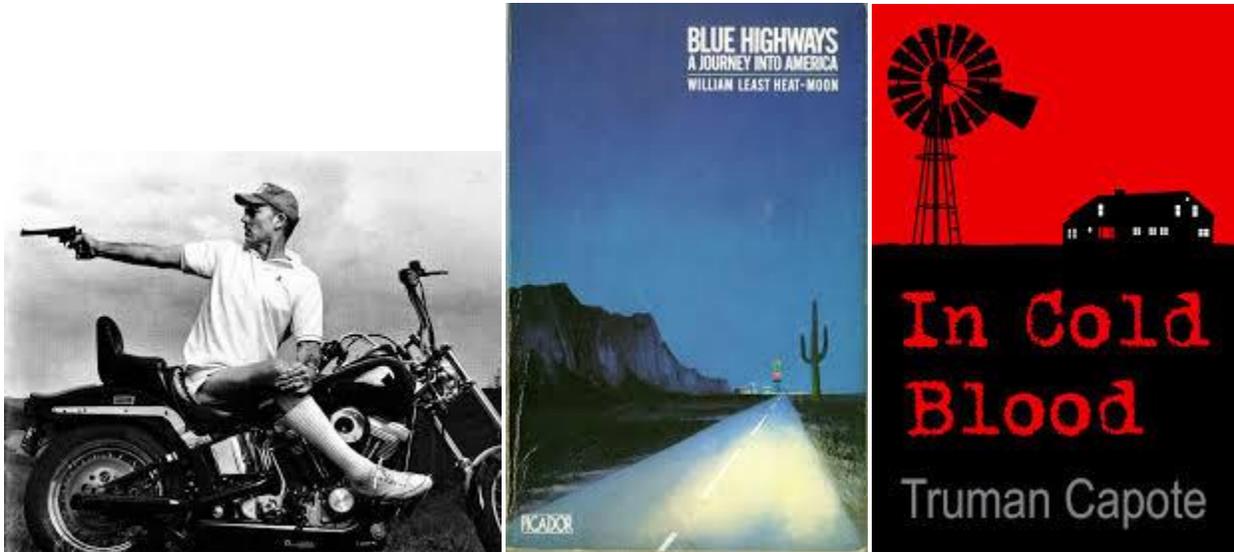


<p>ENG-W 311: Writing Creative Nonfiction  TR 10:00 to 11:15am in KC 270  Spring 2021  Office: 765/455.9229  paulcook@iuk.edu</p>	<p>Dr. Paul Cook  KO 223  Office Hours: TR 11:30am to 12:30pm in person and by appointment, Zoom, Canvas, &amp; email</p>
---	---



***Creative Nonfiction and the Art of the Essay***

Creative nonfiction is an exciting genre to read and to write. It complicates the boundary between what we normally think of as imaginative storytelling and writing about real people, places, things, and events. Most people associate imaginative writing or fiction with, say, fantasy novels, contemporary fiction, romance, sci-fi, thrillers, mysteries, and most of what we call “Literature,” while we think of nonfiction as writing about real events: journalism, documentary or travel writing, personal essays and memoirs.

Creative nonfiction (or “CN”) combines the best of both worlds, fusing elements of fiction and nonfiction by emphasizing the creative potentials of everyday life and simultaneously honoring the strangeness of reality. This is certainly part of the genre’s appeal. So, while it’s fair to say that creative nonfiction is rooted in reality or things that have actually happened, it also plays fast-and-loose with what we might think of as “truth” and gleefully incorporates figures of speech, rich imagery, exaggeration, creative characterization, and other stylistic elements that we might normally associate with literary texts.

This course will be equal parts (1) writing workshop, (2) overview of both classical and contemporary examples of creative nonfiction, and (3) extended course on the nonfiction essay. Together we will read some of the finest examples of creative nonfiction writing available; read, internalize, and imitate these models; practice the kind of discipline a good writing habit demands; and have our work read, critiqued, and supported by a small group of smart, sophisticated readers.

