SYLLABUS. RFW Nonfiction: The Longread

Eugene Lang College, Spring 2020
LLST 3016 A, CRN 2648
MW 4-5:40 pm
6 E. 16th St., Room 1108

[Syllabus version: 3/26/20]

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

What do we mean by "longform" writing that's shorter than a "book"? Does "longform" just mean more words? More work? Why and how do we read and learn from it, and how do we write it ourselves? In this course we will examine the creative richness of longform nonfiction narratives, focusing on close reading of texts that require significant investments of research, writing time, and/or reader attention. The class explores the language, strategies, and forms that writers of literary nonfiction employ for deep dives into the "real" world: through memoir, journalism, research, and genre experimentation. We will study texts representing different approaches and perspectives; we will also discuss how to renew our own approaches to and perspectives on the work. Our reading will aim to be wide, generous, and rigorous. Students will also have the opportunity to propose, write, workshop, and revise a longform piece of their own: the goal is to take productive risks with craft, inspiration, and our limitless capacity to grow and change as writers, readers, and thinkers.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the successful completion of this course, students will have:
1. Learned to analyze the structural, narrative, and creative elements of longform nonfiction.
2. Led and contributed to discussions, developing individual ideas and collaborating with classmates to develop a theory and practice of writing longform nonfiction.
3. Proposed, written, managed critical feedback on, and revised a longform text of their own.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

Writing and participation overlap in many ways: in discussion of written journals, in sharing of written manuscript responses in workshop, and in full participation in class.

- Short writing: reading journals, workshop responses, exercises: 40%**.**
- Longform writing and revision, 8-12+pp: 10%.
- Class attendance/participation, including discussion, workshop, and facilitations: 50%.

Students are responsible for the timely submission of all assignments, even if absent from class. Late work may be awarded *no credit*. The overall grade of "Incomplete" may be assigned by an instructor at her discretion. Policies: http://www.newschool.edu/registrar/academic-policies/

ASSIGNMENTS

All Work: We will use Canvas extensively, so TURN YOUR NOTIFICATIONS ON! All assignments will be posted on Canvas; submit your work as comments on posts. When formatting drafts before posting, your page counts will apply to double-spaced, 12-pt font manuscripts. You must ALSO bring a copy (hard copy or on a reading device) of ALL texts/responses (readings, peers' work, your own comments) to class. LOAD TEXTS IN ADVANCE, in case wifi isn't working.

Reading journals: Readings appear as syllabus links or in Canvas FILES. In response to each text, students will cite two passages (not included in word count), and prepare at least two comments/ questions/ observations (@200 words *per text* except as noted). Post to the reading journals on Canvas by midnight the day before discussion (late entries will not be awarded credit), and bring copies to class for discussion. Write to raise or address questions about narrative structure: what are the narrative and rhetorical devices being employed? How do these sections contribute to, complicate, or further the writer's goals? What moves the work farther, or deeper? Make lists of things you want to learn how to do.

Workshop responses: See workshop guidelines in FILES when we begin.

Exercises & Longform manuscript (8-10 pp): Exercises and responses will be graded as single drafts.Long projects will be marked "credit/no credit," then regraded with letter grades upon revision. Revision should be a substantial re-envisioning of the draft. Students must adhere to the workshop schedule for both their manuscripts and workshop comments on peers' work. Late work derails the workshop and will be docked points or awarded *no credit*.

Facilitations: Students will each facilitate/teach one day's class discussion! If active classroom participation (e.g., speaking in class) presents any sort of problem to you, please speak with Alison to work out solutions.

Facilitators assign at least one additional longform reading of their choice *no less than one week before* (late assigning will reduce your overall facilitation grade) and take the lead in class

discussion. Your pick can be related in content or style, or a second piece by the same author; if you need help selecting a piece, ask Simone and Alison: we have tons of suggestions! Facilitations should mix a close reading of passages in each text with prompts and questions for the class. Facilitators will also address questions raised by classmates in journal entries posted by deadline. We encourage facilitators to include additional content, exercises, and innovative presentation/teaching methods (e.g., a handout with an excerpt from an illuminating craft essay). Short audio and video are welcome.

