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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Over the next eight weeks, we'll delve into creative nonfiction. There will be lectures (recorded or written) about different aspects of the genre, readings and discussion posts, your own writing (both 'in' class and bigger assignments) and small group workshops of that work.

The course is heavy on experimentation and learning through doing — to that end, we'll be writing and reading a good deal. Think about the essay as an 'essai' in science (a way to test an idea) or the French 'essai' (to try/ a trial). It'll be a fun and supportive space and we'll all be together in the requisite bravery, vulnerability and trust of sharing early writing and stories.

The class is based on workshop and participation. It depends entirely on your collective engagement in each other's writing and attuned responses to the work you read. The goal of the course is to learn from other writers (peers and professionals) about how their writing achieves its effects and to develop and follow your own artistic curiosity and preoccupations, to write and critique with rigour, risk, humor, and radical care.

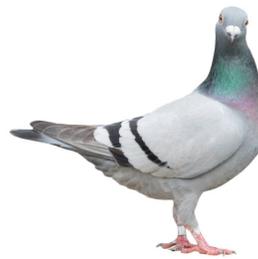
Take this class if you are curious about and engaged in the inherent *difficulty* of writing, if you want to investigate this art form in community, if you are up to write, try many different approaches, collaborate with peers, fail, and try again.



Here's a bird.



birds



and another bird

English 91? Not a bird course but it should be fun.

## OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

- In class writing assignments
- 4-5 written 'sketches/studies': short assignments for small group workshop (500 -1500 words)
- One full essay (approx. 3000 words)
- Readings and weekly discussion posts
- Weekly workshop feedback to your group members on Canvas

## THINGS YOU'LL NEED FOR CLASS – AKA SCAVENGER HUNT

**A notebook:** Get one specifically for the class, a composition notebook that you can fill with all your notes, in-class writing and first drafts. Make sure it's about 8" x 10" (i.e. Moleskin = too small) and not too precious (i.e. something you want to draft in!)

**A few pens:** That you really like to write with, try some out.

### Readings:

Readings will be posted to Canvas. I HIGHLY encourage you to print out the reader so you can mark it up and attend closely to the author's moves. Studies have shown that it makes a huge difference to read things on paper vs. the screen (ditto re: writing first drafts by hand). Ancillary readings/links will be posted to Canvas as the course goes along.

**Please also get:** ~ One pack of 4X6 index cards, blank on one side, lined on the other. (You may also want 3X5 index cards for your own outlining purposes but this isn't a requirement.)

~ One pack of pencil crayons or crayons.  
(Markers are a welcome addition but aren't a substitute.)

\*we're going to require a picture of your notebook so be sure to have the things\*

## HOW IT WORKS

Here's a general sense of the weekly flow. Please see the schedule for specifics. There are a few exceptions to the timeline, so I'll be sure to alert you weekly re: what's coming up. Readings must be complete **before** class begins. Writing assignments are due by class time.

I'll break you into groups of 3-4 for workshop for the 'sketches'. These will be independently led (as if you were in breakout rooms). I'll go over feedback in class. Workshop will happen in 'Discussions' on Canvas (though if your group would prefer to Zoom or send emails or voice messages, you may do so).

There will be one verbal essay that you'll record and post, as well as your final essay, that will have a different feedback structure that's open to the larger group.

We will have approx. two ‘live online’ sessions that you can attend in synchronous time — it’s pretty wonderful to do so if that works for you — but we’ll record it as well for those who can’t be there. You’ll be required to have a Zoom or two with a small group, but you can work the timing out with your partner/group.

In terms of **feedback** from me, I’ll will provide feedback on at least one of your sketches or studies, as well as on your final essay.

In week four, I’ll hold open ‘ask anything’ hours on Zoom where anyone can show up with any questions — or you can send the questions in via a Canvas thread if you can’t attend in real time.

**Each week the course will ‘begin’ on Monday at 9 am PT and ‘close’ Wednesday at 11:59 pm PT.** You must ‘attend’ within that period, post the ‘in class’ writing exercises, and complete the weekly assignments for your participation to count.

On Monday mornings, the written or recorded lecture from Georgina, or the instructions for class that week, will be posted to Canvas by **9 am PT**.

The discussion thread for assignments, for the reading, and for small group workshop will also ‘open’ at this point. In terms of the readings and small group workshop, you’ll make your response post, then comment on 2-3 of your classmates’ posts.

There will be lectures or ‘classes’ in the first five weeks, then in the final three weeks the focus will shift to workshopping your final essays.

## **IMPORTANT NOTES**

**Distributing Your Work to the Class:** Readings will be posted on Canvas. When you submit your story, please do so in PDF format so that everyone has the same pagination (this is helpful if discussing the story in workshop).