**By the end of the semester, you will be able to**

**And here's how you'll learn these skills**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>Identify and discuss</i> primary elements of the genre of creative nonfiction;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Course readings, class discussions, workshops, WDs, etc.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>Deploy rhetorical, grammatical, and stylistic principles</i> relevant to the writing process and creative nonfiction;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Workshops, WDs.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>Participate in a community of writers and share your works-in-progress</i> in a small workshop environment.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Workshops, WDs.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>write clear and effective</i> nonfiction prose;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ WDs, Workshops, course readings.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>see and imitate</i> the ways in which professional writers, critics, and commentators make sense of (and report on) the cultures, discourses, and world(s) they inhabit;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Course readings, reading habit/writing habit.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>Read and analyze</i> long, complex works of creative nonfiction;</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Course readings, reading habit/writing habit.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>Understand and speak (and write)</i> intelligently about the history and the development of creative nonfiction as a genre.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Workshop discussions; Portfolio project.</li></ul>

**To successfully complete this course, you must...**

- **Show up to class on-time, well-prepared, and ready to learn every time we meet.** As the late essayist and novelist David Foster Wallace wrote [in his own syllabus](#) for a creative nonfiction course in 2008, "For obvious reasons, you're required to attend every class." Why? We will have important class discussions, in-class writing exercises and activities, impromptu workshops, etc. every time we meet, and these activities are pivotal to your success in this course. Don't miss class, including our virtual meetings that will take place in the first three weeks of the semester. Excessive, flagrant tardiness will be treated as absences. Attendance will be checked each class and recorded in Canvas so you can check your absences at any time. If something looks amiss, be sure to let me know!
- **Be willing (and able) to read actively and thoroughly.** Just "getting through" the assigned readings will not ensure your success in this course. You must "read actively" ([click here for more info](#)) to be able to understand what you have read.

- **Be willing (and able) to plan, draft (write), and revise.** This is a writing studio/workshop, so you will be expected to write several short essays and reading responses.
- **Be willing (and able) to spend several hours' worth of time and energy** on your partners' drafts and projects.
- **Be willing (and able) to actively participate during writers' workshops** and give specific suggestions on your partners' drafts and projects. You will also be required to write a 1-to-3-page workshop letter on each of your classmates' drafts at various times throughout the semester (see below for details).
- **Be willing (and able)** to have all out-of-class written work complete (i.e., revised, edited, and proofread) by the start of class. All assigned readings also must be finished by the start of each class.

#### Textbook & Other Required Materials

To successfully begin and complete this course, you need to purchase the following textbook (preferably a hard copies version):

[Bradway and Hesse, eds. \*Creating Nonfiction\*. \[ISBN: 978-0312447069\]](#)

Without this textbook, you will not be able to successfully complete the course.

I will post **required** readings and handouts to Canvas; these readings typically will be in .pdf format. I encourage you to **print out** these readings. You should get into the habit of “reading actively” when it comes to *all* of our course readings. That is, you should learn to read with a pencil or pen in hand so that you can engage with the text—underline and circle passages, write comments, observations, and questions in the margins, and jot down ideas as they come to you.

You should also start reading your classmates' work with the same care and attention. When you jot notes down on workshop drafts, imagine you are addressing the writer directly and use complete sentences. Every writer should have a comprehensive style manual (like the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the *Little Cougar Handbook*) and a good desk dictionary.

#### **You will also need...**

\*to set up your [IU Box account](#) so you can save readings, research, and drafts of your work in safe, secure cloud storage

\*\* a sturdy notebook dedicated to this course alone, lots of paper, good pens and pencils, and access to a reliable computer. Also, I assume that you will have a *basic* working knowledge of (and access to) Canvas, MS Word, email, and Adobe Reader. For a detailed user's guide to Canvas, go to <https://kb.iu.edu/d/bcll>.

\*\*\*access to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Luckily, the *OED* is available for all IU Kokomo students through our [library homepage](#). Simply go to the “Databases A to Z” link and click on the letter “O.”

