

**MIDSTATE COLLEGE**  
**411 W. NORTHMOOR RD. PEORIA, IL 61614**  
**(309) 692-4092 (800) 251-4299**  
**Winter 2016**

**Course:** ENG 331 Creative Writing: Non-fiction (life-writing)

**Credit:** 4 Quarter Hours

**Method of Delivery:** Online

**Course Description:**

Students will understand the structure and elements of literary non-fiction – with an emphasis on life-writing - and the writing process, produce full developed works of non-fiction, and demonstrate an understanding of the critical terminology of the creative writer. A minimum of 45 pages of original work is recommended. Journals, a midterm, and a final exam are also required.

**Prerequisite:** ENG 117 Advanced Composition

**Text(s) & Manual(s):**

**Bombeck, Erma.** *If Life Is a Bowl of Cherries - What Am I Doing in the Pits?* NY: McGraw-Hill,1978.  
Beard, Jo Ann. *The Boys of My Youth.* NY: Little, Brown, 1997.  
Didion, Joan. *The Year of Magical Thinking.* NY: Vintage, 2007.

**Topics:**

1. Subjectivity, author's point of view, tone, voice
2. Techniques – metaphor, simile, personification, imagery
3. Audience awareness
4. Memoir and personal essay techniques
5. Rhetorical skills: pathos, logos, and ethos
6. Peer editing skills
7. Proofreading, editing, and revising skills

**Learning Objectives:**

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Develop an understanding of the structure of non-fiction writing.
2. Develop an understanding the functions and applications of key writing terms
3. Develop a writing voice and point of view
4. Develop audience awareness
5. Acquire through both individual and collaborative/workshop efforts the skills necessary for reading, discussing, analyzing, interpreting, and—most importantly—emulating short non-fiction
6. Develop an understanding for different non-fiction writing genres, including but not limited to expository writing, satire, and critical writing
7. Demonstrate an understanding of the critical terminology of the creative writer
8. Decipher and understand the form and content of assigned literary works
9. Respond to literature through clear and effective communication in written form
10. Read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility
11. Write works of short non-fiction that are of interest and value to the writer, to other students in the course, and to a diverse reading audience

**Midstate Grading scale:**

90 - 100	A
80 - 89	B
70 - 79	C
60 - 69	D
0 - 59	F

**MIDSTATE COLLEGE**  
**411 W. NORTHMOOR RD. PEORIA, IL 61614**  
**(309) 692-4092 (800) 251-4299**  
**Winter 2016**

**Midstate Plagiarism Policy:**

Plagiarism is using another person's words, either by paraphrase or direct quotation, without giving credit to the author(s). Plagiarism can also consist of cutting and pasting material from electronic sources by submitting all or a portion of work for assignment credit. This includes papers, computer programs, music, sculptures, paintings, photographs, etc. authored by another person without explicitly citing the original source(s). These actions violate the trust and honesty expected in academic work. Plagiarism is strictly against the academic policy of Midstate College. Its seriousness requires a measured, forceful response which includes consequences for inappropriate and/or no citation.

In courses containing writing assignments, the College promotes the use of an electronic resource which compares the student's writing against previously submitted papers, journals, periodicals, books, and web pages. Students and instructors can use this service to reduce the incidence of plagiarism. This electronic resource has been found to conform to legal requirements for fair use and student confidentiality. It is able to provide a report to the student indicating the parts of the assignment that match.

**Student Success:**

The Office of Student Success is available for students seeking tutoring for individual classes or who need assistance with writing assignments. Information is also available on test taking techniques, how to take notes, developing good study skills, etc. Contact Chris Peck in Room 502 (in person); (309) 692-4092, extension 5023 (phone); [dcpeck@midstate.edu](mailto:dcpeck@midstate.edu) (email).