**Formatting:** Your submissions should be **double-spaced in 12-point normal black font** with normal-size margins. Include your name and the **page number on every page**. Please spell-check and proofread. Failure to adhere to formatting will impact your grade.

**On Content:** Art is about the full scale of human experience and so, the work we read and discuss, from both published authors and peers, may deal with sexuality and gender, abuse, violence, racism, poverty, trauma, suicidality, triggering language and imagery, and other challenging material. A goal of workshop is to foster a space of respect where we can discuss and explore this material together. If any topic is sensitive for you, you are welcome to either include your response in class discussion or you may be in touch by email to excuse yourself from the discussion. Please stay in contact with me about your experience in workshop should anything crop up.

**Privacy:** It’s important that the verbal and written work in the class is not shared. Feel free to share any published story but keep your peers’ work private and refrain from discussing what others say in class or workshop outside of the classroom space. As we’ll be working with real stories entrusted to us, and people may share difficult/vulnerable stories, this privacy is a form of respect that we depend on as a class.

On another note: **CAPS** through Vaden is an incredible resource. Even if you're not in an acute crisis, it can only help one's art and life to work through the challenge of being human with some professional support.

**Email:** I check email on class days and am not always able to respond immediately. Please make sure to check the syllabus and other class materials (handouts, syllabus, announcements.) for answers to questions. If you miss a class or have basic questions about due times and dates, assignment etc. emailing your peers is always the best solution.

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## GRADING

Final Essay: 20%

Short Assignments (writing, interviews, oral storytelling): 40%

Attendance, Participation, Critiques and Discussion Questions: 40%

### **The-Mandatory-Grading-Related-Threats-and-Consequences-Section:**

We won't be grading based on 'good writing' — it's not about a paint-by-numbers projects that AI could create. Speaking of —**DON'T USE AI** for this class, that's a fail, and, more interestingly, the thing that differentiates human thought and stories from AI is our "burstiness," the way that we make unexpected connections, use language in unusual ways, make strange and fascinating moves. Some of the most exciting art is risky, innovative, messy and searching with glimmers of brilliance, a remarkable attempt and an uneven success (or flat-out failure) but we'll all be able to recognize (and you will know too) when there is real time and effort put into a piece, when the work has been read out loud before, when this isn't a first draft and the writer is in pursuit of a question that they can't get to the bottom of... go there. Your grade is based on your development over the quarter and the extent to which you participate meaningfully (almost half of your grade relates to the way you show up for the class and your peers).

**Deadlines:** All assignments **must be completed** to pass the class. Work not turned in the day it is due will receive **zero points**. No hand-written or emailed work will be accepted.

**Attendance:** is vital in a workshop class and this is reflected in the weight of the grade. **You must 'attend' the first class to maintain your position on the roster.** The summer quarter is only eight weeks and therefore, your attendance is needed to stay caught up. An unexcused absence will reduce your course grade by half a point (an A- drops to a B). You are responsible to arrange with a peer to catch up on any missed work.

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## Addenda

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, using ideas, information or quotes from published work or online sources without providing proper citations; copying all or part of an assignment from someone else; and turning in work you did for other classes, or using AI on an assignment. All

assignments turned in for this class should be written during the course of this quarter. If you are in any way uncertain as to whether or not something constitutes plagiarism, err on the side of caution, check the university policy, or ask.

#### Meeting Your Needs:

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible, since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://oae.stanford.edu>)

#### Course Material Support:

Stanford University and its faculty are committed to ensuring that all courses are financially accessible to all students. If you are an undergraduate who needs assistance with the cost of course textbooks, supplies, materials and/or fees, please contact the [Diversity and First Gen Office](#) for support or Joseph Brown, the Associate Director of the Diversity and First-Gen Office ([jlbrown@stanford.edu](mailto:jlbrown@stanford.edu); Old Union Room 207). Dr. Brown is available to connect you with resources and support while ensuring your privacy.

#### Honor Code:

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity, written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work. The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

1. That they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
2. That they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
3. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.
4. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

Examples of conduct that have been regarded as being in violation of the Honor Code include:

- Copying from another's examination paper or allowing another to copy from one's own paper
- Unpermitted collaboration
- Plagiarism
- Representing as one's own work the work of another
- Giving or receiving aid on an academic assignment under circumstances in which a reasonable person should have known that such aid was not permitted

### Sanctions for Violating Honor Code

In recent years, most student disciplinary cases have involved Honor Code violations; of these, the most frequent arise when a student submits another's work as his or her own, or gives or receives unpermitted aid. The standard sanction for a first offense includes a one-quarter suspension from the University and 40 hours of community service. In addition, most faculty members issue a "No Pass" or "No Credit" for the course in which the violation occurred. The standard sanction for multiple violations (e.g. cheating more than once in the same course) is a three-quarter suspension and 40 or more hours of community service.

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*Run towards the danger.*  
*Sarah Polley*

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