

# Advanced Composition: Nonfiction Writing in Digital Media

## English 220, Section 002

Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
Fall 2016  
Meets MWF 2:30-3:20  
HSS 321

## Instructor: Dr. Vetter

Office Location: HSS 50600  
Email: [mvetter@iup.edu](mailto:mvetter@iup.edu)  
Phone: 724-357-4935  
Office Hours: MW 9-11am, TTH 2-3pm & by appt.

## Course Description

A course in nonfiction and creative nonfiction, including study and practice of genres such as the magazine article and personal essay. We will pay particular attention to issues of style, form, and narrative strategy in the nonfiction essay, while also exploring how digital media open up new opportunities for these genres. As I have formal training in both creative writing and composition, we will employ hybrid methods from both disciplines for practicing, discussing, and improving your writing. Be prepared to discuss and apply conceptual knowledge on rhetoric, genre, style, voice, and process; share your writing in peer review and workshop activities; and use class time for writing exercises and discussion of published essays. You will also be expected to lead one class discussion of a published essay. I ask that you take an open-minded and experimental attitude concerning technology as we will explore how writing in digital media can allow us to reach a broader audience and work with modes of communication beyond print text. Welcome to English 220. I look forward to reading your work.

## IUP Course Catalogue Description

Primarily seeks to improve writing style, particularly in the more utilitarian forms, such as magazine article and personal essay.

## Required Course Texts and Materials

Moore, Dinty W. *Crafting the Personal Essay: A Guide for Writing and Publishing Creative Nonfiction*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 2010. Print. Approx. \$12.00.

Additional readings available on the open web or uploaded to D2L.

Style Guide: Purdue Online Writing Lab. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

A single subject notebook to serve as a journal of your daily writing.

## Student Learning Goals

- produce essays that show structure, purpose, significant content, and audience awareness
- understand common features of nonfiction genres, esp. personal essay and feature article
- conduct primary and secondary research and integrate others' texts into your own writing
- reflect on your own writing process and rhetorical effectiveness
- practice writing in a variety of digital media
- gain an understanding of the way texts are published and shared online
- practice constructive criticism of peers' writing

## Course Work and Grade Distribution

### **3 Short Personal Essays:**

Our discussions of narration, form, and style within multiple personal essay subgenres (e.g. memoir, contemplative, lyric, spiritual, humorous, etc.) will serve as springboards for three short personal essays on the topic of your choice throughout the course. These will be workshopped in class and turned in all together for the instructor's feedback.

600-800 words each. 5% - 50 pts. each. 150 pts total.

### **Nonfiction Feature Article:**

Conduct primary or secondary research to write a feature article about a notable individual, event, group, culture, or activity. Include at least one image or video and publish on a digital platform such as Medium, Wordpress, Blogger or other.

1200-1500 words. 20% - 200 pts.

### **Wikipedia Article Edit:**

Choose a notable writer we have read in class, or one you have discovered on your own, and update their Wikipedia article with at least two new sources and the related content. Write a reflective response (in-class) on what you learn about Wikipedia style and process. 15% - 150 pts.

### **Personal Essay Revision w/ Multimodal Element:**

Revise and develop one of your short personal essays into a more substantial and polished piece that also includes a multimodal element (audio, video, photography, etc.). 2100-2400 words.

30% - 300 pts.

### **Journal Writing:**

I will assign numerous writing assignments to be completed in your journals. These may be short prompts that could turn into short personal essays, responses to readings, in-class exercises, or project proposals. 10% - 100 pts. total.

### **Participation:**

Come prepared to discuss readings, and participate in workshop or peer review. Contribute to class discussions. Be ready and willing to learn. 5% - 50 pts.

### **Discussion Lead:**

With a partner, prep an activity, short presentation, or set of discussion questions to guide our conversations about one of our scheduled readings. Includes some form of handout with information about the author, and/or essay topic. 5% - 50 pts.