**Instructor Information:**

Dr. Steve Bortolotti  
Office: 226  
692-4092 - ext. 2260  
[sbortolotti@midstate.edu](mailto:sbortolotti@midstate.edu)

**Policies and Procedures:**

1. If you know you will miss a deadline, plan on asking for an extension. Submission areas close promptly at 8:00 on Monday mornings, unless otherwise noted.
2. Absences do not exempt you from submitting work in on time. I reserve the right to negotiate late submissions with students on a one-on-one basis.
3. **If you miss multiple weeks, no matter what the excuse is, do not expect to be able to make-up assignments.**
4. It is the student's responsibility to keep all copies of papers and written assignments turned in for a grade. If a paper or other assignment is lost by the student or the instructor, the student is responsible for providing the instructor with another copy of the paper or assignment. Copies of the papers written in this course should be kept until the student receives his or her final grade for the quarter.
5. Students suspected of plagiarizing will be subject to the penalties outlined in the *Midstate College Student Handbook*.
6. Writing standards:
  - Use default settings and margins
  - Times New Roman 12
  - Student heading on page 1 of assignment

**MIDSTATE COLLEGE**  
**411 W. NORTHMOOR RD. PEORIA, IL 61614**  
**(309) 692-4092 (800) 251-4299**  
**Winter 2016**

- Page headers starting on page 2

**7. Coffee House**

- Students must submit original work at least 3 times during the term to the **Coffee House** for peer review and discussion.

**8. Discussion Forums:**

- Students must participate in the **Fireside Chat Room** discussion forum. This is an informal chat room created for students to connect with each other and the instructor.
- Students are required to participate in the weekly **Coffee House Discussion Forums** where feedback, commentary, and advice are shared.

**9. Late Assignments and Submission Areas:**

- No assignments accepted late.
- Drop boxes will be shut after the due dates.
- I reserve the right to negotiate to accept late work - in special circumstances - on a one-on-one student basis.
- I will accept assignments, but they will be subject to late points. Refer to assignment sheets for late point breakdowns.
- Work from weeks 1-6 will not be accepted after midterm (Week 6), for any reason, even for late points. No exceptions.
- During Weeks 7-11, the same above policies apply.
- Work from weeks 7-11 will not be accepted after (Week 11), for any reason, even for late points. No exceptions.

**Methods of evaluating student performance:**

- Journal – 100 points
- Portfolio – 100 points
- Unusual Event piece – 50 points
- Scared piece – 50 points
- Conversation piece – 50 points
- Childhood memory – 50 points
- Emotion piece – 50 points
- Helping piece – 50 points
- Metaphor/Simile piece – 50 points
- Satire – 50 points
- Personal growth – 50 points
- Submission to three Coffee House Discussion Groups – 30 points
- 10 Discussion Forums – 100 points

**Instructor's Grading Scale:**

Total number of points: 780 points

780 – 702 = A

701 – 624 = B

623 – 546 = C

545 – 468 = D

467 – = F

**MIDSTATE COLLEGE**  
**411 W. NORTHMOOR RD. PEORIA, IL 61614**  
**(309) 692-4092 (800) 251-4299**  
**Winter 2016**

**Weekly Lessons**

**Week 1: “And the Truth Shall Set You Free-writing”**

**Topic:** Observing truths

**Learning objectives:** Developing a voice; read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility

**Specific tools objective:** Develop recall skills by observing the present.

**Assignment:** Keep a daily journal of ordinary, everyday observations.

**Assignment:** Write a short piece describing an unusual event you recently witnessed.

**Weekly Discussion:** Share your experiences in this week’s Water Cooler.

**Reading:** Joan Didion’s *The Year of Magical Thinking* pp. 2 -114

**Week 2: “The Only Thing We Have to Fear Is Fear Itself ...Oh, and Clowns”**

**Topic:** Memoir

**Learning objectives:** Developing a voice, building audience awareness; read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility

**Specific tools objective:** Sharpen recall skills by revisiting the past.

**Assignment:** Write a short piece recalling what scared you as a kid or continues to scare you. Submit it to the Coffee House for peer review if you wish.

**Reading:** Joan Didion’s *The Year of Magical Thinking* pp. 114 – 227.

**Week 3: “Everybody’s Talking at Me!”**

**Topic:** Dialogue and dialects.

**Learning objectives:** Develop a writing voice and point of view; read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility; respond to literature through clear and effective communication in written form; decipher and understand the form and content of assigned literary works.