## Assignments & Grading

- 1. Daily participation grades (200 points):** As noted above, you must attend all of our class meetings. In nearly every class, you will be asked to do a free-write, or respond to a prompt, write a brief summary of a reading, or even take a short, five-item reading quiz. (Some in-class assignments may be completed in Canvas, too.) Each individual daily participation grade is worth a total of 6.25 points and these points are awarded at my discretion. To receive full credit each day you must prepare for class by completing the assigned readings, attend the entire class meeting, participate in class discussion, and complete that day’s in-class assignment. At the end of the semester, I will drop your two lowest grades in this category, including a grade of “zero.”
- 2. Workshop Drafts (150 points):** You will receive between 0-5 points on each workshop draft (we will have a total of three workshop drafts: WD#1, WD#2, and WD#3.). If you do not turn in a draft, you will get a zero. If you submit a draft late, the highest score it can receive is a 3 (out of 5). Your workshop drafts should be **at least 4 pages long**, in 12-point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, proofread, and polished. You are responsible for posting your drafts to Canvas and for making workshop copies of your work. At the top of each draft, on the left side of the page, you should list, in double-spaced format along with the rest of the draft, the following information: your full name, the essay # (WP#1, etc.), the due date for the draft, and the course (ENG-W 311). Finally, be sure to give each draft a title, even it’s just a working title. Citing sources in creative nonfiction essays is a-okay, but remember to use proper MLA formatting and citation guidelines. For more information on [MLA guidelines](#), click here.
- 3. Workshops and Workshop Letters (200 points):** Your essay drafts will be critiqued, discussed, and picked-apart (kindly!\*) by me and by your fellow writers in workshops throughout the semester. As a reader, you will be asked to give a written response to each of your classmates’ drafts and to participate in the subsequent class workshop discussion of each. Before the WD#1 workshop drafts are due, I will provide handouts on workshop etiquette, on how to mark-up and respond to papers using the many review and editing functions in MS Word, and on what to look for in each draft. For practice, you will all write a workshop letter to All of these handouts can also be found in the Files tab in Canvas. You will also write a 1-to-3-page letter to each of your classmates on their workshop drafts. You will get to write a couple of practice letters on published essays in the first few weeks of class.

(\*We will treat each other with respect at all times—in class and online. Remember that we are critiquing each other’s *work*, not each other. Please do not share your

classmates' drafts, notes, or letters with anyone outside of our class without the express consent of the author.)

- 4. Teaching Project (200 points):** Some of the finest examples of creative nonfiction are books. Each of you will research and explore in further detail a book-length work of creative nonfiction and then present on that work during one of our class periods (starting in Week 6—see the course schedule for specific class meetings). You will be responsible for “running” your portion (10 to 15 minutes) of a class period on a given day, and how you decide to use your time is completely up to you, both in terms of content and format. You will want to choose your book early and I will distribute a list in class in Week 1 to get you started with some ideas. The only requirement is that the book be a published work of creative nonfiction.

The design of your teaching project is yours to determine, of course, but as a minimum requirement each of you will provide us with a detailed, one-page (front and back is okay) handout, complete with source information and “Further Reading” resources in MLA format. We will talk much more in class about options and strategies for developing your presentations.

- 5. Portfolio (250 points):** By the end of the term, you will have written a collection of essays, workshop drafts, ICWs, brainstorm, and notes, including the work you’ve been doing all semester towards your reading habit. In short, you will have generated a sizeable stockpile of “raw materials” from which to draw for your Portfolio pieces. You will need to revise your choice of 1-4 pieces (including both longer essays *and* workshop drafts you want to expand) and submit them for your portfolio, which amounts to a **minimum of 15 pages of revised work**. In addition, you will need to write an introduction or a “Foreword” to your collection of roughly 1 to 3 pages. I will give you a handout around midterm with more specific details on how you might want to do this.

### Readings and Active Reading

The weekly reading assignments in this course will be challenging and (occasionally) quite long. We will be reading texts ranging from long creative novels to contemporary micro-fiction and theories about writing to popular bestsellers, news and magazine articles, web stories, and pretty much everything else in between. These readings are fun and exciting, but they will require you to practice a mode of patient, careful, *attentive* reading to which you may not yet be accustomed.

For instance, when you come across a word you don’t understand, you **must** look it up in an online dictionary (the *Oxford English Dictionary* is best and free for IU students through <http://www.iuk.edu/library/>); when you find a concept or reference with which you’re unfamiliar, look it up on Wikipedia and read the entry until the passage you’re wrestling with starts to make sense. Mark any and all passages in your books that you would like to discuss in

class, that you think are particularly noteworthy, or that don't make sense to you. We will discuss these passages in class. In short, you will need to read closely, carefully, and *slowly*.