**Grade Distribution:** A 900-1000; B 800-900; C 700-800; D 600-700; F < 600 pts.

**Important:** You must complete all major project (listed above) to pass the course.

## Course Policies

**Attendance:** After 3 unexcused absences, I will lower your final course grade by 5% for each additional absence. I will consider excusing absences due to illness or personal emergency but will ask for documentation. Please be aware that, if you are absent during a class period where a major assignment is due or peer review is scheduled, that you must contact me to arrange a make-up or alternative.

**Late Work:** I will only accept late work if we have talked and come to some agreement. If something is going on that is going to hinder you from finishing a project, please talk to me **before** the project is due. It's really important that work for peer review or workshop is finished on time because that commitment impacts another student. Talk to me if something is going on!

**Communication:** I use e-mail to communicate important information about the class. You are responsible for checking your school account regularly. You should also check D2L often for announcements concerning reading and writing assignments.

**Privacy:** Work on major projects is always public. Don't submit writing you can't let other students see. Drafts of papers must be polished and ready for classmates' feedback on the assigned dates to get credit for workshop or peer review. Journals are semi-private. I will never ask you to share with classmates if you are not comfortable doing so. Journals will be assessed and read by the instructor, however.

**Ethics:** I define plagiarism as deliberate cheating, whether by claiming another's ideas or work as your own (fraud) or making up or falsifying information (fabrication) will result in a course grade of F and a report to Community Standards. You are at all times responsible for handling sources ethically by acknowledging the author and source of directly borrowed ideas and language in your writing.

**Accessibility:** The Office of Advising and Testing, in Pratt Hall, room 216, offers evaluation and support for students with disabilities. Please let me know as soon as possible if you need an accommodation in order to work successfully in this class. This classroom strives for full accessibility, and it is not necessary for you to have an official accommodation letter from Disability Services in order to request changes to the classroom that will better serve your needs as a student, although you are encouraged to explore the possible supports they can offer if you are a student with a disability. Both able bodied students and students with disabilities are encouraged to suggest any improvements to the learning environment.

**Atmosphere:** Everyone in our class, including the instructor, must remain civil and courteous at all times. We will often have opportunity to share our opinions and beliefs, but no racist, sexist, heterosexist, or any other negative communication harmful to an individual or group will be tolerated

**Electronic Devices:** Laptops, smart phones, and tablets are permitted in my classroom only when they are being used for class activities (referencing an assigned reading, or in a course activity).

## Additional Course Policies

**Writing Center:** Trained peer and graduate tutors in the IUP Writing Center can help you at any stage in the writing process, from developing a topic to drafting and revising. They can help you to document sources, understand your professor’s feedback, and more. The Writing Center has three locations: For walk-in tutoring (no appointments), visit Room 218 in Eicher Hall, or visit the Satellite Writing Center in the Library, first floor. You can also make an appointment for an online tutoring session (at least 24 hours in advance). The Writing Center’s website contains a link for making appointments for online sessions, or call 724-357-3029.

**IUP Sexual Violence Policy:** Indiana University of Pennsylvania is committed to maintaining a learning and work environment that is free from sexual harassment and sexual violence. Acts of sexual harassment or sexual violence, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, seriously undermine the atmosphere of trust and respect that is essential to a university community. Moreover, sexual harassment and sexual violence are legally prohibited and will not be tolerated. To report a complaint of sexual harassment or sexual violence, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, against a student and discuss options, contact a Campus Security Authority coordinator; the Office of Student Conduct, 307 Pratt Hall, at 724-357-1264; or the Compliance Officer/Title IX Coordinator. If the student does not want to proceed with a student conduct complaint or police report, the Compliance Officer/Title IX Coordinator will still investigate to determine what occurred and take appropriate steps to resolve the situation, mindful of the University’s obligation to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students.

