

08N:350:002 Essay Writing Workshop

Professor Stephen Kuusisto

6:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Thursdays in 469 EPB

Office Hours: T/TR 11:00-4:00

(And by appointment)

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Course Overview and Method:

Recently there has been much ballyhoo about truth in creative nonfiction, particularly where the personal essay and the memoir are concerned. It is my own contention that truth is crucial in the composition of nonfiction and it's my further view that those who resort to the incorporation of falsehoods in their work are essentially lacking all literary talent.

But how do I really feel? Alas, I don't know who I am.
I am still striving to be a Platonist.
I imitate with figures what the gods have given away.

Our aim in the workshop is to write whatever we wish—with an eye toward establishing the ways each writer can unfold, spindle, electroplate, percolate, and scallop the truth. We'll endeavor to give bald reality a head of massy hair. In effect: we're making truth more interesting than lies.

Workshop Schedule:

Aug. 28

Sept. 4

Sept. 11

Sept. 18

Sept. 25

Oct. 2 No class

Oct. 9

Oct. 16

Oct. 23

Oct. 30

Nov 6 No class

Nov. 13

Nov. 20

Thanksgiving break

Dec. 4 No class

Dec. 11

Truth: assorted quotations:

Kenneth Rexroth:

And what is truth, said Pilate, washing his hands.

Abraham Lincoln:

You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you can not fool all of the people all of the time.

Adrienne Rich:

When a woman tells the truth she is creating the possibility for more truth around her.

Adrienne Rich:

False history gets made all day, any day,
the truth of the new is never on the news.

Albert Einstein:

No amount of experimentation can ever prove me right; a single experiment can prove me wrong.

Albert Einstein:

Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods.

Albert Einstein:

The ideals which have lighted me on my way and time after time given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. . . . The ordinary objects of human endeavour -- property, outward success, luxury -- have always seemed to me contemptible.

Alfred North Whitehead:

There are no whole truths: all truths are half-truths. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil.

Anais Niin

When we blindly adopt a religion, a political system, a literary dogma, we become automatons. We cease to grow.

Anais Niin:

The personal life deeply lived always expands into truths beyond itself.

Andre Gide:

Believe those who are seeking the truth; doubt those who find it.

Arthur Conan Doyle:

Whenever you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.

Benjamin Disraeli:

Never apologize for showing feeling. When you do so, you apologize for the truth.

Bertrand Russell:

What a man believes upon grossly insufficient evidence is an index into his desires -- desires of which he himself is often unconscious. If a man is offered a fact which goes against his instincts, he will scrutinize it closely, and unless the evidence is overwhelming, he will refuse to believe it. If, on the other hand, he is offered something which affords a reason for acting in accordance to his instincts, he will accept it even on the slightest evidence. The origin of myths is explained in this way.

Blaise Pascal:

You always admire what you really don't understand.

Blaise Pascal:

We know the truth, not only by the reason, but also by the heart.

Blaise Pascal:

There are truths on this side of the Pyrenees, which are falsehoods on the other.

Brad Holland:

Postmodernists believe that truth is myth, and myth, truth. This equation has its roots in pop psychology. The same people also believe that emotions are a form of reality. There used to be another name for this state of mind. It used to be called psychosis.

Buddha:

Believe nothing just because a so-called wise person said it. Believe nothing just because a belief is generally held. Believe nothing just because it is said in ancient books. Believe nothing just because it is said to be of divine origin. Believe nothing just because someone else believes it. Believe only what you yourself test and judge to be true. [paraphrased]

Christopher Morley:

There is no squabbling so violent as that between people who accepted an idea yesterday and those who will accept the same idea tomorrow.

Clarence Darrow:

Chase after the truth like all hell and you'll free yourself, even though you never touch its coattails.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan:

Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but not their own facts.

David Hume:

Truth springs from argument amongst friends.

Demosthenes:

Nothing is easier than self-deceit. For what each man wishes, that he also believes to be true.

Dorothy Thompson:

Fear grows in darkness; if you think there's a bogeyman around, turn on the light.

Dorothy Thompson:

There is nothing to fear except the persistent refusal to find out the truth, the persistent refusal to analyze the causes of happenings.

E.L. Doctorow:

History is the present. That's why every generation writes it anew. But what most people think of as history is its end product, myth.

Edward R. Murrow:

Most truths are so naked that people feel sorry for them and cover them up, at least a little bit.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton:

Reformers who are always compromising, have not yet grasped the idea that truth is the only safe ground to stand upon.

Elizabeth Kenny:

Some minds remain open long enough for the truth not only to enter but to pass on through by way of a ready exit without pausing anywhere along the route.

Emily Dickinson:

Truth is such a rare thing, it is delighted to tell it.

Felix Adler:

The truth which has made us free will in the end make us glad also.

Freidrich Nietzsche:

And we should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once. And we should call every truth false which was not accompanied by at least one laugh.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences: Policies and Procedures

Administrative Home of the Course

The administrative home of this course is the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which governs academic matters relating to the course such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, issues concerning academic fraud or academic probation, and how credits are applied for various graduation requirements. Different colleges might have different policies. If you have questions about these or other CLAS policies, visit your academic advisor or 120 Schaeffer Hall and speak with the staff. The CLAS Academic Handbook also contains important CLAS academic policy: www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/index.shtml

Academic Fraud

Plagiarism and any other activities that result in a student presenting work that is not his or her own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is reported to the departmental DEO and then to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences who deals with academic fraud according to these guidelines:

www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students have the right to make suggestions or complaints and should first visit with the instructor, then with the course supervisor if appropriate, and next with the departmental DEO. All complaints must be made within six months of the incident.

www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml#5

Accommodations for Disabilities

A student seeking academic accommodations first must register with Student Disability Services and then meet with a SDS counselor who determines eligibility for services. A student approved for accommodations should meet privately with the course instructor to arrange particular accommodations. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/

Understanding Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Visit www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu/ for definitions, assistance, and the full policy.

Student Classroom Behavior

The ability to learn is lessened when students engage in inappropriate classroom behavior, distracting others; such behaviors are a violation of the **Code of Student Life**. When disruptive activity occurs, a University instructor has the authority to determine classroom seating patterns and to request that a student exit the classroom, laboratory, or other area used for instruction immediately for the remainder of the period. One-day suspensions are reported to appropriate departmental, collegiate, and Student Services personnel (Office of the Vice President for **Student Services** and Dean of Students).