SAFETY AND CONFIDENTIALITY
If your classroom contributions or writing discuss violence, bigotry, abuse, or other potentially traumatic subjects, please put a Content Note (e.g., CN: violence, alcohol, ableism, racism) at the top of your submission, so that your classmates can better prepare for reading and workshopping. Certain subjects (illegal acts, crimes, and dangers to students' safety or health) instigate university mandatory reporting; instructors cannot hold them confidential. Rather than sharing such issues in class or on Canvas, please bring them to your advisor's or Alison's attention in private conversation.

UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE/SCHOOL, AND PROGRAM POLICIES

PARTICIPATION, ATTENDANCE & LATENESS
Lit Studies Departmental Policy: "Students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly. The policy mandates that students lose a half grade (e.g. B+ becomes B) for each unexcused absence up to three and **automatically fail the class at four unexcused absences**. Excused absences are those either covered by a doctor's note or letter from the office of disability, or at the discretion of the professor in consultation with the Chair or Director. *Chronic lateness (10 minutes or more) will also be counted as absence.* Students should notify the instructor of lateness and absence, via email, ***in advance*** of the class."

The seminar and workshop methods succeed only when students contribute carefully and consistently. Students must attend class ready to participate in a lively, thoughtful discussion of the work they've read prior to class. Attendance and tardiness will be factored heavily into your final grade. If you must miss a class, notify Alison in advance, yet sometimes the work itself is not eligible for make-ups. With that said, if active classroom participation (e.g., speaking in class) presents any sort of problem to you, please speak with Alison to work out solutions.

Extenuating circumstances include the following: an extended illness requiring hospitalization or visit to a doctor (with documentation); a family emergency (with written explanation); observance of a religious holiday. The attendance and lateness policies are enforced as of the first day of classes for all registered students. If registered during the first week of the add/drop period, the student is responsible for any missed assignments and coursework. Students failing a course due to attendance should consult with an academic advisor to discuss options.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY
Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university. Students are responsible for understanding the University's policy on academic honesty and integrity and must make use of proper citations of sources for writing papers, creating, presenting, and performing their work, taking examinations, and doing research. It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. The full text of the policy, including adjudication procedures, is found at http://www.newschool.edu/policies/

Resources on plagiarism and how to avoid it can be found on the Learning Center's website: http://www.newschool.edu/university-learning-center/avoiding-plagiarism.pdf.
Intellectual Property: http://www.newschool.edu/provost/accreditation-policies/

STUDENT COURSE RATINGS
Course evaluations are a vital space where students can speak about the learning experience. It is an important process that provides valuable data about the successful delivery and support of a course or topic to both the faculty and administrators. Instructors rely on course rating surveys for feedback on the course and teaching methods, so they can understand what aspects of the class are most successful in teaching students, and what aspects might be improved or changed in future. Without this information, it can be difficult for an instructor to reflect upon and improve teaching methods and course design. In addition, department chairs and other administrators review course surveys. Instructions are available online at http://www.newschool.edu/provost/course-evaluations-student-instructions.pdf.

RESOURCES

The university provides resources to help students achieve academic excellence:

- University Libraries: http://library.newschool.edu
- University Learning Center (ULC): http://www.newschool.edu/learning-center
  For additional help with coursework, you are encouraged to schedule tutoring sessions in ESL, Writing (all levels), Math, Adobe, Computer Programming, Oral Presentations and Time Management. Sessions are interactive, with both tutor and student participating. Appointments can be scheduled on Starfish or you can stop by for a walk-in session. The ULC is located on the 6th floor of 66 West 12th street.
- Student Disability Service (SDS): www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services/ studentdisability@newschool.edu, 212.229.5626. Any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with Alison privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service. SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for

you to bring to your instructor. At that point, the instructor will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course.

