

English 242: Nonfiction Writing Workshop

San José State University

Professor Tom Moriarty

FOB 214

Thomas.moriarty@sjsu.edu

Overview

This course is a creative writing workshop course in nonfiction. In this class, you will learn how to write nonfiction stories from initial proposals to final polished drafts. The key to your success in this workshop, and as a writer in general, is serious and constant work. So plan to be reading, writing, revising, and giving extensive feedback to other writers throughout the semester.

Course Objectives

- To teach students the process of planning, researching, reporting, and writing nonfiction stories.
- To teach students concepts and terminology for discussing nonfiction writing.
- To help students develop into successful writers of nonfiction.
- To help students develop as critical readers and editors.

Required Text and Materials

James B. Stewart, *Follow the Story: How to Write Successful Nonfiction*. Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, 1998.

Printouts and photocopies throughout the semester.

Grades

Your work and participation in this workshop will be graded according to the following standards: A = Excellent work. B = Good work. C = Satisfactory work. D = Unsatisfactory work. F = Failure.

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

One Writing project	100 pts.
Another Writing project	200 pts.
A Third Writing project	250 pts.
Workshop participation, which includes written comments on drafts and in-class discussions of your colleagues' work and assigned readings	200 pts.
Queries and quizzes	50 pts.
Craft Presentation and Discussion	100 pts.
Where to Publish Presentation	100 pts.

A = 900 - 1,000 points

B = 800 - 899 points

C = 700 - 799 points

D = 600 - 699 points

F = less than 600 points

Projects

You will submit about 9,000-10,000 words of polished, revised prose this semester. All three of your projects should be *at least* 2,000 words long, with some of them being longer so you can reach your 8,000 word minimum requirement. Two of the three projects must include some sort of research, and only one may be written solely from personal experience. All of the projects may be written in first, second, or third person, or a combination of points of view. You must do projects in at least two different genres (i.e. profile, biography, opinion, essay, narrative, etc.). And, you are welcome to do projects on your own or with one or two partners (you'll still write the same number of words).

In addition, you will give two presentations: a craft discussion and a market presentation. Both presentations will be done in small groups.

All assignments and projects (except those completed in class) must be typed, use a normal font (12pt. Times New Roman), and submitted in the proper format (i.e. a query letter, a manuscript).

All assignments are due on their announced due dates. Late projects will be penalized one full letter grade for each day the project is late. Quizzes cannot be made up. Late homework is not accepted.

Additional Information available online

You are responsible for reading the following information online at <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/comp/policy/index.html>

- Course guidelines
- Academic policies (academic integrity, plagiarism, ADA and AEC policies)
- Estimation of Per-Unit Student Workload
- Recording policies
- Adding and dropping classes

Workshops

The workshops are the heart of this course. You are expected to be prepared for every workshop (which means you've read the manuscript, thought about it, and written down extensive ideas about it), and you are expected to talk in class every day. 20% of your grade comes from workshop participation and absences will affect your workshop grade.

Students are welcome to disagree with one another during class discussions; however, all our dialogue must be conducted with respect for each individual's opinions and work. In addition, the following practices are forbidden while class is in session: the use of laptops or cell phones.

Grading Policy

The department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C= average; D= below average; F = failure.

All projects and assignments are due at the start of class on the announced due dates. Late projects will be penalized one full letter grade for each day the project is late. Quizzes and exercises may not be made up.

Nonfiction Writing Workshop — Tentative Schedule

Week	Topics, Activities, Due Dates, Etc.
1 1/28	Welcome and Introduction to the Course. Proposals and Query Letters. Poetry vs. Fiction vs. Nonfiction. The Many Genres of Nonfiction. Pitch meeting. HW: Read Stewart p. 9-108. Write Query letter, bring in copies to share.
2 2/4	<i>First Query Due</i> Fun with queries. Presentation assignments. How to workshop. Sign up for workshops and teams and presentations. HW: Read Stewart p. 109-210, 310-328. Workshopers: send us your pieces by Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Print, read, and comment on drafts. Work on your own project.
3 2/11	Work in Progress Workshop HW: Read Stewart p. 211-306, 329-345. Workshopers: send us your pieces by Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Print, read, and comment on drafts. Work on your own project.
4 2/18	Work in Progress Workshop HW: Finish first project draft. Bring in three copies to share.
5 2/25	<i>Project #1 Full Draft Due</i> Feedback and editing workshop. HW: Revise, edit, and wrap up first project. Bring in one paper copy to submit. Think about Project #2 ideas.
6 3/3	<i>Project #1 Due</i> Thinking about your craft. Pitch meeting. HW: Write Query letter, bring in copies to share. Prepare first presentations and handouts.
7 3/10	<i>Second Query Due</i> <i>Craft Presentations</i> <i>Market Presentations</i> Fun with queries. HW: Workshopers: send us your pieces by Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Print, read, and comment on drafts. Work on your own project.
8 3/17	Work in Progress Workshop HW: Workshopers: send us your pieces by Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Print, read, and comment on drafts. Work on your own project.
9 3/24	Work in Progress Workshop HW: Finish second project draft. Bring in two copies to share.
10 3/31	Spring Break. No Class.

11 4/7	Instructor at Conference. No official class. <i>Full Draft of Project #2 Due</i> Feedback and editing workshop. HW: Revise, edit, and wrap up second project. Bring in one paper copy to submit. Think about Project #3 ideas.
12 4/14	<i>Project #2 Due</i> Thinking about your craft. Pitch meeting HW: Write Query letter, bring in copies to share. Prepare second presentations and handouts.
13 4/21	<i>Third Query Due</i> <i>Craft Presentations</i> <i>Market Presentations</i> Fun with queries HW: Workshoppers: send us your pieces by Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Print, read, and comment on drafts. Work on your own project.
14 4/28	Work in Progress Workshop HW: Workshoppers: send us your pieces by Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Print, read, and comment on drafts. Work on your own project.
15 5/5	Work in Progress Workshop HW: Finish second project draft. Bring in three copies to share.
16 5/12	<i>Full Draft of Project #3 Due</i> Feedback and editing workshop. HW: Revise, edit, and wrap up third project. Bring in one paper copy to submit. Prepare your set list for the reading.
17 5/19	<i>Project #3 Due</i> Final Exam Day. Public Reading.