**Title IX:** In order to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a University-approved research project. Faculty members are obligated to report sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred to the Department of Human Services (1-800-932-0313) and University Police (724-357-2141). Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at: <http://www.iup.edu/socialequity/policies/title-ix/>

### Important Academic Deadlines

Sept 6	Drop period ends at the end of the day.
Sept 6	Add period ends at the end of the day
Oct. 25	Midterm grades available
Nov. 7	Course withdrawal deadline
Nov. 14	Total university withdrawal deadline

## Course Schedule

Date	Topics and Activities	Assignment Due
Week 1		
M 8/29	Class icebreaker & syllabus review	
W 8/31	Model workshop groups with “Why Do I Write?” responses; Discuss Ch. 2, “The Personal (Not Private) Essay”	Ch. 1-2 in <i>CPE</i> ; Journal entry for writing exercise on p. 6 of <i>CPE</i>
F 9/2	Montaigne and Woolf; Metaphor; Talking about writing: Terminology for nonfiction writers	Ch. 4 in <i>CPE</i> ; Journal entry on one element of writing craft or strategy (e.g. voice, rhetoric, style, genre)
Week 2		
M 9/5	Labor day holiday – No Class	Labor day holiday – No class
W 9/7	Assign and discuss short personal essays; Discussion of memoir as genre and Sedaris essay; Vetter models discussion lead; In-class writing exercises (pp. 32-37 in <i>CPE</i> ) in journals	Ch. 3 in <i>CPE</i> ; Read David Sedaris, “Now We Are Five” on D2L; Read Dirk “Navigating Genres” on D2; Journal entry on memoir as genre
F 9/9	Discussion of contemplative essay and Patrick Madden’s “Three Aborted Essays”; In-class writing exercises (pp. 55-58)	Ch. 5 in <i>CPE</i> ; Read Patrick Madden, “Three Aborted Essays”
Week 3		
M 9/12	Discussion on curiosity and form; Discussion on writing habits; Tips for constructive criticism	Ch. 7 and 19 in <i>CPE</i> ; Journal entry on writing habits
W 9/14	Group Workshop Short Essay 1	Post Short Essay 1 in D2L
F 9/16	Group Workshop Short Essay 1	
Week 4		
M 9/19	Lyric essay as genre; Importance of conflict in the personal essay	Read Ch. 8 and 9 in <i>CPE</i> ; Journal entry for writing exercise (pp. 106-107)

W 9/21	The lyric essay; In-class writing journal entry (exercise pp. 96-98)	Read Lia Purpura’s “On Coming Back as a Buzzard” in D2L
F 9/23	The spiritual essay; Dillard’s “Living Like Weasels”; In-class writing journal entry (pp. 96-98)	Read Ch. 11 in <i>CPE</i> ; Read Annie Dillard’s “Living Like Weasels”
Week 5		
M 9/26	Group Workshop Short Essay 2	Read Ch. 21 <i>CPE</i> on writer’s block; Post Short Essay 2 in D2L
W 9/28	Group Workshop Short Essay 2	Read Ch. 12 in <i>CPE</i> on persona; journal entry on persona
F 9/30	The humorous essay; Comic storytelling; In-class writing journal entry (pp. 163-165)	Read Ch. 14 in <i>CPE</i> ; Read “When Your House Is Burning Down, You Should Brush Your Teeth,” by The Oatmeal
Week 6		
M 10/3	The travel essay; The gastronomic essay; In-class writing journal entry (exercise pp. 156-158 or 196-198)	Read Ch. 13 and 18 in <i>CPE</i> ; Read “Don’t Eat Before Reading This” by Anthony Bourdain
W 10/5	Group Workshop Short Essay 3; Writing what you wish you knew	Read Ch. 16 in <i>CPE</i> ; Post Short Essay 3 in D2L
F 10/7	Group Workshop Short Essay 3; Discussion of Iyer	Read Pico Iyer’s “Why We Travel”; Journal entry response to Iyer
Week 7		
M 10/10	Assign Nonfiction Feature Article; Discuss Omari Akil	Read “Warning: Pokemon GO Is a Death Sentence if You Are Black” by Omari Akil; All 3 Short Essays due
W 10/12	Topic brainstorming session; Browse headlines of digital magazines	Read “Secret Alphabet Division Funded by Google” by Harris; Journal entry on feature article genre
F 10/14	Topic proposal workshop	Nonfiction feature proposal due in journal
Week 8		
M 10/17	Primary and secondary research review	Read the Purdue Owl’s “Conducting Research”; Journal entry response