- See the SDS site for lactation rooms map; in this course students may nurse or bring a child if childcare options are unavoidably limited.
- Student Ombuds: http://www.newschool.edu/intercultural-support/ombuds/
  The Student Ombuds office provides students assistance in resolving conflicts, disputes or complaints on an informal basis. This office is independent, neutral, and confidential.
- Office of Financial Aid: https://www.newschool.edu/financial-aid/
  Walk-in hours are Monday–Friday 10:00 a.m.–4:45 p.m at 72 Fifth Ave, 2nd floor. Eligible students may be considered for different types of financial aid such as scholarships, federal grants, federal work study and federal student loans. To be considered for federal student aid, you will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) available online at fafsa.gov. The FAFSA is available starting October 1. The New School's priority deadline to submit the FAFSA is February 15. The FAFSA needs to be submitted annually.

For extra help with grammar and writing skills, visit the Purdue University Online Writing Lab: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

COURSE OUTLINE (Warning: We may have missed some CN topics.)

Wed., Jan. 22:

--Introductions. Syllabus review. Review of facilitations. If there's time, intro to discussions of reading anxieties, writing anxieties.

Mon., Jan. 27:

--Reintroductions. Sign-ups for class facilitations!

Due: Reading journals (200 words per text, as per Assignments heading above; post to Canvas by midnight before class) on: selections from *How We Read*, eds. Kaitlin Heller and Suzanne Conklin Akbari (both she/her; see PDF in FILES). Read the following essays and think about reading practice and strategies. Bring your texts and comments to class discussion.

--Irina Dumitrescu (she/her), "Reading Lessons"

--Brantley Bryant (he/him), "Best Practice Tips and Strategies for Academic Reading…"

--Pick one more and prepare to tell the class about it more fully!

Wed., Jan. 29:

Due: Reading journals (400 words total, post to Canvas by midnight before. For this topic, your journals may be lists: on genre definitions, limitations, opportunities, insights on and pushback against:

--James Bennet (he/him), "Against Long-Form Journalism," *The Atlantic*

--Melissa Chadburn (she/her), "This Wanting Business," *Literary Hub*

--Sarah Menkedick (she/her), "Telling Stories in Order to Live," *Longreads*

--Morgan Jerkins (she/her), "The Personal Essay for WOC Confessionalists," *BookRiot*

--No journal, but you must read in advance: Conflict & Change exercise (FILES).

Mon., Feb. 3 (Last day of add/drop period):

Due: journal (300 words total) on: Saidiya Hartman (she/her), "Afrotopia" (in FILES: the pdf is clean copy from the book; the Word doc is copied, with possible error, but better for printing) from *Lose Your Mother* (CN: racism, white supremacy, enslavement, murder, death, colonialism, war)

--no journal, but read: Saidiya Hartman as told to Thora Siemsen (they/them), "On Working with Archives," *The Creative Independent*

Small group discussion: highlight points/ formulate questions for librarian Brita Servaes.

Wed., Feb. 5:

4:00-4:45pm: visit from Brita Servaes, to answer advanced research questions.

--Due: journal (100 words): Minal Hajratwala (she/her), "On Shakespeare and the Quest for Belonging," *Granta* (CN: racism)

--Due: Facilitator #1: post your journal-generating post in Canvas! Include your additional text, CN, and any chat/notes you might want to add!

Mon., Feb. 10:

Due: journals (back to 200 words per): Hilton Als (he/him), "Color Vision: Ntozake Shange's outspoken art," *The New Yorker* (CN: murder, abuse)

--Aisha Sabatini Sloan (she/her), "A Clear Presence," *Guernica* (CN: CN: murder, white supremacy, racism, police violence)

Wed., Feb. 12:

Due: journals: Sandra Steingraber (she/her), "The Fracking of Rachel Carson," Orion Magazine (CN: illness, death)

--David Owen (he/him), https://www.davidowen.net/files/2015-5-25-new-yorker-colorado-river.pdf

Mon., Feb. 17: NO CLASS (President's Day)

Wed., Feb. 19: Student Facilitation 2 {I'm not renumbering; this is the first}

Due: journals: Toni Morrison (she/her), "The Site of Memory" (CN: abuse, racism).

