before the due date.
- **Proficiency:** A basic level of proficiency is assumed for all of these technological components starting the first day of class. If you have any difficulty accessing or using any of them, or if you think you might, please let me know.

COURSEWORK & GRADING: The final grades that may be assigned in this course are A (90 - 100), B (80 - 89), C (70 - 79), D (60 - 69) and F (below 60). A grade of C or better is required per MAPW guidelines for achieving course credit. See the [MAPW website](#) for more information. Grades in this course will be based on 100 available points. Therefore, points available for a given category represent the overall percentage and totals are calculated by simple addition.

- **In-class prompts | 10 points** | Throughout the semester, we'll complete at least ten in-class writing activities in the style of a quick-write journal. Each entry will come with its own guidelines. Many entries will be linked to the drafting processes of course portfolio components and/or will involve mini exercises to spark class discussion and your own writing. (You can miss two and still achieve full credit. Missing three or four would be half credit. Missing five or more would mean no credit for this category.)
- **Out-of-class prompts | 20 points** | With a few exceptions, most classes will end with a prompt for you to write about over the week and read at the beginning of the next class. Your responses can (and should) be rough drafts of only a page or two. These drafts won't be workshopped (unless you choose to continue to develop one for workshop purposes). The idea is to find a spark and generate material. (You can miss two and still achieve full credit. Missing three or four would be half credit. Missing five or more would mean no credit for this category.)
- **Workshop draft | 10 points** | We'll have four workshops over the course of the semester at around midterm, with four students presenting work per workshop. The week before your workshop date, you would post, email, or provide hard copies of a personal essay draft of 8 - 10 pages (or shorter essay drafts totaling the same). During your workshop date, you would take peer feedback and have the opportunity to ask questions. (Workshops cannot be made up except in extenuating circumstances.)
- **Workshop Feedback | 20 points (4 sessions @ 5 points each)** | For each workshop that you provide written feedback and contribute to the group discussion about each presenter's work, you'll earn 5 points toward a total of 20.
- **Group Presentation | 10 points** | Early in the semester, we'll form small groups (2 - 5 per group) to give presentations of special topics in creative nonfiction. The presentation could also take the form of an author study. (Presentations can only be made up in extenuating circumstances.)
- **Individual Conference | 5 points** | This conference will focus on feedback for your revised workshop draft, as well as any other work you've done for the course that you'd like to discuss. I'll block off half of a two classes for individual conferences, and will also be available for conferencing outside of class.
- **Course Portfolio | 25 points** | This portfolio will include the final version of your workshop draft, typed and revised drafts of two other pieces that began in this course (your choice), a self-reflexive essay discussing the ways course components (including readings, class discussions, workshops, etc.) helped you develop as a writer of creative nonfiction, and a brief self-assessment checklist on which you'll account for points earned in the course.

ATTENDANCE: I take attendance primarily to learn your names. It's also helpful knowing whether you're attending class when providing feedback and instruction. While course engagement is central to success in this course, I have no attendance "policy" apart from the information in the above grading details. There will be daily, in-class work that factors into your course grade, and certain items can only be made up in extenuating circumstances. If such circumstances are preventing you from attending class, please reach out so I can help or connect you with campus resources if needed. You can reasonably miss up to two classes this semester. If you'll need to miss more, please speak with me as soon as possible. My attendance "policy" amounts to this: You matter, and I value your presence.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Some if not most things you compose in this class will be read and responded to by other students. As such, please do not disclose more about your personal life than you feel comfortable, though personal writing is welcome. It's my goal to foster a safe classroom environment. To protect the confidentiality of students, audio/video recording of the class is prohibited, as is publicizing discussion threads and other materials posted online.

MANDATED REPORTING: I am a mandated reporter, meaning I'm legally obligated to disclose through appropriate KSU channels should a given student share that they are in danger or have been a victim of assault or other forms of violence. Whether you do or do not disclose anything to me, if you are experiencing crisis, danger, or difficulty, I am here for you and I will gladly connect you with resources available here at KSU, such as [counseling services](#), that can help you.

FEEDBACK & CONFLICT RESOLUTION: If you have concerns with any aspect of the class, including my approach to teaching, I'm open to your constructive feedback and will strive to listen empathetically. Provided you contact me in a timely, professional manner, I'm willing to collaborate with you on finding resolutions. I welcome you to reach out.

WITHDRAWING: The last day to withdraw from this course without academic penalty is Wednesday, October 9.

ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE & STUDENT SUPPORT AT KSU

- **Individual/Small Group Meetings:** I am available for conferencing by appointment or during office hours.
- **Writing Center:** Students of all writing abilities will benefit from this free service for the entire KSU community. Work one-on-one with an experienced, friendly peer writing assistant to improve any kind of writing in any subject while developing effective, lasting strategies for topic development, research, revision, editing, source documentation, and much more. Appointments and drop-ins are welcome on both campuses (K-English 242 / M-Johnson 121), and online appointments are also available. See website for hours, scheduling, and information on resources, clubs, and events.
- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#)
- [Academic Support and Advising Services](#)
- [Student Success Services](#)
- **Student Disability Services:** Any student with a documented disability needing accommodation is requested to notify the instructor as early as possible.
- [Cultural and Community Centers](#) (Cultural Awareness Resource Center, Global Village, LGBTQ Resource Center, and Women's Resource Center)
- [ESL Center and International Student Support](#)
- [Military and Veteran Services and Support](#)
- [Career Services](#)
- [Division of Student Affairs](#)

VARIOUS KSU STATEMENTS & POLICIES

- [Federal, BOR, and KSU Policy Statements](#) (including statements on Academic Integrity, Student Conduct, Confidentiality, Sexual Harassment/Misconduct, Course Accessibility, etc.)
- **New Enrollment Status Statement:** Students are solely responsible for managing their enrollment status in a course; nonattendance does not constitute a withdrawal.
- [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)
- [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- [Environmental Health and Safety](#)

See **COURSE SCHEDULE** and **ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION** documents for other course information. These documents are extensions of the syllabus. Each assignment description will include its own late work/makeup policy as needed. By remaining enrolled in this class past the drop/add period, you acknowledge receipt of this syllabus, provided to you August 19, 2019. This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be communicated in class or online.

“When everyone in the classroom, teacher and students, recognizes that they are responsible for creating a learning community together, learning is at its most meaningful and useful. In such a community of learning there is no failure.” —bell hooks

The image on page 1 is my alteration of an unattributed 16th century Dutch illustration, titled “[Kerkuil](#),” accessed through Wikimedia Commons.