**Specific tools objective:** Developing dialogue and dialect skills.

**Assignment:** Record a recently overheard conversation in your online journal.

**Weekly Discussion:** Share your experiences in this week’s Water Cooler.

**Assignment:** Response paper on Didion.

**Week 4: “Memories, Like the Corners of My Mind!”**

**Topic:** Memoir

**Learning objectives:** Develop an understanding for different non-fiction writing genres, including but not limited to expository writing, satire, and critical writing; read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility.

**Specific tools objective:** Develop memoir writing skills and techniques

**Assignment:** Write and submit **one** piece about a childhood memory, focusing on why this memory stands out. Submit it to the Coffee House for peer review if you wish.

Submit it to the Coffee House for peer review if you wish.

**Weekly Discussion:** Peer review submitted pieces in Coffee House discussion.

**Week 5: “There Once Was a Man from Calcutta!”**

**Topic:** Memoir

**Learning objectives:** Develop an understanding for different non-fiction writing genres, including but not limited to expository writing, satire, and critical writing; read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility.

**Specific tools objective:** Sharpen memoir writing skills and techniques.

**Reading:** Jo Ann Beard *The Boys of My Youth* pp. 3 – 97.

**Week 6: “There’s No Crying in Baseball!”**

**Topic:** Personal essay

**MIDSTATE COLLEGE**  
**411 W. NORTHMOOR RD. PEORIA, IL 61614**  
**(309) 692-4092 (800) 251-4299**  
**Winter 2016**

**Learning objectives:** Develop an understanding for different non-fiction writing genres, including but not limited to expository writing, satire, and critical writing; read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility; respond to literature through clear and effective communication in written form; decipher and understand the form and content of assigned literary works.

**Specific tools objective:** Develop memoir writing skills and techniques

**Assignment** Write a short piece about event that saddened you and for which you are still trying to figure out why it happened. Submit it to the Coffee House for peer review if you wish.

**Reading:** Jo Ann Beard *The Boys of My Youth* pp. 97 – 187.

**Assignment:** Response paper on Beard.

**Week 7: “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother!”**

**Topic:** Memoir

**Learning objectives:** Develop an understanding for different non-fiction writing genres, including but not limited to expository writing, satire, and critical writing; read and respond to texts with both analytical acumen and personal sensibility.

**Specific tools objective:** Sharpen memoir writing skills and techniques.

**Assignment:** Write a short piece on a time when you either helped someone get through a rough period or transition, or about a time someone helped you. Submit it to the Coffee House for peer review if you wish.

**Week 8: “There’s No Place Like Home ... and Lots of Other Places Too!”**

**Topic:** Memoir

**Learning objectives:** Honing metaphor, simile, personification, imagery, point of view skills.

**Specific tools objective:** Demonstrate an understanding of the critical terminology of the creative writer.

**Assignment:** Write a short piece describing a place using poetic terms. Submit it to the Coffee House for peer review if you wish.

**Week 9: “Seriously, This Is Funny!”**

**Topic:** Memoir and satire

**Learning objectives:** Developing satire awareness

**Reading:** Selected reading in Erma Bombeck’s *If Life Is a Bowl of Cherries - What Am I Doing in the Pits?*

**Week 10: “Seriously, This Is Funny! – Part 2”**

**Topic:** Memoir and satire

**Learning objectives:** Honing satire writing skills

**Assignment:** Write a short satire on a topic of your choice. Submit it to the Coffee House for peer review if you wish; respond to literature through clear and effective communication in written form

**Weekly Discussion:** Discuss Bombeck in Tuesday or Thursday IM session

**Assignment:** Response paper on Bombeck.

**Week 11: “The Man (or Woman) in the Mirror.”**

**Topic:** Personal essay

**Learning objectives:** Examining personal growth

**Assignment:** Write a piece that discusses where you were at the beginning of this course, and where you are now: what you may have discovered about yourself, your abilities, your shortcomings. Really step back and analyze yourself as a writer.

**Week 12: Finals week**

**Assignment:** Journals and portfolios due.