W 10/19	In-class researching and drafting; Discuss Hayes	Read “Inside the Dating Site for Murderers, Rapists, and Violent Offenders” by Molly Hayes
F 10/21	PCEA Conference	Attend a conference panel; Work on nonfiction feature
Week 9		
M 10/24	Nonfiction feature peer review	Nonfiction feature draft due; Journal entry on PCEA session
W 10/26	Mid-semester conferences	Mid-semester conferences
F 10/28	Mid-semester conferences	Mid-semester conferences
Week 10		
M 10/31	Mid-semester conferences	Mid-semester conferences
W 11/2	Introduce Wikipedia assignment; Discuss Purdy; Wikipedia in academia	Nonfiction feature due; Read Purdy, “Wikipedia Is Good for You?!” (D2L)
F 11/4	Discuss Wikipedia handouts; Complete training module “Wikipedia Essentials” in class	Read Wikipedia handouts: “Editing Wikipedia” and “Evaluating Wikipedia” (D2L)
Week 11		
M 11/7	Preliminary research; Browse possible articles and sources looking for “gaps”	Complete “Editing Basics” module
W 11/9	Workshop Wikipedia proposals	Wikipedia proposals due in journal
F 11/11	Research and writing session	Browse examples of biography articles on literary authors; Write journal entry on genre, features, sections
Week 12		
M 11/14	In-class Wikipedia edits: add content	Complete “Sources and Citation” module; Read biography style handout
W 11/16	In-class Wikipedia edits: add content and copyedit	Review biography style handout; journal entry on style

F 11/18	In-class survey and writing on Wikipedia, nonfiction and style	Finish Wikipedia edits
Week 13: Thanksgiving Break – No class all week		
Week 14		
M 11/28	Introduce Personal Essay Revision w/Multimodal Element; Discuss “Snowfall”	Read <i>Writer/Designer</i> Ch. 1 “What Are Multimodal Projects?” (D2L); Read “Snowfall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek” (D2L)
W 11/30	Review “Designing Your Project”; In-class drafting/designing	Read <i>Writer/Designer</i> Ch. 6, “Designing Your Project”
F 12/2	In-class drafting/designing	Work on drafting/designing multimodal element; Revising personal essay
Week 15		
M 12/5	End of semester conferences	End of semester conferences
W 12/7	End of semester conferences	End of semester conferences
F 12/9	End of semester conferences	End of semester conferences
Week 16: Finals		
Final Exam	In-class reflection	Personal Essay Revision w/Multimodal Element due

### Discussion Lead Calendar

Date	Text	Discussion Leaders
F 9/9	Madden, “Three Aborted Essays”	
W 9/21	Purpura, “On Coming Back as a Buzzard”	
F 9/23	Dillard, “Living Like Weasels”	
F 9/30	The Onion, “When Your House Is Burning Down...”	
M 10/3	Bourdain, “Don’t Eat Before Reading This”	
F 10/7	Iyer, “Why We Travel”	
M 10/10	Akil, “Warning: Pokemon GO Is a Death Sentence...”	
W 10/12	Harris, “Secret Alphabet Division funded by Google...”	
W 10/19	Hayes, “Inside the Dating Site for Murderers, Rapists...”	
W 11/12	Purdy, “Wikipedia Is Good for You!?”	
M 11/28	Branch, “Snowfall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek”	