You should expect to *read*—in the manner I've just briefly described—between *50 to 75 pages* each week. And a few times during the semester the reading load will be heavier. Please get into a weekly if not daily reading habit that works for you and stick to it. Also, make sure that your personal work and family schedule this semester will allow for this kind of sustained, attentive reading. This will be key to your success and learning in this course. If ever you have any questions or concerns about our readings or the reading load, please don't hesitate to let me know.

### Attendance and Participation

While there will be *some* lecture in this course, this is definitely *not* a lecture-only course. Ongoing, stimulating class discussions and in-class group activities are vital to the success of this course and to your overall learning experience and growth as a writer of creative nonfiction. In short, it's important that you come to class regularly, complete all assigned readings each week, take time to reflect on what you've read (and then go back and re-read), take careful notes on the readings (in your notebook and textbook), ask questions, and participate actively and enthusiastically in class discussions and in-class exercises.

When you miss class, you miss important information, and classmates miss your input and ideas. If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out what we covered in class and for submitting in advance any assignments due on that day. I reserve the right to change the course schedule at any time, and it is your responsibility to stay on top of these changes. If ever you do miss class, you should use the "Questions about the Course" Discussion in the "Discussions" tab in Canvas to find out what you missed. See "**Communicating with Me and Each Other**" below for more information.

Your course grade will drop by one letter grade (10%) if you miss more than 10% of our classes (**or 4 class periods**); you will fail the course if you miss 20% of our classes (**6 class periods**). If a *bone fide* emergency forces you to miss several class periods, please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss your options. Documentation will be required.

### Smartphones, Food, and Other Distractions

Please be courteous with your smart phones and other mobile devices. Opportunities to unplug are increasingly rare and multitasking is a myth. Instead of obsessively checking our devices, let's use our precious time together for writing, discussion, reflection, and exploration. Also, while I don't really have a problem with most types of food (I love food, actually), please keep in mind that this is a classroom, not the back room at Uncle Buddy's Family Feedbag. Coffee, sodas, and water are fine (coffee is encouraged); please try to keep foodstuffs to something manageable, not-too noisy, and non-odorous (granola bars, fruits and veggies, snacks, etc.)

### Late Assignments

Most late work will not be accepted (i.e., in-class writing, quizzes, in-class activities, etc.). Workshop Drafts will be accepted late, but these will receive a penalty. (If you miss a quiz or ICW due to absence, for example, you will receive a zero.) If a *bona fide* emergency forces you to miss class, please let me know as soon as is reasonable so that we can discuss your options.

### Inclement Weather and Instructor Illness

As we all know, the weather in Indiana in the spring semester can be nothing short of brutal. Luckily, I don't often get truly sick; anything can happen, however, so my pledge to you is that if ever I do find it necessary to cancel class for any reason, I will send a Canvas announcement either the night before or the morning of the cancellation. Here's a good idea for each of you: go into the "Settings" tab in Canvas (top right when you first log in), click on the "Notifications" tab, and then set your preferences to receive Canvas messages and announcements directly to your mobile phone. Let me know if you need help setting this up.

### Communicating with Me and Each Other

You will have a variety of methods for getting in touch with me and each other, including

- Canvas messages, comments on assignments, and responses to discussions (all in Canvas).
- Questions and interactions in class.
- Office Hours. My physical, in-person office hours will be each week on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:30 to 12:30pm and by appointment. Come on by! My office is in KO 223.
- I have found that most students like to ask questions in the few minutes immediately following class. This is fine with me as long as the questions are quick and easy. If you have a question that requires more in-depth discussion or will take more than a couple of minutes to adequately address, please set up a meeting with me or drop by my office hours.
- Zoom conferences. You are always more than welcome to set up a Zoom meeting with me, even on relatively short notice. Just let me know in advance when you'd like to meet. Here's the info:

<https://iu.zoom.us/j/3584545003?pwd=TIRHS2ZKOHdwRVVYZDlvSnhQMnZYZz09>

Meeting ID: 358 454 5003

### Technical Requirements and Student Disability Assistance

This course requires that you have access to the IU Kokomo computer network, access to the Canvas course management system, and some basic familiarity with Canvas. The IU Kokomo Instructional Technology department provides guidelines for hardware and software for all students. This course requires primarily word processing (MS Word), printing capabilities, and

access to Canvas. See <https://iuware.iu.edu> for free downloads and discount prices on hardware and software exclusively for IU students.

