





Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) 617

Creative Non-Fiction (Revision 6)

Status: Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode: [Grouped study](#) 

Credits: 3

Area of study: Arts

Prerequisites: None

Precluded: None

Faculty: [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Notes: Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

Overview

MAIS 617: Creative Non-Fiction is a hybrid course in which students will have a chance to do both literary criticism and creative work. The original version of this course was described by its author, Gordon Morash, as a literature survey course. Recent revisions have made it possible to engage in the course both as a reader and a writer.

Gordon Morash wrote about arts and culture for more than 35 years. He was a feature writer, broadcaster, and columnist in newspapers, magazines, and on radio in Edmonton. As a fiction writer, he was published in magazines and anthologies; and as a teacher, he gave courses in fiction, journalism, and food writing. Until his untimely death in August 2009, he worked as a writer, editor, teacher, and writing coach.

Angie Abdou, responsible for recent revisions of the course, has a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from University of Calgary. She has published five books of fiction. Her first book of creative non-fiction, *Home Ice: Reflections of a Reluctant Hockey Mom*, was published by ECW Press in September 2018. Her second work in the genre is the memoir *This One Wild Life: A Mother-Daughter Wilderness Memoir*, published by ECW Press in April 2021.

Learning outcomes

After completing MAIS 617, students should be able to:

1. Determine why writers adopt creative non-fiction as an approach to expression and storytelling, and why readers are drawn to the genre.
2. Describe the role of social consciousness and its function in literature and journalism.
3. Discriminate between New Journalism, conventional journalism, and conventional storytelling.
4. Explain the terminology of the genre—for example, creative non-fiction, literary journalism, literary non-fiction, participatory journalism, subjective non-fiction, New Journalism, gonzo journalism.
5. Value the role of the genre as a practical versus artistic endeavour.
6. Understand the reader's role: the tension between truth and fiction, and how to read, how to believe, how to interpret.

7. Recognize and execute the elements of storytelling—characterization, setting, point of view, tension, theme, dialogue, format, and narrative thrust and movement.
8. Explain why and how a particular piece of creative non-fiction works or fails.
9. Recognize the flaws and pitfalls in creative non-fiction as a genre.
10. Create an original creative non-fiction work.

Evaluation

The final grade in MAIS 617 is based on forum participation as well as three marked assignments (book review, presentation, and final paper). To receive credit for MAIS 617, students must complete and submit all of the assignments and actively take part in the online activities. Students must achieve a minimum grade of **C- (60 percent)** [↗](#) for the course.

Students will be evaluated on their understanding of the concepts presented in the course and on their ability to apply those concepts. The final grade in the course will be based on the marks achieved for the following activities.

Activity	Weight
Online Participation in Group Discussion	20%
Assignment 1: Book Review	20%
Assignment 2: Presentation and Moderation of Online Discussion	20%
Assignment 3: Creative Non-Fiction Paper	40%
Total	100%

Online Participation in Group Discussion

You are expected to participate in the online discussion every week. On each Monday, your course professor will post the week's discussion questions and

instructions. You will be expected to respond to the questions posted and to respond to at least one of your fellow students' postings. These postings should demonstrate your knowledge of the assigned readings. After Week 6, you will also be expected to participate in discussions based on your fellow students' presentations.

Book Review

To be handed in by the end of the fourth week of the course, this will be a 1,000–1,200-word review that comments on a book of creative non-fiction. You will use the techniques of creative non-fiction to summarize the book, capture its main themes, and consider its strategies and effectiveness.

Presentation and Moderation of Online Discussion

On Sunday of your assigned week, you will post a 15-minute (or approximately 2,000–2,500-word) presentation online, and in the following weeks you will moderate discussion around it. Your presentation will, essentially, teach one of the course readings and be responsible for that week's discussion.


Term Paper

Due by the end of the course, you must write an original piece of creative non-fiction that employs research and / or interviews, characterization, tension, setting, and other strategies of fiction discussed in this course. Your paper should be 3,000–3,500 words in length.





Materials

Bydlowska, Jowita. *Drunk Mom: A Memoir*. Doubleday Canada, 2013.  (Print)

Gutkind, Lee. *You Can't Make This Stuff Up: The Complete Guide to Writing Creative Nonfiction—From Memoir to Literary Journalism and Everything in Between*. Da Capo Press / Lifelong Books, 2012.  (Print)

Kerrane, Kevin, and Ben Yagoda, editors. *The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism*. Simon & Schuster, 1998.  (Print)

Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) 
- › [Focus Areas](#) 
- › [Courses](#) 
- › [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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View [previous revision](#) 