--AND second longform: facilitator's choice (assume this for all other facilitations), which will be assigned one week in advance, as per facilitator's journal post on Canvas

Mon., Feb. 24: Student Facilitation 3

Due: journals: Due: journal: Ken Armstrong and T. Christian Miller (both he/him), "An Unbelievable Story of Rape," The Marshall Project/*ProPublica* (CN: rape, assault, violence, trauma). Plus second longform assignment.

Wed., Feb. 26: Student Facilitation 4

Due: journals: Wesley Morris (he/him), "The Morality Wars," *NYT Magazine*

Mon., Mar. 2: Student Facilitation 5

Due: journals: John Edgar Wideman, "Looking At Emmett Till," *Creative Nonfiction* (PDF in FILES) (CN: murder, lynching, white supremacy, racism)

Wed., Mar. 4: AMNESTY DAY: no class [Facilitation 6 rescheduled for end of semester]

But you still have due on Canvas: longform proposal: conflict/change exercise (1 page, include 3 sources or references. Post to Canvas).

Mon., Mar. 9: Student Facilitation 7

Due: journals: Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris (both he/him), "Exposure," *The New Yorker* (CN: DISTURBING IMAGES of death, war, torture, murder, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bigotry, abuse, violence)

Wed., Mar. 11: CONFLICT/CHANGE WORKSHOP

Due: read the Workshop Procedure document. Read all classmates' proposals, prepare to discuss (no journals required, but do take notes.)

Mon., Mar. 16 & Wed., Mar. 18: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

[Everything below has been edited as of 3/18/2020]

Mon., Mar. 23, Mar. 25: NO CLASS (distance learning days)

Due: Fri., Mar. 27: LONGFORM MANUSCRIPT (8-12pp), posted to Canvas as a comment.

Mon., Mar. 30; Wed., Apr. 1; Mon., Apr. 6; Wed., Apr. 8: MANUSCRIPT WORKSHOPS

Workshop schedule will be posted. If you cannot participate with an oral response on Zoom, post your 200-word response per manuscript on Canvas.

Mon., Apr. 13: Student Facilitation 8

Due: journals: Tobias Jones (he/him) and Ayo Awokoya (she/her), "Are your tinned tomatoes picked by slave labour?" *The Guardian* (CN: death, exploitation, violence)

Wed., Apr. 15: Student Facilitation 9

Due: journals: Seo-Young Chu (she/her), "Woven: A Refuge for Jae-In Doe," *Entropy* (CN: self-harm, rape, illness, anti-LGBTQ bigotry)

Mon., Apr. 20: Student Facilitation 10

Due: journals: Natalie Diaz (she/her), "A Body of Athletics," Pen America, https://pen.org/a-body-of-athletics/ (CN: violence, death, sexual assault, genocide)

Wed., Apr. 22: Student Facilitation 11

Due: journals: Wendy Walters (she/her), "Lonely in America," *Harper's* (PDF in FILES. CN: racism, enslavement, death, depression)

Mon., Apr. 27: Student Facilitation 12

Due: journals: Cynthia R. Greenlee (she/her), "The Word Is 'Nemesis'," *Longreads,* https://longreads.com/2017/06/05/the-word-is-nemesis-the-fight-to-integrate-the-national-spelling-bee/ (CN: racism)

Wed., Apr. 29: Student Facilitation 13

Due: journals: Gabrielle Bellot (she/her), "Lady of the Moon," Poetry Foundation (CN: bigotries against transgender and LGBTQ+ people, gender dysphoria, self-harm)

Mon., May 4: Student Facilitation 14

Due: journals: Matthew Salesses (he/him), "The Rules of the Asian Body in America," *Medium* (CN: death, illness, racism, xenophobia)

Wed., May 6: Student Facilitation 15

Due: journals: Porochista Khakpour (she/her), "How to Write Iranian-America," *Catapult* (CN: war, self-harm, rape, illness, bigotry)

Last day of class: Mon., May 11: Student Facilitation 16

Due: journals: Elissa Washuta (she/her), "White City," *The Offing* (CN: abuse, assault, alcohol, self-harm, colonization, death)

Thank you very much!