Students should contact the IU Kokomo Helpdesk with technical questions. The Helpdesk offers technical support to faculty, staff, and students for all IT-related requests. The Helpdesk provides assistance to users, as well as maintains a tracking system that places each user's request into a queue. You can send an email request to the Helpdesk at [kohelp@iuk.edu](mailto:kohelp@iuk.edu) or call 765/455.9315. Local phone and walk-up support at the Helpdesk in the Library is also available Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm ET. If you're having any technical difficulties, please contact both me and the Helpdesk right away so we can get your problem solved.

### Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

All the essays that you submit for this course must be written specifically for this course. **You may not submit any work that was substantively begun before 18 January 2021.** (This is a practice known as "double dipping.") Here's the official University policy on academic honesty and plagiarism:

"A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, words, or statements of another person without an appropriate acknowledgement. A student must give due credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever he or she does any of the following: (a) quotes another person's actual words, either oral or written; (b) paraphrases another person's words, either oral or written; (c) uses another person's idea, theory, or material unless information is common knowledge." Source: Indiana University Code of Student Ethics. (Note that "intent" is not a factor here.)

Knowing the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable uses of other's work, texts, or ideas can be tricky sometimes, and we will spend some time in class discussing the boundaries of acceptable use, the nature of research, and when, where, and how to appropriately document source materials. We will also have a substantive review of MLA formatting at some point in the semester.

### IU Kokomo Writing Center

The IU Kokomo Writing Center provides an array of one-on-one services for students in courses across the curriculum, including Spanish-language tutoring and help with your ENG-W 221 major writing projects! The tutors who work in the Writing Center are advanced undergraduate students who have excelled in writing-intensive courses like this one. (They're also really friendly and approachable people!) Take a few minutes to visit their website and register for a WC Online account so you can make an appointment, check drop-in hours, ask a question, or attend a helpful workshop. Here is the link: <https://www.iuk.edu/writing-center/index.html>

### Civility Statement

Indiana University Kokomo encourages a climate of respect and inclusiveness that welcomes and embraces community members with diverse backgrounds and life experiences; deliberately

seeks multiple perspectives; and supports the free and open exchange of ideas and civil discourse. Our community encompasses the life of the classroom, including but not limited to an engagement in student life, service learning, travel abroad, and social media reflections. This community will thrive when we approach each interaction and conversation with an open mind and when each member respects the inherent dignity and worth of all people. Respect and civility should therefore be afforded to all individuals regardless of age, disability, educational background, family status, gender, gender identity and expression, nationality, race/ ethnicity, religion, position, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic level, or veteran status at Indiana University Kokomo.

#### Accessibility Statement

Every attempt will be made to accommodate qualified students with disabilities (e.g., mental health, learning, chronic health, physical, hearing, vision neurological, etc.) You must have established your eligibility for support services through the appropriate office that services students with disabilities. Note that services are confidential, may take time to put into place, and are not retroactive; captions and alternate media for print materials may take three or more weeks to get produced. Please contact [your campus office](#) as soon as possible if accommodations are needed. If you have documentation of an accommodation, please contact me confidentially so we can make the necessary arrangements.

#### Sexual Misconduct Statement

As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to create a positive learning environment for all students. Title IX and IU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibit sexual misconduct in any form, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, and dating and domestic violence. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help. If you are seeking help and would like to speak to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) 765/455.9364 (counseling services).

It is also important that you know that Title IX and University policy require me to share any information brought to my attention about potential sexual misconduct, with the campus Deputy Title IX Coordinator or IU's Title IX Coordinator. In that event, those individuals will work to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available. Protecting student privacy is of utmost concern, and information will only be shared with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist. I encourage you to visit [stopsexualviolence.iu.edu](http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu) to learn more.