“Art makes the familiar strange so that it can be freshly perceived. To do this it presents its material in unexpected, even outlandish ways: the shock of the new.” – Viktor Schlovsky

Official Course Description
Topics in Creative Writing – Advanced study of a special topic. Variable topics may include screenwriting, graphic novels, horror fiction, the history of literary magazines, or other related topics. May include workshop component or seminar paper.

Objectives and Specifics
Writing can be tough. The great secret? Most of what you need to shape, to make your narrative or poem unique, to find your voice, or to capture an audience is right in front of you. It’s around you. It’s everywhere. Even if you’re writing a science fiction manuscript or a series of poems about a space alien who rides a unicorn, standing in awe and documenting the tangible world around you will help like you wouldn’t believe.

The Special Topic we’re going to read, discuss, and write for this course is called many things. The nonfiction novel. Gonzo Journalism. New Journalism. Longform writing. Literary reportage. Creative journalism.

To put it as simply as I can: this course is intended to move you out of your own brain (at least a little bit) and to investigate the world around us as a fertile source for material.

Required Texts and Tools
In Cold Blood by Truman Capote
The White Album by Joan Didion
The Orchid Thief by Susan Orlean
Hell’s Angels by Hunter S. Thompson
Werner Herzog Film Into the Abyss
A reporter’s notepad
A subscription to newspaperarchive.com
Optional Equipment
An audio recording device

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>Exercise Two</td>
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<td>Exercise Three</td>
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<td>Final Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Scale: 100-90: A; 89-80: B; 79-70: C; 69-60: D; 59- F

Program Learning Outcomes / Student Learning Outcomes

1.) The student will demonstrate close reading skills and recognize strategies used by professional creative writers.
2.) The student will employ these techniques and strategies, crafting carefully composed, competent prose.
3.) The student will articulate useful, critical editorial advice for peer writers.
4.) The student will demonstrate strategic revision on completed creative work.
5.) The student will compose a complete, polished manuscript of substance.

Attendance is mandatory. Your third absence will result in a half-letter-grade deduction from your final grade. The fifth absence will result in a final grade of F. It should be noted that my last name, an Anglicized version of Brennenstuhl, originates from Medieval Stuttgart, where historically the Swabian peoples live. Among the qualities they admire most is punctuality. I will be militant in my roll-taking, and will take roll within five minutes of the beginning of class.

Academic Integrity:
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.
Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

This is typically not an issue in a fiction or poetry workshop. Plagiarism and dishonesty in nonfiction, however, can kill a reputation or career. We will discuss at length the role of fact checking.

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54):**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Students with Disabilities:**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations.

For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.
Tentative Class Schedule

Tue. Jan 19 – Tue. Feb. 9

Block One
Didion and the Personal / Historical

Texts

Tutorial
newspaperarchive.com

Exercise One Due Feb. 2
The Abstract and the Concrete (via email)

Exercise Two Due Feb. 9
The Personal Within a Historical Event

Tue. Feb. 16 – Tue. March 8

Block Two
Thompson and Gonzo Journalism

Texts
Hell’s Angels and “Fear and Loathing at the Kentucky Derby”

Field Trip
TBD

Exercise Three Due March 8
Writing about Event
Robert Durst Film

March 12 – 18

SPRING BREAK NO CLASS
Block Three
Moving Deeper into the Subject

Texts
In Cold Blood and The Orchid Thief

Tutorial
Interviewing Subjects and Fact Checking
Werner Herzog Film

Final Assignment
Writing, editing, revising a comprehensive narrative of historical and cultural research; interviewing subjects; injecting the personal into the narrative in order to create perspective. Due Tuesday, May 10 at 3:00pm.